

Children's Select Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2023 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Helen Belcher OBE, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Carole King, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Jo Trigg, Cllr Mark Verbinnen, Dr Mike Thompson, Nikki Barnett, John Hawkins and Cllr Trevor Carbin (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Bridget Wayman and Cllr Suzanne Wickham

21 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Jacqui Lay
- Cllr Antonio Piazza
- Cllr Kathryn Macdermid – Substituted by Cllr Trevor Carbin

22 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 17 January 2023, as a true and correct record, subject to the declaration of interest by Cllr Jo Trigg being amended to read that she was currently the Vice- Chair of governors at John of Gaunt School, Trowbridge but from 1 April will become a trustee of Equa Multi Academy Trust.

23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

24 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. On behalf of the Committee, he extended condolences to the friends and family of Helen Jones, who contributed a great deal to the Committee over the years and will be greatly missed.

2. On behalf of the Committee, he extended condolences to the friends and family of Roger Bishton, who was institution in Democratic Services and employed by the council or county council for longer than most Councillors. Roger was a fount of knowledge in all things committee related and with a particular dedication to school admission appeals. He supported this committee for years and will be fondly remembered.
3. He congratulated Jen Salter for her permanent appointment as Director - Families & Children and on behalf of the Committee, was looking forward to carrying on working with her.

25 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

26 **Regular updates**

Members were reminded that they had the opportunity to submit questions in advance of the meeting.

26a Update from Wiltshire Youth Voice Representative

The Chair thanked officers for the report and suggested that councillors encourage the schools in their area to take part in eco week 2023 as only 14 schools have signed up so far. He also congratulated Cora, one of the Council's Voice Consultants who presented the Annual Corporate Parenting Panel at the recent Full Council meeting.

The Chair was keen for this committee to see some of the outcomes of the activities taking place such as the mystery shopper for the integrated front door and collecting families' voice included in the Child and Youth Voice annual report.

26b School Ofsted Judgements

The Committee received an update from officers which included information about the most recent Ofsted Inspection reports, which presented an ongoing view of the effectiveness of schools as seen by Ofsted Inspection.

The Chairman suggested that Andrew Best could provide a short presentation on the changes and what they mean for schools and the council and comment on some of the themes being picked up and the key areas of focus for the ungraded inspection. The Chairman also suggested that the inspection outcomes table split the inspection between graded and ungraded for ease of reading / analysing and greying out the results that have already been discussed by the Committee so that new inspections are clearer to read.

The Head of School Effectiveness confirmed that there is investment in reading material in schools, and these are purchased 'at cost', however, there is an issue of the reading material matching the material pupils wished to read.

26c DfE Changes - Update from Department for Education

Officers were thanked for the report and adding the Wiltshire element.

The Corporate Director People agreed to highlight the issue of the location of defibrillators in schools.

27 Schools Forum

The Committee received a brief update highlighting key items from the last meeting of Schools Forum.

28 Corporate Parenting Panel

The Committee received a brief update highlighting key items from the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Chairman welcomed Cllr Peter Hutton – Portfolio holder for Safeguarding, who commented on Full Council considering the Annual Report at their meeting in February 2023 and noted that there would be a further report in May/June 2023. He also commented on a recent open day at Canons House, and that there would be an opportunity for future visits for Councillors.

29 Directors' update

Corporate Director People

The Corporate Director reported that a Panel of young people were involved in the recent interview process for the new Director Families and Children, and their contribution was a very positive experience for all.

Director of Families and Children

The Chairman welcomed Jen Salter, new Director of Families and Children to the meeting and congratulated her on the new appointment, wishing her well for the future.

The Director reported on the recent appointment of Head of Service who would provide invaluable insight for the development and improvements to current practices. The Director referred to a Ofsted inspection of Canons House during 2022 which resulted in a 'requires improvement' outcome. A number of Ofsted recommendations were implemented and during a further review in February 2023, no further issues were raised apart from a few minor recommendations. It was expected that a further graded inspection would take place later in 2023.

The Committee noted that the Trowbridge Resource Centre had recently been refurbished.

Director Education and Skills

The Director reported that Salisbury Academy was being refurbished and that pupils were being taught in alternative accommodation around the city until January 2024.

The Committee noted that the number of places at Silverwood School and Downlands were expanding.

The Directors then responded to comments and questions on the following issues:

- The publication and distribution of school data to primary schools – The Committee noted that schools would normally receive this information annually. The Director for Education and Skills confirmed that she would follow this up.
- The Children’s Homes contract is currently out for tender, with sites expected to open by the end of 2023.
- Alternative Provision places were available for schools to sign again with a closure date of March 2023, there were some minor changes. It was suggested that the draft strategy could be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.
- The Council would be commissioning providers to run two new three bed children’s homes on behalf of the Council.

The Chairman thanked the Directors for their updates.

30 **Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holders' update**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills commented on a recent visit to Great Cheverell Primary School was classed as outstanding by Ofsted and recognised the top-quality teaching and exceptional leadership at the school. She also referred to the recent LGA Peer Review and acknowledged the positive comments contained in the Peer Review final report.

31 **Chair's update**

The Chairman reported that he would be attending a People’s Voice conference in Manchester and he would provide an update at a future meeting.

32 **Independent Care Review of Children's Social Care and National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson**

The Committee received a report about the Councils considerations of the findings and recommendations of the independent care review of Children’s Social care and National review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, Director of Families and Children, and Principal Social Worker introduced the report. They explained that the review of the children's social care system in England was commissioned by the government in March 2021, with the findings being divided into key sections as detailed in the report.

It was noted that in Wiltshire, the Director of Families and Children's Services held the statutory responsibility for children's services, and the former Director of Children's Services led a piece of work to understand what the recommendations would mean at a local level, based on current practices as well as local views on the recommendations from each of the reviews referred to above. These views on the recommendations were detailed in the report. Since this work was undertaken the Department for Education published the new Children's Social Care Strategy – Stable Homes, Built on Love alongside the National Framework currently out for consultation until 11 May 2023, with the government responding formally to both reviews at a later stage.

Officers responded to comments and questions raised by the Committee on the following issues:

- The support offered to children in addition to that currently provided by a social worker, and the impact of national recruitment challenges.
- The use of agency staff covers the Councils vacancy rate of 17% in this area, which is comparative to the national average and Council average.
- The Risk Outside the Home pilot has been extended and continues to be developed, with the Council deciding if it wishes to be part of the pilot.
- Meetings were being held with practitioners and staff

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Resolved:

To note the report and the position of the Families and Children's Services and await a further discussion once the government has responded formally to both reviews.

33 **"Shaping the future" programme with schools**

The Committee received a report about 'Shaping the Future' programme with schools.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, Director of Education and Skills, and Head of School Effectiveness introduced the report.

The Committee noted that report worked through a timeline of activity in relation to how the Council worked with the system to shape the future. It covered initially both contextual information and key activity taken place between the summer 2022 and spring 2023, with more detail about principles and approach

of the new school improvement framework for maintained schools and a narrative on the Wiltshire Learning Alliance.

Officers responded to comments and questions raised by the Committee on the following issues:

- Information about the current status of schools is being collated on a regional level and it was confirmed that no school in Wiltshire will be isolated by September 2023 and they will benefit from being part of a strong Multi-Academy Trust.
- The local authority are supporting school leaders and governors of both maintained and academy schools, who engaged with the process and attended road shows about the future proposals.
- Schools were considering all options moving forward and it was acknowledged that they would be stronger working together, both in an academic and financial sense.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Resolved:

To note the update.

34 **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)**

The Head of School Effectiveness introduced the Standing Advisory Council on Religious education (SACRE) Annual Report 2021/22 and provided some background information of the work of SACRE.

The Committee noted the following background information about SACRE:

1. SACREs have responsibility for advising a Local Authority (LA) on its schools. In the 1944 Education Act, each local education authority was empowered to set up a SACRE but not compelled to do so. However, in the 1988 Education Act the setting up of a SACRE was made compulsory.
2. A SACRE is a part of local government, and its principal function is to advise the local authority on matters related to Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools.
3. The Wiltshire SACRE is represented by members who are interested in education in general and religious education in particular. The membership is allocated to four groups as follows:
 - Group A: Christian denominations, other religions, religious denominations and non-religious world view
 - Group B: Church of England
 - Group C: Teacher and school representatives
 - Group D: The Local Authority
 - SACRE officers

- Co-opted members

The Committee noted that the Annual report is shared with key partners and the Secretary of State, and their annual conference is held on 3 February 2023. Details of attendee numbers would be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

The report indicated that Bristol Diocese charged £10,300 for the role of the SACRE Advisory to help deliver the SACRE curriculum for Wiltshire Schools, and this is considered to be good value for money when compared to other local authorities. The Committee noted that the Wire Award, which recognises excellence in Religious Education, is being encouraged through regular headteachers meetings.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Resolved:

That the next annual report from SACRE be presented to the Standing Task Group to enable development of the cover report to ensure a “standalone” report.

35

Performance Outcomes Report Academic Year 2021-2022 - Pupil Performance in Public Tests and Examinations

The Committee considered a report about performance outcomes for 2021-22, introduced by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills, Director of Education and Skills, and Head of School Effectiveness.

Officers informed the Committee that the report contained high level data enabling members to view the performance outcomes from ages 5-19. The report summarised each phase of education and compared Wiltshire Council to other local authorities. It was noted that performance in Wiltshire is similar to the national picture for all pupils with slightly stronger performance in the Early Years and later in Post 16, but with a dip in Key Stage 2.

Officers responded to comments and questions raised by the Committee on the following issues:

- Impacts on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is a priority for the Council especially the challenge to improve outcomes for this group.
- The role of Scrutiny in undertaking research into challenging themes.
- The variation of performance between schools and the possibility of comparing these with Ofsted reports.
- The effect of Covid on performance figures is noted and impacted every local authority and issues would need to be addressed at KS2.
- Year on year comparisons of performance would be useful especially the percentage of disadvantaged pupils who are also SEND.

- Pupil Premium spend is monitored by school governors.
- How performance statistics are compiled and whether they are filtered to highlight differing trends.

The Chairman thanked officers for their report.

Resolved:

To review the gap between disadvantaged learners and the national average.

36 **Executive Response to the Rapid Scrutiny on High Needs Block Funding**

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at their last meeting on 17 January 2023 they considered the Executive Response to the Rapid Scrutiny on High Needs Block Funding, which included a number of recommendations. These recommendations were verbally agreed at the last meeting, however a written Executive response is required as a way of formally concluding the review.

It was noted that the written Executive response would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee in June 2023.

37 **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee received the latest version of their Forward Plan and the strategy list for the Children, Education and Skills Directorate. The following updates were suggested:

- To add an item on performance results for consideration in January / February 2024
- To add an item on attendance of pupils – date to be agreed

Resolved:

To note the Committee's Forward Plan and agree that the additional items detailed above be added to the Plan.

38 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 6 June at 10:30am.

The chairman also noted that it was likely that the date for the committee's meeting, scheduled for 20 September, will move to Thursday 21 September at 10.30am.. This would be confirmed in due course.

39 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

40 **Glossary**

The glossary was noted.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.25 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Stuart Figini of Democratic Services,
direct line 01225 718221, e-mail stuart.figini@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line 01225 713114 or email
communications@wiltshire.gov.uk