

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

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### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2011 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

#### **Present:**

Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Helen Osborn, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cllr Alan Macrae and Cllr Sheila Parker

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#### 147. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Bill Moss and Mr Neil Owen.

#### 148. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed and approved as a correct record.

#### 149. **Declarations of Interests**

No declarations of interest were received.

#### 150. **Chairman's Announcements**

##### 1. **DCE Restructuring**

In January 2010, the Committee received details of DCE's new staffing structure following recent budget cuts. Following the meeting, John Hawkins, teacher representative, expressed concern that the matter had been raised under Chairman's announcements rather than under a separate agenda item.

Mr Hawkins subsequently met with the Corporate Director for DCE and several other officers to discuss his concerns. Mr Hawkins thanked the

officers for answering his questions, but asked the Committee to continue to monitor the impact of the cuts.

The Chairman noted that it was not within the remit of the Committee to scrutinise organisational structures but that officers had agreed to keep the Committee informed on the matter.

## 2. Deferred Items

The Small Schools Strategy was deferred in November 2010 whilst the Committee awaited clarification on the national policy. Although this was now beginning to emerge, the next few months were likely to provide more clarity on the direction that officers should take. A report would be considered at the Committee's meeting in June 2011.

### 151. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

### 152. Coalition Changes – DCE update

The Corporate Director for the Department for Children and Education introduced an update report on the latest changes from central government.

Members were asked to note the interim report by Graham Allen MP, 'Early Intervention: The Next Steps', the recommendations of which were circulated at the meeting.

A summary of Professor Eileen Munro's interim report on child protection was given. The final report would be produced in April 2011.

The Government's green paper, 'Support and Aspirations: A New Approach to Special Education Needs and Disability' was circulated. The Committee had previously agreed to undertake a rapid scrutiny task group giving a response to this consultation document. The paper was likely to lead to a more parent-focused system and include a single assessment process resulting in a single plan for the life of a young person up to age 25. The revised system was also expected to address the current situation where children who may simply have fallen behind are classified as having SEN through the designations of School Action and School Action Plus.

The Committee was asked to note that the Green Paper had referred to Wiltshire Council as an example of good practice, highlighting the positive work undertaken by the Department.

Ensuing discussion also included sixth form provision and the role of the English baccalaureate. Clarification was provided that the Department

continued to seek any funding that may be available through Central Government.

It was reported that further national funding was being made available to sixth form colleges, but Wiltshire would not receive any as it has no sixth form colleges. Members asked officers to explore whether further education colleges could receive a proportion of this funding.

It was estimated that by September 2011 approximately half of Wiltshire's secondary schools could be academies. Although there was an assumption that most academies would take over the services previously provided for them by the Council, several had expressed an interest in retaining the Council's support. It was noted that at present schools transferring to academy status were unable to transfer back to local authority control for seven years.

**Resolved**

**To note the update.**

153. **Budget & Performance monitoring**

A condensed version of the most recent Cabinet budget monitoring and performance reports, with information relating specifically to DCE, were circulated.

It was reported that following Central Government's announcement regarding the cessation of the previous indicator sets, DCE continued to investigate its own alternatives for monitoring performance.

**Resolved:**

**To note the latest budget and performance data in relation to DCE.**

154. **Transition Planning - update**

The Joint Service Director for Commissioning & Performance presented a report updating on progress to ensure effective transition from children's to adult's services. The Committee had last received a report in March 2010, when the focus had been on the implementation of the Multi-Agency Transition Protocol over the next 3 years.

The Chairman asked members to note that Transitions also fell within the scope of a systems thinking review of services for disabled children and adults, which formed part of the overarching corporate plan to achieve savings of £21.3m over the next four years. The Committee was asked to take this into consideration when setting its future work programme.

The Transitions Protocol, established following the Joint Area Review in 2008, had been recognised as representing good practice and had, as a result, also been adopted by other authorities. Specific note was made to the pilot of the Person Centred Reviews, which focused on the young person and their wishes and aspirations.

To support the Protocol it was important to ensure information was easily accessible to parents. This had been achieved through transitional events, web-based information and the publication of a handbook for parents.

Concerns were expressed over the attainment gap for children receiving free school meals and those with SEN where gaps had widened at both KS2 and KS4. To address this, the Department had implemented an intervention programme targeted at ages 5 to 6, which included one-to-one support. Results were already showing a significant improvement in attainment levels and the Corporate Director proposed that a future paper be submitted to the Committee providing further details of this work.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note progress made on Transition Planning.**
- 2. That the Committee be kept informed of progress with the corporate review of services for disabled children.**

**155. Scrutiny of the Business Plan 2011 – 2015**

In February 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Liaison Board requested that the four Select Committees refer to the Council's recently adopted 4 year Business Plan in order to set their individual work programmes.

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a report identifying the content in the Business Plan that fell within the remit of the Committee. Following discussion, members agreed to the proposed methods for scrutinising each area.

Members also agreed that future agendas would include a framework providing detail on how the Committee was progressing with scrutinising each area.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note that Council on 22 February 2011 adopted the 4 year Business Plan on recommendation from Cabinet;**
- 2. To note the decision of the Overview & Scrutiny Liaison Board on 10 February that work be undertaken to identify relevant content from the Business Plan for the individual select committees;**

3. **To agree the list of themes set out within the report but to acknowledge that further refinement would be made when more details emerged; and**
4. **To recognise the budget implications and demands on the leading scrutiny members in determining priorities and workload.**

156. **Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented a report recapping on the work done by the Task Group since its formation in March 2010 and proposing its future direction.

The Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group was originally established to consider the new Commissioning Plan for Looked After Children (LAC), with an initial expectation that only one meeting would be required. Due to the variety of issues and services that are relevant to children in care, a further four meetings were held. These had enabled members of the Task Group to gain a good understanding of the challenges faced by LAC and those providing services or caring for them. At its meeting in February 2011, members of the Task Group had unanimously agreed that the Task Group should continue its work.

The Portfolio Holder for Schools reiterated the need for the Task Group to continue its work, particularly as the Corporate Parenting Panel had changed its approach and would no longer be undertaking 'scrutiny' work. Officers also confirmed that scrutiny involvement had proved beneficial to the Department.

**Resolved:**

**To agree that the Placements for LAC Task Group continue its work with the terms of reference listed in paragraph 11 of the report and that it retain the current membership.**

157. **Task Group update**

Updates on the work undertaken by individual Task Groups was provided with the Agenda with the following additional information provided:

**Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group**

The Task Group had met for the second time on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and further statistical information had been considered. Members had noted that around 50% of Wiltshire residents receiving post-16 education did so outside of the County and that only a small proportion of this number received sixth form education. Further information was being sought as to why this was the case, taking into consideration that the national average was approximately 37%.

## Major Contracts

Members noted the update provided within the Agenda.

## Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group

Specific attention was drawn to a DVD produced by the Council to highlight the real experiences of Wiltshire children within the adoptions/fostering process and the importance of the services provided by the Council. The Committee agreed with the Task Group's recommendation that the DVD should be shown to all members at the next Full Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Vulnerable Children noted that the Corporate Parenting Panel's annual report was due to be presented at the next meeting of Full Council and that the DVD would link favourably to this item.

## Rapid Scrutiny Exercise: Green Paper – Children & Young People with SEN and Disabilities

The Rapid Scrutiny Exercise would be undertaken following the recent publication of the Green Paper.

## Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group

The Task Group had now established its membership and the first meeting was to be arranged.

### **Resolved:**

### **To note the updates provided.**

#### 158. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee would be 9 June 2011.

#### 159. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for discussion.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.10 pm)

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