

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2011 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRADLEY ROAD, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas,
Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr John Knight (Substitute),
Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Helen Osborn, Mr N Owen, Mrs R Ryan,
Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cllr Alan Macrae and Cllr Dick Tonge

177. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jon Hubbard (who was substituted by Cllr John Knight) and Revd Alice Kemp.

178. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the Select Committee meeting held on 9 June 2011.

179. **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr John Knight declared a personal interest in Minute No 187 - Denominational Home to School Transport because he was a Local Authority Governor at St Augustine's School, Trowbridge. He stated that he would take part in the debate and vote.

Dr Mike Thompson also declared a personal interest in Minute No 187 - Denominational Home to School Transport because he represented the Clifton Diocese on this Select Committee and therefore had a particular interest in this subject. He stated that he would take part in the debate and vote.

180. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that on Tuesday 19 July 2011, the Secretary of State for Education made a series of announcements on education funding with the aim of making the system fairer and less bureaucratic. These announcements covered both capital investment and school revenue funding.

The following three consultation documents had been issued:-

Capital Funding

- *A consultation on the implementation of the 2010/11 review of Education Capital (the James Review)*, the response date being 11 October 2011.

Revenue Funding

- *A consultation on schools funding reform: proposals for a fairer system.* This consultation built on the initial consultation issued in April 2011 and looked at the development of a national funding formula. The response date was 11 October 2011.
- *A consultation on the basis for the decision on the appropriate amount of academies funding transfer for 2011/12 and 2012/13.* This was in the light of the Secretary of State's decision to reconsider the reduction to local authority funding that was made as part of the two year local government settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 to reflect the transfer of central services from local authorities to Academies and Free Schools. The consultation aimed to respond to the challenges made by local authorities regarding the basis on which the original decision was made. The response date was 16 August 2011.

Links to the consultation documents on the DfE website would be circulated to members of this Select Committee.

181. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

Members of the public addressed the Committee and submitted written questions for which written responses had been prepared as set out in Minute No 187 below.

There were no questions received from members of the Council.

182. **Coalition Changes - Update from Department for Children and Education (DCE)**

The Select Committee received a report by the Corporate Director, Department for Children & Education which provided the following updates on Coalition proposals for children's services and education:-

- Reform of Early Learning and Children's Centres
- Consultation on New Admissions Code
- Key Stage 2 Testing, Assessment and Accountability Review
- Further Action to help our School System to become world class
- Definition of Persistent Absence
- Behaviour in Schools
- Managing Teacher Performance
- 16 – 19 Bursary Scheme
- Academies Update
- Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

183. Budget & Performance Monitoring - DCE

The Committee received a copy of the Budget Monitoring Report which was to be considered by Cabinet on 26 July 2011, together with relevant appendices. It was noted that there was no Performance Report on this occasion.

It was noted that the numbers of Looked After Children and Children with a Child Protection Plan were increasing and that these increasing levels were higher than budgeted for. The number of children coming into care because of neglect or emotional abuse was increasing and the number of active court proceedings currently stood at 60, against an average in previous years of 38 at any one time. The increase in court proceedings was also causing pressure on the Department's legal budget as the Council's legal service was unable to meet the current demand and therefore had to put work out to external solicitors. Pressures on the Leaving Care budget were also significant. It was noted that officers would review options to address these pressures and report back to Cabinet in September.

Resolved:

To note the latest budget performance data provided.

184. Future Educational Direction

The Select Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director, Children & Education which provided information on the future educational direction as national systems moved towards a more self-improving, practitioner-led and locally determined model.

It was noted that the Local Authority (LA) was keen to support the widest 'family' of schools in Wiltshire. It was recognised that all schools required support more than ever, whether they be an Academy, Voluntary Aided, Foundation, Community or Voluntary Controlled, the aim being to improve life chances for children and young adults in Wiltshire. The relationship between the Local Authority and schools was very good and this had resulted in the building of the Wiltshire Learning Trust, this being an umbrella alliance to describe the LA's offer to schools and early years' settings to provide choice, access and quality. Its aim was to support all schools to do the best for their population, particularly to improve life chances and safeguard children.

It was reported that all schools on becoming academies received information on services available from Wiltshire Council within the Wiltshire Learning Trust. A pack of information had been distributed in May 2011 detailing services the LA would continue to provide on the same basis to all maintained schools and also those available to purchase. Members were informed that this was not really a new venture as some trading with schools had been in operation for over 10 years in such services as human resources and finance. It was necessary now to sharpen up the delivery of these services so that they could be provided quickly and efficiently to schools in Wiltshire and further afield when requested.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

185. **Reducing Child Poverty**

Consideration was given to a joint report by the Corporate Directors, Children & Education and Public Health & Wellbeing which was due to be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting on 26 July 2011. The purpose of the report was to seek Cabinet's approval to the Wiltshire Reducing Child Poverty Strategy and this Select Committee was invited to make any comments prior to Cabinet's consideration of the Strategy.

It was noted that the Child Poverty Act, which committed both the current and future Governments to eradicating child poverty by 2020 received Royal Assent in March 2010. The Act required Central Government to produce a national strategy to reduce child poverty. It also required local areas to address child poverty through cooperation between partners, the production of a needs assessment and strategy.

The Select Committee received the written views of Revd Alice Kemp who considered that there was a need to specifically target the needs of families where a parent or child was disabled. She suggested that these families were significantly more likely to be at risk of poverty and stated that it cost on average three times as much to bring up a disabled child compared to a non-disabled child. Often parents were unable to work because of the health needs of their

child. She questioned what else could be done to alleviate poverty in this specific group of families.

Members expressed support for the Strategy and drew attention to specific areas of deprivation in Wiltshire.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note and commend the report and the Child Poverty Strategy.**
- (2) To recommend that Cabinet makes adequate funding available to fulfil the objectives described in the Strategy.**

186. 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation - Report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise

Members were reminded that at the last meeting a rapid scrutiny exercise was established to respond to the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy consultation document and following on from this, a report was presented for consideration setting out the Rapid Scrutiny Group's findings and recommendations. It had also been agreed that at this meeting, the Select Committee would agree arrangements for scrutiny of the results of the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy and subsequent proposals to Cabinet.

The Select Committee then considered in detail the findings and recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny Group and

Resolved:

- (1) To submit the response to the 13-19 Commissioning Consultation drafted by the Rapid Scrutiny Group, subject to the following amendments:-**

Q1. Do you have any comments on the purpose of the 13 to 19 commissioning strategy outlined in section 2.1 including the specific age range covered by the strategy?

The Committee wishes to emphasise the value of engaging young people below the age of 13 in youth services, as it encourages their future involvement.

Q2. Do you have any comments on or additions to the scope of the 13-19 commissioning strategy outlined in section 2.2?

Consideration should be given to using the Health & Wellbeing budget to fund services for young people in the 13-19 age bracket.

Q3. Are there any other strategies or plans which cover the 13-19 age range to add to the list in section 2.3?

Housing development affects people of all ages, so should be considered when planning services for 13-19 year olds. Consideration should therefore be given to including the Core Strategy within this list.

Q12. Do you agree with the commissioning priorities identified in section 7.2? Do you have any comments, amendments or additions? Can you select your top 3 commissioning priorities?

The Committee considers that the top commissioning priority should be to increase the availability of affordable housing for young people including continuing to invest in housing support for vulnerable young people.

(2) To establish a rapid scrutiny exercise to consider and make recommendations on:-

(a) The consultation process followed by the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy, paying mind to the concerns raised by the original Rapid Scrutiny Group.

(b) The consultation results and subsequent proposals to Cabinet for the 13-19 Commissioning Strategy, prior to their consideration by Cabinet on 13 September 2011.

(3) To agree that the following recommendation be NOT made to Cabinet:-

“In light of the issues that could be experienced in bringing about substantial change to services in such a short period of time, thought should be given to extending the timescale for implementing these changes to allow for secondary consultation and for ensuring all internal and potential external processes are in place before any changes are made.

Thought should also be given to whether the £600k expected to be cut from the 2012/13 youth development service budget could be funded from the £733k outturn underspend that was ringfenced into earmarked reserves at the end of the 2010/11 financial year.”

(Cllr Russell Hawker requested that his abstention from voting be recorded.)

187. Denominational Home to School Transport

The Chairman introduced this item and announced that she would agree to take the report by the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood and Planning, which was made available on Tuesday 19 July 2011, as an item of urgent business because there would not be a further meeting of this Committee to consider and make comments before it was presented to Cabinet for approval on 13 September 2011.

Cllr Richard Gamble, Portfolio Holder for Public Transport, gave a brief overview of the contents of the report, explaining that following consideration of the representations received, and of the financial, environmental, legal and equalities impacts, the following three options were now put forward for consideration:-

Option 1 – implement original proposal to withdraw all discretionary denominational transport assistance with effect from September 2012.

Option 2 – withdraw discretionary denominational assistance with effect from September 2012, but with transitional provisions to assist pupils entering the final year of their GCSE course in 2012.

Option 3 – withdraw discretionary denominational assistance with effect from September 2012, but with transitional provisions to assist all pupils who are already receiving transport.

The Committee received statements from members of the public as follows, expressing their opposition to the proposal:-

Mr Alastair Erdozain – Retired Governor, St John’s RC Primary School, Trowbridge

Ms Emma Kayne – Governor, St Patrick’s RC Primary School, Corsham

Ms Helen Ward – Parent & Foundation Governor, St Augustine’s RC School, Trowbridge

Mr Michael Stevenson – Chair of Governors, St Augustine’s RC School, Trowbridge

The Committee also noted that questions had been received from the following members of the public and to whom written responses were given:-

Mrs Jane Keogh – a parent

Mr Tony Lowe –

Father Jean-Patrice Coulon – Parish Priest, Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception, Devizes

The Committee also received letters opposing the proposal from:-

Dr Michael Thompson – representing Clifton RC Diocese

Mr Paul Hughes – Headteacher, St Joseph’s RC School, Salisbury

During the ensuing debate the following points were raised:-

- A suggestion was made that a Rapid Scrutiny Task Group be set up in order to give more time for consideration to be given to the contents of the report prepared by the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood and Planning. The Task Group should be open to the public and its views and comments would be forwarded to Cabinet to consider at its meeting on 13 September 2011.
- Whilst supporting in principle the setting up of a Rapid Scrutiny Task Group, a number of Members considered that all Members of the Select Committee should be invited to participate, rather than a small number of its membership, bearing in mind that the Task Group would be sending its views and comments direct to Cabinet.
- Many parents make arrangements for their children’s primary or secondary education to be carried out in one school and to be suddenly faced with having to either pay for denominational school transport or finding a totally new school might not viable.
- Consideration should also be given to a further Option of no change to the current arrangements and a detailed examination should be given to costing figures provided.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

1. To establish a Rapid Scrutiny Task Group to consider the proposals to Cabinet on Denominational Home-to-School Transport and to make recommendations as appropriate, this meeting to take place prior to Cabinet's meeting on 13 September 2011 and to include an opportunity for public participation.
2. To appoint the following members of this Select Committee to form the Task Group:-

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Carole Soden, Mr Neil Owen, Mrs Rosheen Ryan and Dr Michael Thompson.
3. To request that the Chairman and Scrutiny Officer liaise with the Cabinet Member and officers to ensure that the further information requested by members is made available for the Rapid Scrutiny Task Group.

188. **Task Group Update**

The Select Committee received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups:-

- Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group
- Major Contracts Task Group
- Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group
- Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group

After discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.
- (2) To agree that the Placements for Looked After Children Task Group meets in mid-November 2011 to consider the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy, with any conclusions being referred for endorsement by the Select Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2011, and, if appropriate, referred to Cabinet on 15 December 2011.
- (3) To note that the Chairman of the Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group would be meeting with the Head of Targeted School and Learner Support on 14 July 2011 to discuss the direction of this

Task Group which would be reported back to this Select Committee at its next meeting.

189. **Forward Work Programme**

The Select Committee received the Forward Work Programme for consideration and comment.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme.

190. **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of the Select Committee would be held on Tuesday 27 September 2011 at Monkton Park, Chippenham, starting at 10.30am.

191. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

192. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute Number 193 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 and 4 respectively of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

193. **Transformation of the Passenger Assistant Service**

On considering a confidential report by the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood & Planning and the written views of Revd Alice Kemp,

Resolved:

(1) To support the implementation of the recommended Option 7.

- (2) To recommend to Cabinet that the fourth bullet point under the proposal be amended to read as follows, because the Select Committee felt that the original wording of “if required” suggested there was some uncertainty over whether such a core of PAs would actually be retained:-

“Retain a core of 5-10 PAs in house as required, to make sure that the necessary experience is available to deal with the requirements of service users with “acute” needs”.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 2.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713035,
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