

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 MARCH 2012 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

Present:

Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Paul Darby, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter 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 Helen Osborn, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE

14. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Laura Mayes, Mr Neil Owen, Mr Chris Dark.

15. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 January 2012, subject to the inclusion of Cllr Russell Hawker as being present at the meeting.

16. **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr Mary Douglas declared a personal interest in Minute No 23 - Wiltshire Council Funding for ASK – Family Support Services, as she had been a facilitator for ASK several years previously.

17. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

18. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

There were no members of the public present or councillors' questions.

19. **Coalition Changes - Update January to March 2012**

Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director provided an update report on the Coalition Government's latest proposals for children's services and education.

Arising therefrom

- Children's Centres – The Select Committee noted that trial local authorities had been announced by the Children & Families Minister to test a range of measures which would aim to reinforce the role of Sure Start Children's Centres in improving outcomes for all children, whilst focusing on those who could benefit from their services. The purpose of payment by results would be to reward progress to reduce inequalities in child development, school readiness, health and life chances and to improve parenting aspiration and skills. Although Wiltshire had not been chosen to participate in this trial, the results would be closely monitored.
- Summer School Fund launched to help Disadvantaged Children into Secondary School – It was noted that a £50 million summer schools fund to help the most disadvantaged pupils was now available. The money would help up to 100,000 pupils making the transition from primary to secondary school, which was a time when Ofsted research showed that pupil performance could take a significant dip. Local authorities would not be directly involved in this scheme and it would be for individual schools to apply for £500 for each disadvantaged pupil to take part in a two week summer school.
- New Approach to NEETs – The Select Committee noted that the Government had unveiled a new scheme to get 16 and 17 year old teenagers, who were out of work and not in education, into work or to train for a job. The Government was making £126 million of new money available for this scheme. It was noted that in Wiltshire work was already being carried out very closely with potential providers.
- Measures to speed up Adoptions - The Government had proposed changes to legislation to speed up the adoption process and had published an Action Plan for Adoption to overhaul the system for prospective adopters and strengthen the performance regime for local authorities. The new action plan included proposals for:
 1. New adoption scorecards, to hold local authorities to account. The first scorecards were due to be published in the coming weeks.

2. A revised approval process for new adopters, cutting it to six months.
3. A national gateway for adoption, providing a first point of contact for anyone interested in adoption.

After discussion,

Resolved:

To circulate Wiltshire's Adoption Scorecard to Members of the Select Committee when available.

- Academies Update – The Select Committee received an updated list of academies as at February 2012. It was further noted that The John of Gaunt School, Trowbridge would be converting as from 1 April 2012. During discussion, Members requested further information about academies.

Resolved:

(1) To request a report on the academy programme both nationally and locally to a future meeting of this Select Committee.

(2) To request that a briefing note be circulated to members of the Select Committee setting out the different types of academy.

20. **Budget and Performance monitoring**

The Select Committee received an edited version of the Revenue Budget Monitoring report which was presented to Cabinet on 15 February 2012, together with the Business Plan scorecard report; these contained only the information pertinent to children's services.

It was noted that Children's Services budgets were projected to underspend by £0.288 million by the end of the financial year. An increase in the overspend for Children's Social Care was offset by underspends across other service areas.

There were 396 Looked after Children (LAC) as at 31 December 2011 and it was noted that there was a general increase in numbers of LAC despite some occasional fluctuations. It was considered that more detailed statistical information should be made available and it was pointed out that the Placements for LAC Task Group had been examining this as part of their remit.

Resolved:

(1) To note the contents of the report.

- (2) To request that information on the numbers of LAC from the Placements for LAC Task Group be circulated to Members of the Select Committee.
- (3) To request the Officers to consult with the Head of Public Passenger Transport about the enquiry from Cllr Andrew Davis regarding competing bus and coach provision and to circulate the response to all Members of the Select Committee.

21. **Local Safeguarding Children's Board ((LSCB) - Annual Report 2010/11**

The Select Committee received a report by the Development Manager, Wiltshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) which introduced their Annual Report 2010-11 and Business Plan 2011-13, together with an executive summary.

It was noted that this multi-agency Strategic Board co-ordinated policies, training and all multi-agency safeguarding systems and ensured the effectiveness of safeguarding children work. In order to meet the requirements of the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, it was necessary to produce and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the area.

It was noted that the areas for focus in 2011-12 were agreed by the Board in February 2011 when the following core objective was agreed:-

Increasing consultation about safeguarding with children, young people and parents and becoming more responsive to their views.

The Chairman reported that Ofsted inspectors had recently carried out an inspection of Wiltshire's safeguarding and looked after children services. The inspection looked at the contribution made by relevant services to ensure that children and young people are properly safeguarded and the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. Their report and findings was due to be published on 24 April 2012.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board 2010-11 and its Business Plan 2011-13.
- (2) To establish a Task Group to consider child safeguarding arrangements in Wiltshire and to request that at its first meeting the Task Group receives any reports and action plans following the

recent Ofsted inspection of children's services in Wiltshire to be used to help scope the review and formulate its terms of reference for approval by this Select Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2012.

- (3) To agree that the Task Group would consist of members of the Select Committee (to include the Chairman and Cllr Jon Hubbard) and, if possible, some non-committee members.
- (4) To request the Task Group, when undertaking its review, to consider how future Select Committee activity might always include some consideration of safeguarding issues.

22. **The future development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS) - update**

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director which provided an update on Wiltshire's development of the Department for Education's (DfE) Power to Innovate (PTI) and the proposed closure of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS) in August 2012 following the Cabinet decision in November 2011. Reference was also made in the report to the provision for young people currently in the service who would be directly affected by the closure of YPSS.

The Select Committee last considered this issue in November 2011 when it received a report proposing the transformation of education provision for permanently excluded students of secondary school age. The proposal was essentially to close Wiltshire's four YPSS centres in Chippenham, Trowbridge, Devizes and Salisbury and to delegate the responsibility for educating permanently excluded students to secondary schools, which would receive the devolved funding. The Select Committee welcomed the trial, which it felt was most likely to provide an improved service for young people, and requested a progress report at this meeting.

These decisions were made consequent upon YPSS being placed in Special Measures following an Ofsted inspection in May 2011. Since then YPSS had received a monitoring visit from two additional inspectors appointed by Ofsted who had reached a conclusion that the service was making satisfactory progress in relation to the Improvement Action Plan.

Mr Neil Owen had raised a couple of issues concerning:-

- Chairs of School Governors being asked to sign off the proposal and the lack of time for Boards of Governors having sufficient time to discuss the issues.
- Sarum Academy not agreeing to the proposal and refusing to take on the responsibility.

In response, Mr Mark Brotherton, Head of Targeted School & Learner Support, explained that the DfE had been late in sending the correct paperwork and their deadline had been set by the Minister who was to sign off the PTI. Wiltshire officers had endeavoured to get the paperwork to schools as soon as they had been received but nevertheless the deadline had been very tight and forced. However Headteachers had known about the general direction of travel and it had been expected that Governing Bodies would have met earlier to discuss what was happening but not necessarily the finer details.

It was noted that the majority of schools were taking part in the trial. Sarum College had decided not to participate and would therefore not receive their share of the money from DSG. The Council would therefore commission the Wessex Partnership through their arrangements for personalised learning to make provision for students from Sarum Academy. It was further noted that Sarum College had offered to make a contribution to this Partnership despite not receiving this money.

Resolved:

- (1) To note that a recent monitoring visit by Ofsted inspectors had found that the YPSS was making satisfactory progress in relation to the Improvement Action Plan.**
- (2) To note the update provided on the development of the Department for Education's (DfE) Power to Innovate (PTI) and the proposed closure of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS) in August 2012.**
- (3) To request a further update on the PTI Project, including the DfE's light-touch review of the pilot schemes nationally at the November meeting.**
- (4) To request that a briefing note be issued to all Councillors regarding the PTI Project.**

23. Wiltshire Council funding for Ask - family support services

The Select Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, providing a summary of the Family Information Service and Parent Partnership Service Review and subsequent dialogue with current provider of services, as requested by the Chairman.

The Service Director, Commissioning & Performance explained that following a review of the Family Information Service (FIS) in Summer 2011, it was found that there was a significant duplication around the provision of information

available to parents and carers of children with disabilities/special educational needs. The following services all had a role in providing this information:-

- Ask
- Wiltshire Parent Carer Council
- Carers' Support
- Children's Centres
- Parenting Support Advisors

The review had concluded that the FIS needed to be redesigned to complement and not duplicate services.

Discussions had taken place with Ask in which the findings of the review had been shared with them. It had been made clear that the Council's preferred option was to continue to work with Ask through contract extensions but with a reduced financial contribution. Revised specifications and funding levels had been discussed with Ask who were now considering their position. If Ask decided not to deliver the services based on the revised specifications and funding levels, then the opportunity would be given to other Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) organisations to run the services.

Members of the Select Committee expressed some concern at the possibility of losing the services of Ask and after discussion,

Resolved:

To undertake a Rapid Scrutiny Exercise to consider the future provision of the Family Information Service following recent changes to the Ask contract, the membership consisting of Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay and Cllr Bill Moss.

24. Trading services to out-of-county schools - Proposal to establish a task group

The Select Committee was informed that, at its meeting on 28 February 2012, Council had agreed that consideration should be given to establishing a scrutiny task group to explore opportunities for generating further income to the Council through increased trading of services to schools in other counties.

In January, the Organisation and Resources Select Committee discussed the level of trading currently conducted by the Council (following discussion of the Business Services forecast overspend of £0.100 million) and resolved to include a policy paper on the role of the Council as a provider and/or commissioner of services, including the current traded services in education, on the Committee's forward work plan. A preliminary item on this will be discussed by the O&R Select Committee on 5 April.

After discussion,

Resolved:

To defer until the next meeting consideration of establishing a Task Group to explore opportunities for generating further income to the Council through increased trading of services to schools in other counties, in order to receive the views of the O & R Select Committee which would be meeting on 5 April 2012.

25. **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.

26. **Forward Work Programme**

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

Resolved:

To agree the Forward Work Programme.

27. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

28. **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 31 May 2012, starting at 10.30am, at Monkton Park. Chippenham.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.50 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 713035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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