

SCRUTINY ASSEMBLY

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Assembly held on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 5.00 pm in Telford Minster, Meeting Point House, Southwater Square, Telford, TF3 4HS

Present: Councillors S Bentley, M Boylan, G H Cook, E Davies, P Davis, F Doran, N A Dugmore, Cllr N A M England, S Handley, Z Hannington, A S Jhawar, J Jones, L Lewis, G Luter, A D McClements, H Morgan, T J Nelson, L Parker, I Preece, S J Reynolds, R Sahota, K Tonks, C R Turley, J Urey, O Vickers and D R W White (Chair).

Co-optees: S Fikeis and S Fogell

Also Present: Councillors Cllr L D Carter (Cabinet Member for Place (The Economy & Neighbourhood Services)), Cllr S Davies (Leader of the Council) , Cllr A R H England (Speaker of the Council), Cllr C Healy (Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Green Spaces, Heritage & Leisure), Cllr R Mehta (Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities & Civic Pride), Cllr K Middleton (Cabinet Member for Healthy, Safer & Stronger Communities and Partnerships), Cllr R A Overton (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Homes & Enforcement) and Cllr P Watling (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health Systems)

In Attendance: J Britton (Executive Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support), D Knibbs (Director: Children's Safeguarding & Family Support), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), J Power (Organisational Delivery & Development Service Delivery Manager), D Sidaway (Chief Executive), P Starkey (Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), S Wellman (Director: Education & Skills) and S Yarnall (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny))

Apologies: Councillors E Aston, A J Burford, A J Eade, T L B Janke, G C W Latham-Reynolds, P J Scott, P Thomas, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson and R Tyrrell

Co-optees: D Saunders

SA6 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Erin Aston, Andy Burford, Andrew Eade, Thomas Janke, Gilly Latham-Reynolds, Peter Scott, Paul Thomas, Bill Tomlinson, Karen Tomlinson and Rachael Tyrrell.

SA7 Declarations of Interest

None.

SA8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

SA9 CSE Inquiry Update

The Leader of the Council and the Director: Policy & Governance presented an update on the Council's progress following an independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Telford and Wrekin.

The presentation set out the steps that had been taken by the Council to commission an independent inquiry and the work that had been delivered so far as a result of the recommendations made by the Independent Chair in July 2022.

In 2018, a meeting of Full Council agreed to commission an independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford and Wrekin. The Council adopted a "double independence" approach to the commissioning of the inquiry which commenced with the procurement of an independent Commissioning Body, Eversheds Sutherland, who took responsibility for the procurement of an Independent Chair in consultation with the Survivors' Committee which later resulted in the appointment of Tom Crowther KC.

Mr Crowther commenced his work in Summer 2019, reviewing documentary evidence from various organisations including Telford & Wrekin Council, Shropshire Council, West Mercia Police, the Police & Crime Commissioner and Voluntary Sector organisations. A total of 170 witnesses were interviewed over a period of two and a half years.

Shortly after Mr Crowther's report was published on 12 July 2022, the Leader of the Council announced that the Council would be working in collaboration with three individuals with lived experience to shape the Council's response to the recommendations. Since then, consultees and Council officers have continued to work diligently to ensure the recommendations are inclusive and address key issues identified in the report. The report contained 47 recommendations with 148 actions, 82 of which are for the Council alone to implement.

Following the publication of the report, the Strategic Implementation Group (SIG) established which consisted of representatives from all partners, the Independent Chair, and the three Individual Lived Experience Consultees (ILEC). The group served as a forum where all partners had the opportunity to present their progress and seek agreement that a recommendation was ready for assessment by the Independent Chair. Actions were not marked as complete by the partners themselves but instead, it was the Chair's responsibility to decide the effectiveness of the work carried out.

Each organisation involved in the inquiry had its own internal governance arrangements and the Council had continued to hold assurance meetings

every 4 to 6 weeks to monitor progress of each Directorate against the recommendations and actions outlined within the report. Other organisations such as West Mercia Police and Health sectors had several recommendations for which they were solely responsible and were accountable to their own organisations for the delivery of these recommendations. Members were informed that although reference had been made to Police and Health sector recommendations, detailed information on these recommendations had not been provided to the Council except where there were multi-agency recommendations involving the Council, which were set out as part of the presentation.

The role of Individual Lived Experience consultees involved regular weekly meetings to review recommendations and actions including proposed approaches to delivering the recommendations. Workshops were held with practitioners and consultees to help develop several documents that were shared with the Independent Chair. These sessions provided valuable challenges on the implementation of the recommendations to ensure that the outcomes were meaningful and impactful for those at risk of, or victims of CSE.

The recommendations outlined in the report were categorised into several themes:-

- Data
- Enforcement
- Governance & Oversight
- Policy & Procedures
- Quality Assurance
- Resources
- Training

Data:

Recommendations 1 to 5 of the report set out the requirement for an annual report to be published profiling CSE in the Borough to include data from Children's Services, Licensing, Police, Health sectors and Schools. The first annual report was published in July 2023 and focused on the following core objectives:-

- To create a benchmark against which to track future trends in CSE;
- To create a profile of CSE incidents in the Borough including information about those at risk, victims, perpetrators and criminal investigations; and to understand where CSE was happening to drive evidence-led decision making in respect of policy and practice; and
- To test whether partners were effectively sharing information about cases.

Recommendation 26 set out the requirement to collate data relating to complaints against taxi drivers including how many complaints had been

received and how many of those complaints related to drivers licensed by the Council.

Recommendation 46 set out the requirement for the ICS to consult with GP practices in the Borough about data improvements to enable systems to flag CSE concerns on a child's medical records.

Enforcement:

Recommendation 30 related to historic premises licenses granted before the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003 and before local authorities were responsible for Licensing and set out the requirement for the Council to ensure historic licenses have appropriate license conditions for the protection of children.

Governance & Oversight:

Recommendation 9 was a multi-agency recommendation and set out the requirement for a review of the sub-groups of the Safeguarding Partnership.

Members were informed that a review had been carried out and the sub-groups would continue to remain focused on exploitation, data and performance.

Recommendation 41 related to the Police & Crime Commissioner holding the Chief Constable to account.

Policy & Procedures:

Recommendations 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21 and 22 related to making changes to policies and procedures in respect of the Council's involvement with children and young people.

Members were advised that some policies, procedures and documents had been co-produced with Lived Experience consultees to ensure that they were inclusive of those with lived experience.

Recommendations 14, 33, 34 and 35 related to processes and policies in place within schools including the appointment of CSE leads in secondary schools, recording and sharing of information around ongoing concerns, threats and risks of CSE and a review of school site security.

Recommendations 23, 25, 27, 28 and 31 related to making changes to policies and procedures in respect of the Council's role in public protection including information sharing with neighbouring authorities to obtain agreement for shared protocols, making the complaints process more accessible for taxis and licensed premises, sharing safeguarding information relating to taxi drivers, increasing CCTV in taxis and increasing oversight of night-time premises such as takeaways and restaurants. At the time of the meeting, the Council had installed CCTV in 25 vehicles following a pilot scheme which commenced in 2022.

Recommendations 36, 38, 43 and 47 were recommendations to be implemented by the Police and Health sectors. Recommendations 36 and 38 focused on crime markers for CSE and required the Police to review their approach to ensure that they are used appropriately and consistently. They also focused on the Police's complaints process which required the Police to publish details of complaints received about how CSE cases have been handled. Recommendation 43 and 47 focused on trauma-informed mental health practice and the need to increase funding as well as the introduction of CSE markers to files which indicate a patient had been, or may have been at risk of being exploited and for these markers to follow medical records when and if patients move between practices.

Recommendations 20, 29 and 39 were recommendation to be implemented by multi-agencies. Recommendation 20 related to the implementation of a protocol setting out how information should be shared in the event of a risk of HIV as a result of sexual exploitation. Recommendation 29 related to the involvement of West Mercia Police in taxi licensing exercises and required documented processes setting out how the Police and Council would work together in enforcement exercises involving taxis. Recommendation 39 relates to the improvement of the protocol for agreeing which agency will undertake a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) when more than one agency is involved with a child or young person. This specific recommendation is the responsibility of both the Council and Police and at the time of the meeting, a protocol had been developed to ensure that there would be a consistent and co-ordinated approach to ensure that all relevant cases received and NRM.

Quality Assurance:

Recommendation 13 sets out the requirement for an annual file review of CSE files in the Council's CATE and Safeguarding services to provide assurance that information is properly recorded and that the focus of work with young people is appropriately directed.

Resources:

Recommendations 7, 8, 17, 40 and 44 sought to either secure or increase the existing resources in place to support children and young people who had been, or were at risk of being exploited. The Council had committed to securing the resource for the CATE team for the period of the Medium Financial Team Strategy. The Police and Crime Commissioner had also committed to ongoing funding for the Street Pastor and Taxi Marshall programmes.

Training:

Recommendations 6, 12, 24, 32, 37, 42 and 45 related to training. In particular, recommendations 12, 24 and 32 were to be implemented by the Council to ensure training was available for practitioners, taxi drivers and awareness-raising for children and parents. The Council have worked with the Lived Experience consultees to develop a core training programme around CSE. Recommendations 37 and 42 were to be adopted by the Police and Health sectors to ensure training was in place for police officers and staff and to improve the quality of training to health practitioners and providers. The

Council were continuing work around recommendations 6 and 45 which related to multi-agency and information sharing across all partners.

The Director: Policy & Governance outlined the next steps of the Council which looked write to the Independent Chair by the end of the year to undertake a review in 2024.

Following the presentation, Members asked a number of questions.

The meeting ended at 6.27 pm

Chairman:

Date: Tuesday 24 September 2024