

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2010 AT COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Paul Darby, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Mrs J Finney, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Mr N Owen, Cllr Pip Ridout, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE and Cllr Alan Macrae

102. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Davis and Mrs Di Dale.

Mr Rob Rees, Assistant Principal of Wiltshire College, attended on behalf of Mrs Di Dale.

103. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2010 were approved and signed as a correct record.

104. **Declarations of Interests**

Mr Neil Owen declared a personal interest in Item 8 – Laverstock Schools Update, as a governor at St Edmunds School, Laverstock.

105. **Chairman's Announcements**

1) **Scrutiny of Budget & Performance**

On 16 September, the Organisation and Resources Select Committee agreed to disband the Budget & Performance Task Group leaving each select committee to decide the best approach to scrutinising budget and performance issues within their individual areas.

It was agreed that all future agendas would include a standing item providing an update on DCE's budget and performance status. Budget and performance monitoring reports to Cabinet would be circulated in hard copy to all members of the Committee when published. Members were asked to submit any specific questions on these reports in advance of the Committee meeting wherever possible.

Resolved that:

- 1) **Committee members would receive budget and performance monitoring reports in line with the Cabinet cycle, allowing them to submit individual queries or request full reports to Committee through the Chairman and scrutiny officer as necessary.**
- 2) **The Committee would establish rapid scrutiny exercises as necessary to undertake detailed scrutiny of budget and performance data.**
- 2) Appointment of a Committee representative to attend the Children & Young People's Trust Board.

The Committee representative previously appointed to the Trust Board, Cllr Jon Hubbard, had been unable to attend the meetings due to work commitments. A new representative was therefore required.

Cllr Helen Osborn was appointed as the Committee's new representative with Cllr Mary Douglas acting as substitute when required.

- 3) Visit to the new Melksham Oak School

Any members of the Committee interested in attending this visit were asked to contact the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Cllr Andrew Davis and Mr Neil Owen expressed their interest.

106. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

107. **Coalition Proposals for Children's Services and Education**

The Corporate Director, DCE, presented a report providing details of the coalition government's latest proposals in relation to children's services and education.

In addition to the report, a further 'call for views' document was circulated providing details of the Department for Education's (DfE) Green Paper: Children and Young People With Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

A proposal was made that members of the SEN Review rapid scrutiny exercise, plus the Vice-Chairman, undertake a rapid scrutiny exercise to respond to the Green Paper.

The following points were discussed:

- In response to the reduction in Area Based Grants, the Council was considering numerous contracts held with both the voluntary sector and within the Council on services offered as part of the Commissioning Strategy for Parenting & Family Support. The Strategy, which was still in draft form, would be presented to the Committee for consideration.
- Hardenhuish School, Chippenham was the only Wiltshire school so far to be given academy status under the new academies programme. A positive working relationship remained between the school and the local authority during the transition period. Further schools within Wiltshire had expressed their interest in becoming academies. There would be further announcements in January 2011.
- A school's transition to academy status placed temporary additional strain on Council resources. Once the transition was complete administrative costs might potentially reduce because academies would take responsibility for some services currently provided by the local authority. However the local authority would also lose the funding to provide these services.
- The Sarum Academy in Salisbury had its opening ceremony on 22 September 2010. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services was due to meet with John Glen, MP for Salisbury, and would be encouraging him to visit the Salisbury High School buildings to gain an understanding of what the Council would like to achieve with a new build for Sarum Academy.
- The Secretary of State had asked Professor Alison Wolf to undertake a review of vocational education for 14-19 year olds. It was understood that her report would be completed by 2011 and members would be kept informed of its findings.
- The Council had not been badly affected by the reduction of the End Year Flexibility (EYF) funding from DfE, although clarification was provided that the Harnessing Technology Grant was expected to cease following receipt of the Quarter 2 payment to schools.
- The deprivation indicator used to calculate the pupil premium was now likely to include military families, a large number of which live in Wiltshire.

- A written briefing would be provided to the Committee on the implications of the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF), which all local authorities would be required to introduce from April 2011.
- Cllr Mary Douglas expressed concern that the Committee had not received the new Family & Parenting Support Commissioning Strategy, which it had requested at its previous meeting. It was reported that, following discussion with the Chairman, the Placements for LAC Task Group had received the Strategy instead, as this allowed scrutiny of the Strategy prior to final Cabinet approval. It was agreed that in future all Committee members would be notified if an item was to be considered by a Task Group instead of the full Committee.

Resolved:

To note the update report.

108. **16-19 Learning - Update on Transfer of Responsibility from LSC to LA**

In March, the Committee received a report on the transition of responsibility for 16-19 learning from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to the Local Authority from 1 April 2010.

The Head of Secondary and Special School Improvement presented an update report providing details of the progress made by the Council since taking on its new responsibilities.

It was clarified that the coalition government had amended the responsibilities discussed in March. The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) was now responsible for making financial payments to General Further Education providers, Sixth Form Colleges and other training providers, though the local authority remained the body responsible for funding maintained school sixth forms. Local authorities also retained responsibility for commissioning 16-19 education, but the YPLA held the budgets and contracts and made the payments. The previous national commissioning framework would no longer apply although clarification was yet to be received on what would replace it.

The Special Purpose Grant for supporting the costs associated with transferring staff to the Council formed part of the Area Based Grant and could therefore be subject to a reduction. This was being monitored by DCE.

Ensuing discussion included:

- That DCE continued to work with local providers to reduce the number of learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities needing to travel outside of Wiltshire to access provision.

- As part of the funding reductions this year, development money for post 16s (a national fund) had been removed. There was therefore an increased need to work closely with providers to ensure a correct match of placements to the needs of young people.
- Members expressed concern that the Council's ability to fulfil its strategic role of commissioning training providers could be hindered because funding was held by the YPLA. The constantly changing arrangements for funding were also considered to be generally unhelpful. It was agreed that these concerns should be relayed to the Secretary of State.
- It was hoped that further clarity on the role of the local authority would be provided following budgetary announcements in October/early November by central government.
- At present, many students travel out of the county to receive further education, including the south of the County, where the provision sought was not perceived as being available.
- In September, the Committee agreed to submit a letter to the Secretary of State expressing the Committee's concerns regarding funding arrangements for further education. Cllr Hubbard confirmed that he had met with the Head of School Improvement and would be meeting again after the meeting to finalise the letter. This would be circulated to all Committee members for comment prior to despatch.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the update provided.**
- 2) That a letter would be submitted to the Secretary of State expressing the Committee's concerns regarding the funding arrangements for further education.**

109. Laverstock Schools - Update

In March the Committee noted the collaborative working taking place between St Josephs Catholic School, St Edmunds Church of England Girls School and Wyvern College in Laverstock. There was concern, however, that there remained no solution to the poor condition of the school buildings. A site visit was subsequently arranged to aid members' understanding of the issue.

The Head of Secondary and Special School Improvement presented a report detailing the visit and the latest position regarding the schools' status.

Ensuing discussion included:

- There remained aspirations for a sixth form on the Laverstock site. Approximately 1,500 pupils attend the three schools and many other Wiltshire schools with similar sized budgets have sixth form facilities.
- Some refurbishment work had been undertaken but that the condition of the school buildings overall was unsatisfactory.
- Most of the pupils the members spoke to indicated that they would not be remaining in Salisbury to receive further education but would travel out of county.
- Parking remained a problem within the Laverstock schools area. It was agreed that this was an Area Board issue.
- It was agreed that provision of further education in the Salisbury area might benefit from further scrutiny by the Committee. A task group was established to focus on this area. It was noted that a sub-group of the Children & Young People's Trust Board had been established to consider the strategic approach to this provision across Wiltshire and that any task group should maintain close ties with this body.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the update**
- 2) **To establish a task group to consider further education provision in the Salisbury area. A representative from the Trust Board strategic approach sub-group would be invited to attend the Task Group's meetings and close working would be maintained between the two groups.**

110. **Executive Response to the Recommendations of the Review of SEN Provision Rapid Scrutiny Exercise**

In July, members undertook a rapid scrutiny exercise to consider the Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The recommendations from the exercise were endorsed by the Committee and subsequently submitted to Cabinet for consideration alongside the final recommendations of the Review of SEN Provision on 27 July.

The Executive response to the rapid scrutiny's recommendations was presented by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

Ensuing discussion included clarification that any financial savings made as part of the SEN review were to be reinvested into SEN provision and that there was

a need for the Committee to receive further information on the transition of service from one provision to another.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the Executive response to the Review of SEN Provision Rapid Scrutiny Exercise.**
- 2) To monitor implementation of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise's recommendations by receiving regular updates and the reports already requested within the rapid scrutiny group's final report.**

111. **Social Care Update**

The following updates were provided:

a) **Social Care Team Restructure - update**

A progress report on the restructuring of Children and Families Social Care was presented by the Service Director for Children and Families. This provided details of the early indications of the impact on service delivery.

New processes and systems were now in place and feedback received to date had been positive. A positive difference to the service was likely to be fully realised within the next six months.

b) **Summary Report on Allocation and Vacancies in Children and Families Social Care**

A report on case allocations and workforce vacancies within Children's Services was presented by the Service Director for Children and Families.

The report incorporated the recommendations made within the Laming Report following the death of Victoria Climbié in the London Borough of Hackney. These included strengthened and improved reporting arrangements within local authorities in respect of staff recruitment and workload arrangements.

Clarification was provided as follows:

- The vacancy level within the team had remained at between 3% to 4%.
- The recruitment campaign had been successful with only 1.5 social work posts vacant at present. Although newly qualified social workers (approximately 20) were unable to work with statutory cases in their

first year, the new recruitments would improve the service provided by the Council.

c) Ofsted Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment

A report on the Ofsted assessment of the performance of the children's social care contact, referral and assessment services within Wiltshire was presented by the Service Director for Children and Families, DCE.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of these arrangements and the impact they had on child abuse and neglect.

The feedback received from the Inspector was complimentary in terms of the structure of the duty and referral teams. Two areas highlighted for further attention were the lack of administration posts on the duty desk where there were now 2 new posts and the second related to training for new recruits. Additional training in September and October had been established.

The department was expected to have addressed all the areas for development reported by Ofsted by the end of 2010.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the content of the Social Care Restructure update report;**
- 2) **To note the update on case allocations and workforce vacancies within Children's Services; and**
- 3) **To note the results of Ofsted's assessment of children's social care contact, referral and assessment services within Wiltshire, and the actions in progress to rectify identified areas for development.**

112. Role of Schools Forum

Following a request made by Cllr Helen Osborn, the Corporate Director for DCE presented a report on the role of the Schools Forum. Mr Neil Baker, Chairman of the Schools Forum and Headteacher of Christ Church C of E Primary School attended to answer any questions arising.

Ensuing discussion included that Councillors would be welcomed to attend and observe the Schools Forum. The Forum had recently been reconstituted to reflect changes in legislation and a representative from a Wiltshire academy would be offered membership.

Resolved:

To note the report.

113. **Task Group Update**

An update on the Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group was included on the Agenda cover sheet.

Resolved:

To note the update.

114. **Holding the Executive to Public Account**

The Committee noted the items to be considered by Cabinet, Corporate Parenting Panel and Schools Forum relevant to children's services.

Resolved:

To note the items in the Cabinet, Corporate Parenting Panel and Schools Forum forward work programmes listed in the Agenda.

115. **Forward Work Programme**

The Committee's Forward Work Programme was provided for consideration.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme.

116. **Date of Next Meeting**

10.30am, 25 November 2010.

117. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.05 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Sharon Smith, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 718378, e-mail sharonl.smith@wiltshire.gov.uk

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