

Minutes

Name of meeting	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	MONDAY, 11 MAY 2009 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM ONE, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Muriel Miller (Chairman), William Burt, Vanessa Churchman, Deborah Gardiner, Lady Pigot, Erica Oulton, Margaret Webster
Co-opted Member (non voting)	Mr Paul Fuller, Mr Adrian Smith
Other Members Present	Cllrs Dawn Cousins, David Knowles, Roger Mazillius, Ian Stevens, Alan Wells
Officers Present	Mr Jonathan Baker, Mr Steve Beynon, Mr Chris Mathews, Mr Nicolas Crick, Mr Paul Thistlewood, Mr Keith Woods
Local Safeguarding Children's Board	Mr David Parkinson (Independent Chair)
Apologies	Cllrs Ivan Bulwer, Gill Kennett, Heather Humby, Colin Richards, Mrs Sue Poston, Mr Charles Rogers, Mrs Sara Sheath, Mrs Ursula Topp

80. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes to the meeting held on [16 April 2009](#) were agreed.

81. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Deborah Gardiner declared a personal interest in Minute 82 due to her husband's employment with the Isle of Wight Council.

82. **Local Safeguarding Childrens Board**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People presented to members the follow up paper to the Safeguarding Pilot Inspection report that went to

Cabinet on 20 April 2009 and included the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2009.

Following the death of Victoria Climbié in February 2000 of abuse and the failure of services dedicated to the safeguarding of children, Lord Laming was asked by the Department of Health to conduct a review of her death and those services at a local and national level. As a result of this, local partner organisations would cooperate in order to protect children which came into effect following the ratification of the Children Act (2004).

Local Safeguarding Board Regulations in 2006 defined the nature of a serious case review and from 1 April 2008 further recommendations were made. In 2009, Lord Laming made the recommendation that all future Serious Case Reviews should be chaired by an independent chair person.

On 30 January 2009, Ofsted notified the Local Safeguarding Children Board that the serious case review submitted in June 2008 was judged to be inadequate, failing to demonstrate a rigorous analysis of the circumstances of the case as well as apologising for the delay in conveying their judgement.

Members were advised that an action Plan was drawn up that gave 8 recommendations. Six of these needed to be completed by the end of May 2009 with the other two by 1 June 2009. The Head of Targeted Intervention advised the Committee that whilst a few completion dates had slipped slightly, all actions were expected to have been completed.

The Chairman requested that attendance of partner organisations at the Local Safeguarding Children Board are monitored in future meetings of the Board as well as looking into adopting an effective communications strategy.

With regards to the budget for the Board, members were advised that the actual figure for 2008/09 was £26,427 below expectation; however, because the Local Safeguarding Children's Board manager would now be paid by the Isle of Wight Council, the budgeted figure for 2009/10 was nearly twice the amount from the previous year.

There was also some concerns raised as to the exactly how much the Council would need to fund and the amount that would be received from Government. Firm guidance on this was being sought, although it was anticipated that the Council would need to find half of the funding for Children's Services.

There was continued disquiet expressed over the manner in which the inadequate findings against the Local Safeguarding Children's Board were conveyed to members. However, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People reminded the Committee of the apology made at both the last Scrutiny meeting as well as the Full Council Meeting of April 2009.

Members also express their concern over the manner in which the Ofsted letter was conveyed, however the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People told the Committee that the protection of the child's family's identity

was of paramount concern and that the action taken was done so in their best interests.

The committee therefore requested that a review be undertaken, at the earliest opportunity covering how Serious Case Reviews are communicated to elected members. It was also agreed that an enquiry into Child Protection should be undertaken by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible.

Members were advised that there was no indication that budgetary constraints had in any way impeded in safeguarding children, although financial arrangements may need to be reviewed.

The Director for Children and Young People advised the Committee that judgement on the Serious Case Review was based on the latest criteria even though the incident occurred two years previously in 2007.

The Chief Executive advised that the Serious Case Review could only proceed once the police gave its authorisation and that the council could not go outside this jurisdiction

The Chief Executive also assured members of the committee that the Children and Young People Directorate had been adjudged as adequate and that issues raised by the Serious Case Review had been addressed.

The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board was requested to provide the Committee with the Minutes of all the Board's minutes, the managers report to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as the Annual report being considered by the said relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Issues were raised by the Committee over too much pressure being put upon unqualified family support staff. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board assured members that a qualified member of staff would make at least one visit. Whilst this was still not ideal, it was an improvement on previous arrangements and further improvements would also be pursued. It was stated that there were 11 full time posts available and it was envisaged that 9 would be filled by the summer. However there was a national shortage of social care workers and it was still possible that recruitment from the mainland may be necessary.

Concerns were raised from other members present over the need for good quality support measures in place including training, IT and a sound audit trail procedure. With this in place, questions on what actions have been carried out should be answered with a lot more confidence. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board did however inform members that prior notice could have meant having the required information to hand.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People advised the committee that 4 working sub groups had been appointed whose main duties were to address the progress of the recommendations.

The Head of Targeted Intervention stated that since January 2008 a restructure had been put in place which had looked into various areas of improvement. This included direct staff support from relevant Heads of Service which incorporated regular 1-1 meetings, improved induction procedures and various forum involvements.

Members were advised that IT systems would be made fit for purpose and help to address some important issues; however the Integrated Childrens System (ICS) was still providing problems with uploading times.

RESOLVED:

- i. THAT in future the Annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children Board should be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- ii. THAT the practicalities of incorporating the annual reports of the Council's partners on the website be investigated.
- iii. THAT the Local Safeguarding Children Board be recommended to consider the adoption of a communications strategy.
- iv. THAT the minutes of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, together with the Manager's report, should be made available to members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- v. THAT a review be undertaken, at the earliest opportunity, as to how Serious Case Reviews are communicated to elected members and a process initiated whereby they are also informed immediately when Ofsted notifies the Council and/or the Local Safeguarding Children's Board of concerns.
- vi. THAT it be recommended that an enquiry into Child Protection should be undertaken by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the earliest opportunity.

CHAIRMAN