

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRADLEY ROAD, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Paul Darby, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Jeff Osborn (Substitute), Mr N Owen, Mrs R Ryan and Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman)

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Lionel Grundy and Cllr Alan Macrae

194. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from the following Committee members:- Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Helen Osborn (who was substituted by Cllr Jeff Osborn), Dr Mike Thomson and Mr Chris Dark.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Richard Clewer, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Lionel Grundy and Cllr Alan Macrae.

195. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 July 2011.

196. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

197. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reported that there was a vacancy for an Opposition Member of the Council on the newly formed Youth Strategy Implementation Group.

Cllr Russell Hawker agreed to fill this vacancy.

198. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

No requests for public participation had been received for this meeting and there were no councillors' questions.

199. **Report of the Denominational Home-to-School Transport rapid scrutiny exercise**

The Chairman reported that a rapid scrutiny exercise to look at Denominational Home-to-School Transport had been held on 8 September 2011, as agreed at the last meeting of this Committee. The Committee received:-

- The report of the rapid scrutiny exercise which was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September 2011.
- Responses from Cllr Dick Tonge, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, to the recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny Group.

It was further reported that on 13 September 2011, Cabinet made the following decision:-

“That Cabinet approves the following change to the Council’s Education Transport Policy in respect of denominational home to school transport in order to achieve financial savings:

Withdraw discretionary home to school transport assistance for children attending a denominational school on grounds of their religion with effect from September 2012 but with transitional provisions to assist all pupils who are already receiving transport subject to the following:

- except where there is a legal entitlement to free transport (i.e. for low income families in certain circumstances, as described in paragraph 3 of the report presented);
- during 2011/2012 Council officers would seek to support the schools to arrange their own transport, to try and ensure that, as far as possible, transport continues to be available but funded by the users or from other sources rather than by the Council and

- the Council would provide a fixed amount of funding direct to the schools, to assist them with the costs of providing transport for all pupils who are already attending the school, each year until they leave. The payment would be made once each year and would be for a fixed amount per pupil, for each child still attending the school who was receiving transport in the 2011/12 academic year. The overall amount paid by the Council would therefore decrease each year as successive year groups leave the school. The amount paid per pupil would be set at £409 per pupil (adjusted for any extraordinary costs), which is equivalent to the average overall cost per head of providing the existing transport in 2011/12, less the 2011/12 parental contribution. Transport would have to be arranged by the schools affected.”

Cllr Richard Gamble, Portfolio Holder for Public Transport reported that the Council was now actively working with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton and the schools to implement this decision.

Members thanked the Senior Scrutiny Officer for preparing the final report of the rapid scrutiny exercise to a challenging deadline in time for its submission to Cabinet.

Resolved:

- (1) **To endorse the report of the rapid scrutiny exercise.**
- (2) **To note the responses of Cllr Dick Tonge, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport.**

200. **Report of the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy rapid scrutiny exercise**

The Chairman reported that a rapid scrutiny exercise to look at the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy had been held on 9 September 2011, as agreed at the last meeting of this Committee with Cllr Jon Hubbard as the Lead Member.

The Committee received:-

- The report of the rapid scrutiny exercise which was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September 2011.
- Responses from Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, to the recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny Group.

It was further reported that on 13 September 2011, Cabinet made the following decision:-

“That Cabinet agrees the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the 11 to 19 Commissioning Strategy as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report presented, including agreeing the following:

- (a) The commissioning priorities outlined in section 6 of the strategy and highlighted in section 15 of the report presented;
- (b) The Wiltshire Youth Work Offer for young people aged 13 to 19 also outlined in section 6 of the Strategy and sections 22 and 23 of the report presented and
- (c) The savings from youth work services budgets outlined in section 24 of the report presented.”

Resolved:

- (3) To endorse the report of the rapid scrutiny exercise.**
- (4) To note the responses of Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.**

201. Coalition Update

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:-

- Families in the Foundation Years
- Key Stage 2 Review of Testing, Assessment and Accountability
- New Standards of Competence and Conduct for Teachers
- Academies Update
- Schools Control over School Day
- Education Funding
- Reducing Bureaucracy for Schools
- Compare Schools Tool for Parents
- Government Response to the Munro Review of Child Protection
- Government Announcement of £6million for Children in Care and Families who need Extra Support
- Care to Learn
- SEN and Disability Green Paper Pathfinder
- Alternative Provision Trial

Attention was drawn to Wiltshire’s success in being accepted on the 18 month SEN & Disability Green Paper path finder programme. A large number of local authorities had applied and Wiltshire was one of the 20 accepted. There was to be a conference planned to take place at the end of September at which further

information would be provided. Wiltshire had been asked to explore the possibility of providing a single plan for children and young people up to the age of 25.

Wiltshire had also been accepted as one of eight trial local authorities to take part in an Alternative Provision Trial. This trial planned to develop new ways of working so as to ensure that schools had full responsibility for pupils they permanently excluded. This would involve the use of “freedom to innovate” to work around legislation and devolve funds to schools. The work would include reviewing preventative response and ensuring appropriate provision for children and young people to get the best outcomes. Members recognised that permanent exclusion was a difficult and complex issue and suggested that as part of this trial an examination be made of the outcomes of those pupils excluded over the last three years. It was noted that within the Western Wiltshire area there had developed an understanding amongst headteachers that they would share the responsibility of accepting excluded pupils. It was appreciated that there would need to be some change consequent upon imminent changes to the YPSS. However, it was hoped that use of the Fair Access Protocol and Fresh Starts might help mitigate the perceived problems.

The Select Committee noted the announcements the Government had made on 19 July 2011 about how education funding would be better targeted in the future. Details were received about various consultations that had been taking place and further information would be provided to the Select Committee in due course.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) To receive progress reports on the various consultations and initiatives in due course.**

202. Budget and Performance Monitoring - Department for Children & Education

The Select Committee received the Revenue Budget Monitoring report which was presented to Cabinet on 13 September 2011, together with an edited version of the Appendix which showed only the Department for Children & Education’s risk analysis. The report updated Members on progress made in delivering savings identified in the 2011-2015 Financial Plan in relation to the 2011/2012 base budgets and any significant new cost pressures or changes.

A version of the Business Plan Scorecard report, edited to contain only information pertinent to children and education, which was presented to Cabinet on 13 September 2011 was also received.

Attention was drawn to the continuing rise in numbers of looked after children and its effect on the Children & Education Budget. The Major Contracts Task Group had identified some potential savings which would help mitigate the problem but it was recognised that more recently there had been a significant increase in numbers of children at risk. It was reported that savings were being made in other areas and despite the increase in numbers, the increase in shortfall within the Department for Children & Education as a whole had not increased significantly. It was suggested that consideration be given to investigating the possibility of developing some preventative measures to combat this ongoing problem and to include in the research any correlation between numbers of teenage pregnancies and children in care.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the latest budget and performance data as it related to the Department for Children & Education.**
- (2) To note that work was continuing to review options to address these pressures which would be brought back to Cabinet in due course.**

203. Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements

The Select Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director, Department for Children & Education which updated Members on the findings of the recent inspection which took place in July 2011.

It was noted that all local authorities were subject to an annual inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment in children's services. This two day inspection is unannounced when inspectors spend time with referral and assessment team staff to form a view about front-line practice and processes for children in need and who may need protection.

The Select Committee was pleased to hear that the inspection outcome was good with no priority actions identified. It also acknowledged that the majority of areas of development identified at the previous inspection in July 2010 had been addressed. The report identified areas of strength and areas of practice that met requirements, with some areas for development.

It was noted that there were still three areas for development that had previously been identified at the last inspection, these being:-

- Despite increased timeliness of assessments, some initial assessments were approved by managers without the child being seen.

- Assessments did not consistently address the ethnicity and diversity issues of children, young people and their families.
- In some cases, the voice of the child and their family was not explicitly recognised in assessments.

The Service Director explained the various actions that had been put in place to rectify these shortfalls, including improved working between the relevant agencies that comprised the Referral and Assessment Team.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the outcome of the inspection and content of the action plan.**
- (2) To note the improved performance of the Referral and Assessment Team in recent months.**
- (3) To congratulate the officers involved in achieving the positive report from Ofsted.**

204. **Multi-Agency Thresholds Document**

The Select Committee received a report by the Corporate Director, Department for Children & Education which set out details of the Multi-Agency Thresholds document that was currently being used in Wiltshire.

It was noted that following consultation, a revised version of this document had been distributed to schools and other partner agencies in July 2011. It set out revised processes for accessing support for children and young people with additional needs and also provided guidance on making decisions on service thresholds to everyone who worked with children and young people. The revised system set out in the document took effect in September 2011.

Following feedback from schools and other agencies, requests for support from a single service would be made on a new Single Agency Referral Form (SARF). It was noted that the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) would continue to be completed where there was a need for more than one service or the child/young person's needs were not well understood. It was also expected that a CAF would be completed for the vast majority of children and young people at risk of, or about to be, permanently excluded as there was evidence that these were some of the most vulnerable children and young people.

Members welcomed the introduction of this document but did ask if there were plans for monitoring the process. Fears were expressed that the CAF form might not always be completed correctly due to pressure of time and that there

might well be a poor understanding on how to reopen a CAF without the need to start the process from the beginning.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the introduction of the new Multi-Agency Thresholds document in Wiltshire.**
- (2) To request the officers monitor the process and present a progress report to this Select Committee in six months' time to include case studies.**

205. 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

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

206. Forward Work Programme

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

Resolved:

To agree the Forward Work Programme, subject to a progress report on the implementation of the new Multi-Agency Thresholds document being prepared for the meeting of the Select Committee on 29 March 2012.

207. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting was due to be held on Thursday 24 November 2011, at Monkton Park, Chippenham, starting at 10.30am.

208. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.15 pm)

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

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