

<b>MEETING:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	Tuesday, 9 February 2016
<b>TIME:</b>	2.00 pm
<b>VENUE:</b>	Council Chamber, Barnsley Town Hall

## MINUTES

### Present

Councillors Ennis (Chair), P. Birkinshaw, G. Carr, Franklin, Frost, Gollick, Hand-Davis, Hayward, Johnson, Makinson, Mitchell, Morgan, Pourali, Sixsmith MBE, Spence, Tattersall, Unsworth, Wilson and Worton together with co-opted members Ms P. Gould and Ms J. Whitaker.

### 22 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representative

Apologies for absence were received from Ms Kate Morrith in accordance with Regulation 7 (6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

### 23 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

There were declarations of interest from Councillors Ennis, Makinson and Pourali as Berneslai Homes Board Members; Councillors G. Carr, Sixsmith, Tattersall, Unsworth and Worton as Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Virtual School Governance Group and Co-opted Member, Ms Joan Whitaker as a Member of Barnsley Federation of Tenants and Residents.

### 24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record.

### 25 Devolution Proposal

The Chair welcomed the witnesses to the meeting which included:

- Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE, Leader of BMBC and Chair of Sheffield City Region Combined Authority
- Diana Terris, Chief Executive, BMBC

Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE gave a presentation to the Committee about the Sheffield City Region (SCR) Devolution Proposal, advising that the devolution journey has been evolving for a number of years. Since 2012, the city region has been delivering government investment, generating significant benefits. This led to the first devolution deal in 2014. If the current deal is approved this will lead to a Mayoral Combined Authority.

The SCR comprises of nine local authorities including Barnsley; everyday 42,000 residents cross the SCR boundaries to access employment which reflects the economic activity within the city region. The objectives of the SCR include addressing the deficit of 70,000 jobs compared with other areas of the country, increasing the number of businesses by 6,000, as well as generating approximately 30,000 highly skilled occupations.

The current deal is an entirely economic one, which means it would have no authority over the police or health services. The public consultation ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The consensus of opinion is people are supportive of devolution, but not the introduction of an elected mayor; however, these are mutually inclusive of each other due to Central Government requirements.

An important part of the deal is the 'single pot' which is £30m a year over a 30 year period (£900m), with a 60:40 capital / revenue split. This enables a single line in the Spending Review, as well as allowing for greater responsibility and control over decisions and spending within the city region.

There will be improvements to the transport infrastructure ensuring it is more integrated, as well as being more attractive to users with features such as smart 'oyster style' ticketing. Both the HS2 and HS3 rail networks will operate within the SCR. The devolution process would allow for control over the Adult Skills Budget, resulting in an increase in the skills base within the SCR, as well as enabling co-working with stakeholders, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The devolution process would allow for an enhanced accountability of national programmes to the SCR, as well as a greater role with UK Trade and Investment (UKTI). Future changes in legislation would also allow the SCR Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise Government departments.

The deal covers the SCR as well as new powers to an elected Mayor for the 4 South Yorkshire members of the Combined Authority (CA); there would be further powers to the wider SCR through the SCR Combined Authority. The process allows for any of the remaining 5 non South Yorkshire members to become a constituent member of the CA.

Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE concluded the presentation by giving his recommendation to 'sign up to the deal' enabling the authority to benefit from the potential investment that will be available. Current indications suggest the Council's future income will be generated from Council Tax and Business Rates, as the Revenue Support Grant will no longer exist in 2020.

Members proceeded to ask the following questions:

- i) What are the main challenges and opportunities with the devolution proposal?

The committee were advised the main challenge will be ensuring the right person is elected as Mayor considering the financial changes ahead, as well as being a high profile position. The proposal delivers a huge opportunity for the borough providing long term investment, as well as additional powers allowing for greater control and flexibility over financial spending.

- ii) What interest has there been from businesses regarding Junction 36; after devolution will there be opportunities to offer better incentives?

The group were advised we've got incentives for businesses; the challenge going forward is knowing how much incentive to give as it is difficult encouraging new businesses to locate to Barnsley due to strong competition from other parts of the country, who may already have an existing infrastructure and available workforce. The Council has worked closely with the ASOS distribution centre to help with their recruitment, which has resulted in the creation of 2500 new jobs in the area.

- iii) Will business rates be distributed via the SCR?

Members were advised there is still further work to be done on this. We need to ensure the balance is right geographically and whether the money will go on services or the economy.

- iv) How important will the decision be for the location of the Sheffield station on the HS2 rail link?

The committee were advised successful negotiations with the SCR have been on-going for 4-5 months to evaluate the two alternative locations in Sheffield. Whether the station is located centrally at the old Victoria Station or on the perimeter at Meadowhall; both of these locations would benefit the SCR. A station located centrally would see increases in higher level jobs such as the financial sector within Sheffield City Centre whereas a station at Meadowhall would see a wider span of employment across the area however this would be in logistics/the manufacturing sector. The decision lies with Central Government and will be made in October 2016. If it is decided to locate the station at the old Victoria Station it would cost an additional £1bn. The government has said that there is no extra money available; whatever decision is made however needs to be supported.

This has been a challenging issue for the SCR, however we are working well together and this has been commented upon by external individuals who have worked with other regions in the country.

- v) Under a Mayoral Combined Authority would there need to be changes to how the road network is managed within the SCR?

The group were advised each authority within the SCR will need to ensure the road network within their own area is maintained as they currently do. However, alongside the Mayor, they will need to identify key network routes which contribute to economic growth which will be maintained by the SCR such as the A62.

- vi) How will the SCR ensure the funding is invested appropriately across the region?

The SCR needs to make sure money is invested in 'game changing' projects with consideration for both central and rural economies. Each project will therefore need to be assessed on its economic potential, such as investment in Doncaster Airport.

- vii) Does the Devolution Deal depend on match funding?

Members were advised there will be no requirement for match funding, however you would expect that when applying for monies, the SCR will ask companies what they will be contributing towards projects. Those who can demonstrate their contribution rather than just taking from the funds are more likely to be successful.

viii) Do Barnsley priorities integrate with the plans of the SCR?

The committee were advised that the needs of Barnsley fit into every element of the deal and it will be able to benefit, such as the need for more jobs and better skills.

ix) If the proposal goes through, how will the deal help with the sustainability of Berneslai Homes (BH)?

The group were advised this deal won't help with the BH business plan, However, out of the deal we can make sure BH don't duplicate what the private sector can do.

x) What evidence is there that devolution has worked e.g. in Manchester and are we learning from the experiences of others?

Members were advised Devolution within the UK includes the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies. The Manchester City Region Devolution Deal is slightly ahead of the SCR, but only just. The evidence for Devolution working is based on findings in Europe, where Economic Performance has been better due to decisions being made based on better knowledge and understanding of local areas.

xi) Can we guarantee Barnsley will receive a fair share of the deal and have we got projects ready to take advantage?

The committee were advised the deal is not about authorities getting their 'fair share', but about maximising economic investment. There would be a stringent five year programme to ensure both economic and financial objectives were achieved, but this does not necessarily mean each area will get the same financial share on the same timeframes. The committee were assured that Barnsley is undertaking proactive involvement with the SCR at both a political and officer level and this will continue.

xii) Following a referendum, if the decision is to leave the EU would this affect the devolution proposal?

The group were advised part of the proposal incorporates control of European funding, which would mean an exit from the EU would have implications for this. However, should we leave the EU, it is even more important that we are part of the deal; otherwise we would be completely left out of funding/economic development mechanisms.

xiii) How effective are relationships between key stakeholders?

Members were advised over the last four to five years there have been successful relationships with stakeholders; if we weren't making this work then we wouldn't be getting the deal. There will always be negotiations to be had as there are 9 Council Leaders in the group who want the best for their area.

- xiv) Would the Council's Cabinet function remain the same?

It was confirmed that there would be no changes to the Council's constitution as this is not part of this devolution deal.

- xv) Have we got the maximum out of this deal; will the £900m that is available over the 30 year period be sufficient for the 9 authorities and is it linked to inflation? Also have we learned lessons from existing projects we've had problems with such as the superfast broadband?

The group were advised this deal has secured the most funding compared with others and is a good starting point. Over 30 years this is a lot of money however it's not about just dividing the money equally between the authorities, it's about maximising investments of which we will ensure Barnsley gets its share. For example Doncaster Airport could be given £100 million for development however this would maximise economic development for Barnsley by creating a variety of jobs as well as development of the surrounding road networks.

Despite the earlier issues with the Broadband project this is now going well as we have learnt lessons from this and the private sector are now taking the risks.

- xvi) What impact has the Department for Work and Skills moving from Sheffield to London had; is the needs assessment of jobs for our area accurate; and how will the deal impact our transport infrastructure?

The group were advised the area has not been helped by the government department move; however this evidences how much our economy relies on the public sector which is not good. If this had occurred in Leeds, it would have much less of an impact; therefore we need to ensure we have good private sector jobs in our economy so that it is not impacted by public sector cuts.

Regarding transport, the deal starts in April 2016; however the money and investment powers come 1 year later. It's good that we will have influence over transport; however this does not mean that we will suddenly be able to double bus services.

- xvii) Could a change of Government result in the devolution proposal being reversed?

The committee were advised this could be possible; however, once the devolution process had begun it would be both difficult and costly to reverse.

- xviii) How will the Mayor for the Combined Authority be selected?

The group were advised the Mayoral appointment would inherently be a political one, although there is always the possibility of either a public figure or celebrity being elected.

- xix) Will the proposal help to reduce the 70,000 jobs deficit against other parts of the country, as well as increasing the number of apprenticeships?

Members were advised each project has job creation priorities against it, such as our Goldthorpe and junction 36 and 37 work contributes towards the figures. Nationally, Barnsley ranks as the highest in the country for private sector employment growth; also, during 2013/14, Barnsley had the highest success rate in the country (77 per cent) for the number of apprentices having successfully completed their training. Businesses have a choice where they choose to locate therefore we need to make sure we maximise our opportunities to get them.

xx) Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE, the Leader of the Council was asked if he would be interested in the role of Mayor for the Combined Authority?

Members were advised by the Leader, whilst he is Chair of the SCR, he has not decided whether he will apply for the Mayoral role. Also, there are potentially 8 other Council Leaders within the SCR who could be interested in applying for the position. However, in the first instance the proposal needs to be finalised and agreed.

xxi) How will you ensure public engagement and involvement in the design, delivery and review of projects/services; also, what is the timescale for the appointment of the Mayor?

The committee were advised where there are statutory services in place such as transport there are already processes in place for public engagement. The SCR also has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore we will look to work with these existing processes. For the Mayor, there could be the opportunity for a public question time, similar to the monthly audience with the London Mayor. The first Mayoral elections for the Combined Authority will be held in May 2017. It is important to note that the SCR will take a co-ordinating role and will not be the service deliverer.

xxii) Are there any prospective female candidates for the Mayoral position?

Members were advised a lady had been suggested; although, it has since been confirmed she will not be standing. Also, until there is an official job description it is difficult for any potential candidates to make an informed decision.

xxiii) Activities and jobs in the Financial Sector tend to be based in cities; will the deal help us to get these jobs into Barnsley?

The group were advised it is important that parts of the city region don't grow at the expense of others; it is about us all supporting each other. The bulk of financial roles are in Leeds, therefore we won't just be able to move this but we need to think about what kind of jobs we can get in Barnsley such as advanced manufacturing and logistics as we don't currently have the workforce supply for the financial sector.

The Chair thanked the witnesses for their attendance and presentation and extended the acknowledgement from Doncaster Council to Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE regarding appreciation of him giving this presentation there and the detail incorporated.

## 26 Berneslai Homes Annual Report 2014-15

Due to Councillor Ennis' declaration of interest, the committee selected a Chair from the floor. It was proposed and agreed for Councillor Sixsmith to Chair; therefore he introduced the item and welcomed the following witnesses:

- Helen Jaggard, Chief Executive, BH
- Alison Rusdale, Director of Corporate Services, BH
- Stephen Davis, Director of Assets, Regeneration and Construction, BH
- John Townend, Chair of Barnsley Federation of TARAs
- Joan Whittaker, Secretary of the Barnsley Federation of TARAs
- Richard Burnham, Head of Housing and Energy, BMBC
- Councillor Roy Miller, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place, BMBC

Helen Jaggard introduced the Berneslai Homes (BH) Annual Report 2014-15, and highlighted the risks and challenges being faced as outlined in the committee reports. Further to the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) on District Heating, discussed at the OSC on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015, BH reported back on the 4 elements requested by the committee including:

1. All the reductions in the District Heating charges have now been implemented, the last being on the 01.11.15.
2. All of the insulation works recommended in the report were carried out prior to Christmas 2015.
3. BH responded to Councillor Unsworth's enquiry regarding Legionella.
4. BH is continuing to support its tenants with advice on how to use their heating systems efficiently.

Members proceeded to ask the following questions:

- i) As detailed in the report, the BH rent collection rate is high at 98.58%, However, following the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) over 50% of tenants are in arrears, therefore when UC is fully embedded how do you expect this to impact on rent collection and what plans are in place for this?

The committee were advised currently UC is only being awarded to single claimants of working age; at this time it is taking between seven to eight weeks to process their claims and to receive their first payment. For this interim period tenants do not have the financial resources to support their day to day living expenses or for paying their rent. BH is providing support to these tenants through their Tenant Support teams, who will ensure when their tenants receive their backdated payment of UC their rent arrears are cleared.

Following the full roll out of UC to all claimants this will mean BH will have to collect £30m of rent that previously would have been paid to them through Housing Benefit. This could result in the collection rates reducing to 96%, although in some areas of the country the figure has been as low as 70%. There will be constant pressure on BH to chase arrears, therefore we are preparing for this as best we can including encouraging behaviour change from tenants and assisting them to manage their budget. It would be better however if under UC the housing benefit element was paid directly to Berneslai Homes.

- ii) Has there been any publicity to advise BH tenants of the benefits of recycling and also the issues surrounding fly tipping in the borough, including promoting the Council's Bulky Item Collection service of 4 items for £10?

Members were advised this was not one of BH core functions; however, the Housing Management Teams inspect the various estates, and periodically 'walkabouts' are undertaken which have shown the estates to be well maintained. We live on mixed estates however where the issue is from BH tenants, this is addressed. Last year 2500 visits were carried out regarding low level anti-social behaviour (ASB).

- iii) Regarding the future sale of high value properties; are the value of these determined by either an average of local or national house prices?

The group were advised initially BH identified only 10 high value properties that might be affected, however consultation over the government formula would mean many more properties in Barnsley might be classed as high-value with properties above £80k. The Council will have to pay a levy and if the only way to do this is by selling these properties when they become void then it will impact on supply. The national policy is to reduce Council housing as demonstrated by imposing the Right to Buy Scheme on Housing Associations and compensating them in full by forcing Council's to sell their homes to pay for this.

- iv) As detailed in the cover report, from April 2017 tenants with an annual income of £30k will be charged the market rent; how many tenants will be affected and how will you identify them?

'Pay to Stay' relates to people on the tenancy agreement who have a £30K income. We don't currently ask for this information, in the future we can ask but not force it, therefore the government will need to provide guidelines regarding this for example if people refuse to declare their income they will be automatically charged anyway. The government may decide the costs are tapered depending on the household income e.g. the charges will increase the more household income is over the £30K threshold. There is an incorrect assumption that if people can afford the market rent then they can afford to buy a property, which is not the case. Two people on the living wage on a tenancy agreement will be over the £30K limit.

- v) Further to the previous CCfA discussion on District Heating, has all the remedial work now been completed?

The group were advised all the work identified in sections 3 and 6 of the District Heating report has now been completed; however the more extensive works will require capital investment and will need to be undertaken over the long term. This work will be done on a worst-case basis for which there is a funded programme to 2019.

- vi) How confident are you in the arrangements and management of tenancies where BH sub-let to other agencies for people with complex needs; who is responsible for managing these?

Members were advised BH is confident in the arrangements and management of these tenancies. If the property is sub-let to an agency then it is their responsibility to manage any issues, however if they are not doing this then it is upto BH to resolve



this. For all tenancies there is an introductory period therefore we have the opportunity to resolve issues and we try to support people to maintain their tenancies. BH looks after 18,800 properties; this arrangement only relates to a small number of properties.

- vii) Why has Universal Credit (UC) been introduced if the existing system is working?

The committee were advised this was due to a change in legislation as part of the Government's Policy on Welfare Reform. BH has to administer Government Policy, therefore are doing the best they can.

- viii) How can the Council support Berneslai Homes to be more sustainable in relation to the management of its housing stock?

Members were advised BH has a 30 year business plan in place for the management of the 18,800 properties it looks after. Following the increase in the number of successful Right to Buy applications, this has resulted in the need to consider the acquisition of other properties and continued financial investment is required to support this.

- ix) Of the 7037 applicants who are on the waiting list for a BH property, can a breakdown be provided of the type of properties that are needed; also if it will be the persons first home, and whether there is anything the Council can do to help?

The group were advised there has been a significant reduction in the number of people who are waiting as previously there had been 9000 on the waiting list. Of those currently waiting, there are only 100 applicants who are in absolute housing need. BH confirmed they will be able to provide a breakdown of the types of properties that are needed by those currently on their waiting list to the committee.

- x) What procedures are in place to prevent the duplication of work between BH and Area Councils such as the removal of litter and fly tipping?

Members were advised BH did not consider there was any duplication of duties due to them undertaking their own enforcement procedures, such as ensuring people maintain their gardens, as well as their own referral of cases to Neighbourhood Pride. Also, each of the housing management teams undertake youth engagement to educate them e.g. regarding litter, to prevent issues occurring in the first place.

Existing budgets fund the cost of activities such as grass cutting and the removal of graffiti; however this does not extend to litter picking unless the request is made through the steering committee. BH advised litter picking only occurs as part of the regular grass cutting cycles, there are no separate litter picks. BH confirmed they would check their processes to make sure there was no duplication in relation to Neighbourhood Pride Services.

- xi) The intention of the Government is to reduce the influence of local authorities on the social rented sector; does the BH Business Plan take account of this?

The committee were advised the BH business plan has been remodelled since the rent reduction in July and with consideration for the increase in Right to Buys; therefore BH will have to make substantial savings to deal with these financial challenges.

- xii) Can we have information regarding how many 4 bedroom properties we have and how many people are on the housing waiting list for them?

BH confirmed that they would provide this information.

- xiii) Does the sale price of a house bought under the Right to Buy scheme reflect the condition of the property?

Members were advised that every property is individually valued and if there have been any improvements made to the property, the sale price would reflect this.

- xiv) The annual report confirms 361 eviction warrants were applied for but only 40 tenants were evicted; why is this the case?

The committee were advised BH only evicts tenants as a last resort. The majority of evictions are in relation to rent arrears, we take cases to court but evictions are not granted lightly. We should pride ourselves on a low number of evictions as this means we are managing tenancies effectively.

- xv) If BH tenants are not being socially responsible in relation to the disposal of their household rubbish and damaged bins, what action can be taken?

Members were advised if there is evidence to support this, letters are sent and we speak to tenants to ask them to address the situation; although ultimately it depends on the engagement and cooperation of the tenant.

- xvi) Is the Government legislating for any additional funding for social housing?

The group were advised currently there is no additional funding available; despite the cost of an average new build property being £120k. BH is looking to source alternative funding to continue future development programmes.

- xvii) Due to the Government changes including forced sales of council houses, we will be looking for Housing Associations to build more homes. Their rent prices however are still more expensive; therefore will this result in more people being homeless?

The committee were advised the change in the Government's policy will reduce the number of affordable properties and it appears affordable housing is a government blind spot. Not all private landlords are bad however they are not as well regulated as ALMOs (Arms Length Management Organisations). Therefore we increasingly need to ensure the private rented sector is well managed and maximise outcomes from the Housing Planning Bill.

- xviii) Can you draw on funding from partners such as the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), and Health and Wellbeing Board to protect the most vulnerable?

The group were advised the Chief Executive of BH chairs the wellbeing provider forum and advised the dialogue between the health and housing sector is taking place. For example BH is involved in work looking at a social prescribing scheme.

- xix) John Townend, Chair of Barnsley Federation of TARAs raised concerns to the committee regarding the government removing secure tenancies and asked if in their role as Members they could encourage the government not to remove these?

Cllr Roy Miller advised that a motion had been taken at Full Council to take concerns regarding changes in the Housing Sector to MPs in Parliament, including the local MP John Healey who is the Shadow Minister for Housing and Planning.

The Chair thanked the witnesses and all attendees for their contribution.

## **27 Draft Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2014-15**

Cllr Ennis resumed the role of Chair for the meeting and welcomed the following witnesses:

- Mel John-Ross, Service Director, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, BMBC
- Liz Gibson, Head of Virtual School for Looked after Children, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson - People (Safeguarding)
- Cllr Ralph Sixsmith, Dearne South Ward
- Natalie Chappell, Barnsley Foster Carer

An introduction was given by Mel John-Ross, who explained following the agreement at the OSC meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) Annual Report would be discussed at the OSC on an annual basis. This is to enable participation from Members who are not directly involved with the CPP. The key elements of the report were also outlined.

Members proceeded to ask the following questions:

- i) What plans are in place to improve the educational attainment of our children in care?

The committee were advised, Liz Gibson has recently been appointed as the Head of Virtual School for Looked after Children to help in improving their educational achievements. We now have a dedicated post which means we can move the service forward, but we are still under-resourced. An Education Improvement Steering Group has specifically been set up to challenge the quality of the Personal Education Plans (PEPs). Also, in her new role, Liz Gibson is analysing existing data and looking at ways to move things forward and ensure the best possible outcomes as soon as a child enters care.

- ii) To what extent is the voice of our children in care reflected in both the design and improvement of services?

Members were advised that children need to be at the forefront of any changes, as they are the ones who are directly affected. The Children's Council enables their

involvement but we need to also ensure children can input on a day to day basis, therefore the service want to come back to Members with a clear plan of how this will be done.

- iii) As Foster Carers how do you view the provision for our children and ensuring they receive appropriate services and are you satisfied with the support you get as a carer?

The group were advised foster carers act as the biggest advocates to make sure children get what they want and also talk amongst each other to find out what options may be available. We also speak to schools on a regular basis and push schools for what we want for our children. We have a support worker and have had a very positive experience of caring in Barnsley and have found we can get what we need when we push for services.

- iv) In comparing Barnsley to our statistical neighbours, we are aware a number of children are cared for by extended family networks; does this account for our low numbers in care?

The group were advised this is a very important issue and we have challenged assumptions regarding these figures. There were 244 children in care at the end of 2014/15 and as of today we have 279. We have been reviewing our Placement and Sufficiency Strategy and acknowledge we have a high number of Special Guardianship Orders and Residency Orders which prevents children from coming into care. The Orders are still a cost to us financially; however it is cheaper than having children in care.

- v) The figure in relation to children missing from care is very high and has increased, is this as a result of a change to the definition and recording?

The committee were advised the figures in the Annual Report indicate there has been an increase in the number of cases; however, confirmed this is due to there being a change in how these incidents are recorded and also the definition.

Every incident is now recorded, rather than every child who goes missing; therefore, there could be several incidents, but these could all relate to the same child. The incidents are monitored on a monthly basis and a care plan is implemented for each case. Also, in the majority of instances when a child is missing their whereabouts are usually known, normally it is just they are not in the place where they should be at a given time; which can often happen with teenagers.

There are often more incidents of children 'going missing' from residential care, than those who are placed with foster carers; these could be children who are from outside the Barnsley area and particularly initially want to return home, however there is always a care plan in place to track this and do something about it.

- vi) What is done to ensure that Barnsley children in care, who are placed out of the area, receive high quality services?

Members were advised wherever possible the preference is for children to be situated in care facilities within the borough, when this is not appropriate the care providers used will be Ofsted rated, either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. There will also be an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and qualified Social Worker to provide additional support and challenge the support being given to the child.

- vii) Of the number of children who have 'gone missing' from residential care, how many were residents of Barnsley and how many were from outside the borough?

The service confirmed this information can be provided to the members of the committee.

- viii) Does the service feel the CPP provides sufficient challenge to services?

The committee were advised following the Ofsted inspection, the terms of reference for the CPP have been reviewed and as officers, we feel we are now getting more appropriate support and challenge from the CPP. The start time of CPP meetings has also been altered to 5.00pm to enable our young people in care to attend.

- ix) The Annual Report indicates there has been a reduction in youth offending by Looked after Children and hopefully we will see the rate fall lower for children in care than other children?

The group were advised the reduction in youth offending is positive and our aim is to continue to make improvements in this area.

- x) Substance and drug abuse rates have fallen amongst young people in the area, is this mirrored amongst children in care?

The committee were advised that this is a broad area. In relation to children in care we ensure health assessments are done and that health needs are met. This includes taking a holistic approach, picking up issues and ensuring they are addressed.

- xi) How successful were the events to promote foster caring in the Borough and what other plans are in place to do this in the future?

Members were advised there have been recent high profile campaigns which included the fountains adjacent to the Town Hall being illuminated green. Currently 20 prospective new foster carers are being assessed, which is a priority for the service. We need to increase the number of in-house foster carers which is a challenge as we are in competition from private fostering agencies and other local authorities.

- xii) What are the procedures for children from neighbouring authorities who are placed in care facilities within the Barnsley borough?

The group were advised under these circumstances the relevant authority must notify the Council when the child is placed in the accommodation and similarly when they leave. In Barnsley, due to our high number of private homes and private foster carers we've set up a meeting of private providers to gather intelligence from them. The meeting is chaired by Children's Social Care plus this is attended by others including the Virtual Head, the Police and Health Service representatives.

- xiii) How are Looked after Children with mental health problems supported in Barnsley?

Members were advised Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have long waiting lists for assessments; however the timescales involved have been challenged by partners including the Council's Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee

(SSC). There have been improvements in the timescales, however this is an issue for all children and our Looked After Children need to be prioritised. The improvement plan for CAMHS is still in progress.

The Chair suggested that representatives from the Children in Care Council are invited as witnesses to attend when the CPP Annual Report is next brought to the committee; thanked the witnesses and all attendees for their contribution and declared the meeting closed.

#### Action Points

- 1) BH to provide a breakdown of the types of properties that are needed by those currently on their housing waiting list.
- 2) BH to check their processes in relation to Neighbourhood Pride services to check there is no duplication.
- 3) BH to provide information regarding how many 4 bedroom properties we have and how many people are on the housing waiting list for them.
- 4) Once complete, service to share with Members their plan for ensuring children in care can input into service improvement.
- 5) The service to provide a breakdown of the number of children who have 'gone missing' from care regarding how many were from Barnsley and how many were from outside the borough.
- 6) Representatives from the Children in Care Council to be invited to the OSC as witnesses when the CPP Annual Report is next considered by the committee.