

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2014 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Pat Aves, Mr Ken Brough, Cllr Mary Champion, Miss Tracy Cornelius, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Stewart Dobson (Substitute), Cllr Sue Evans, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Helen Osborn, Mrs Lynne Swainston and Cllr Philip Whalley

Also Present:

Cllr Simon Killane and Cllr Laura Mayes

36 **Election of Chairman**

Resolved:

To elect Cllr Jon Hubbard as Chairman for the ensuing year.

Cllr Jon Hubbard in the Chair

37 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

Resolved:

To elect Cllr Jacqui Lay as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

38 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Miss Sarah Busby, Cllr Mary Douglas (who was substituted by Cllr Stewart Dobson), Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Chris Hurst, Revd Alice Kemp, Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Ricky Rogers and Dr Mike Thompson.

39 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 April 2014 as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of apologies received from Miss Tracy Cornelius.

40 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

41 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

- (a) **Wiltshire's Friary Doorstep Sports Club** On 2 April 2014, the Friary Doorstep Sports Club won the accolade of 'Most Innovative Doorstep Sports Club' at the Street Games National Awards at Warwick University. The project delivered weekly sports sessions to young people aged 13-25 in the heart of the Friary Estate in Salisbury. Over the previous six months, the project had worked with 30 young people who previously could not access community based sports programmes. Sports delivered included football, touch rugby and street dance.

The project was part of a national programme to deliver 1,000 Doorstep sports clubs across the country in communities considered to be amongst the most deprived in the UK and received funding through the Street Games network. Following Wiltshire's success with the Friary project, funding had now been allocated to start up additional doorstep clubs in Chippenham and Trowbridge. Further information was available from Daniel Geeson, Sports Development Officer. Members of the Committee requested the Clerk to convey their congratulations and best wishes to Daniel Geeson.

- (b) **Meeting with Cabinet Members and Directors** The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee and the three select Committees would shortly be meeting with the appropriate executive members and directors. The purpose of these meetings would be to ensure that the O&S work programme was aligned with executive priorities and was as forward looking as possible. The Committee would be updated on the results of this meeting in due course. Members were requested to contact either the Chairman or the Senior Scrutiny Officer should they have any issues they considered the Committee or the executive should be looking at.
- (c) **Pre-meeting Information briefings** The Chairman reminded the Committee that pre-information briefings were held immediately before each Committee meeting and were open to all members of the Committee and also to substitute members. These briefing sessions were proving to

be very useful and frequently acted as an introduction to a major item on the agenda for the subsequent meeting.

42 Public Participation

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

43 Early Help Strategy 2014-17 and draft Early Help Improvement Plan

The Chairman reminded the meeting that in December 2013 the Committee received the draft Early Help Strategy 2013-17 which was at that stage out for consultation. The Strategy set out the Council's proposals for Wiltshire's early help offer, including what it currently did, the desired improved outcomes for children and young people and the priority objectives to achieve this.

Having considered the draft Strategy in December 2013, the Committee asked to receive the final Strategy and draft implementation plan at a future meeting.

The Committee was now being asked to consider the final version of the Early Help Strategy 2014-17 and the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and Children's trust draft joint Early Help Improvement Plan.

It was noted that the five objectives of the Strategy had been designed to ensure a coordinated approach in meeting this vision; they were as follows:-

- (1) Getting the best start in life.
- (2) Gaining the skills required to begin school.
- (3) Being ready for adult life.
- (4) Developing a family-based approach to early help.
- (5) Developing effective structures and processes to access early help – including developing an Early Help Offer.

It was explained that an Early Help Improvement Plan had been drafted and, for each objective, key priorities for action had been identified. In addition, a draft Early Help Dataset had been developed which would be the key tool for monitoring effectiveness and impact of the Early Help activities. These drafts were currently under review by the Wiltshire Early Intervention Sub-group.

The Committee thereupon examined the five objectives and made the following points:-

- Objective 1: Ensuring the best start in life – 15 hours free childcare for disadvantaged 2 year olds should be promoted with appropriate provision across the County. Members asked if the number of eligible children had been calculated and were informed that 40% of the September 2013 cohort was eligible.

- There was a need for regular updated statistics to be provided which would demonstrate the level of improvement in the services provided.
- It was noted that about 1,100 additional children were likely to be arriving in Wiltshire in the next three to four years as part of the increased military presence in Wiltshire and that the Leader of the Council was seeking additional financial support to cope with these increasing numbers of children. However, it was pointed out that not all of these children would require early years help.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the Early Help Strategy 2014-17 and the draft Early Help Improvement Plan.**
- (2) To recommend to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee that a Task Group be set up to look at how the Committee could effectively monitor delivery of the Strategy and, subject to that Committee's agreement:**
 - (a) To agree that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, in consultation with the Senior Scrutiny Officer, draw up the terms of reference of the Task Group.**
 - (b) To invite all backbench Members of the Council to indicate if they were willing to serve on this Task Group.**

44 Executive Response to the Final Report of the Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group

The Committee received a report by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services setting out her response to the Final Report of the Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group.

The task group's final report was endorsed with one amendment by the Committee on 29 April. It was then referred to Cabinet, who took the final decision on this matter at an extraordinary meeting on 15 May 2014, when it resolved to:

- "i) Adopt the key principles for a new operating model as set out in the report;
- ii) Authorise implementation of the community-led model for youth activities to increase the opportunities for young people's involvement and engagement;

iii) Approve that the community-led operating model for youth activities maximises the amount of funding available to community area boards and local coordination;

iv) Delegate authority to Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and senior officers to develop and implement the new operating model, taking account of i)-iii) above and the recommendations of the scrutiny task group."

Having noted the decision of Cabinet and the Cabinet Member's response to the task group's final report, the following points were raised:-

- The Committee was delighted that so many young people had shown an interest in this matter and had put forward their views. The Committee also noted with pleasure the valuable contribution made by Kaylum House, the children & young people's representative on the Committee, at meetings of the task group.
- The Chairman expressed his disappointment at the wording of the response regarding the costing that the task group put forward because the numbers used were provided and validated by Officers. It was considered that the response that the costing figures were 'unrealistic' undermined the work of the task group.

Cllr Laura Mayes responded and apologised for the negative connotations which were not intended and agreed to amend the wording to reflect this. She also explained that the response did not indicate that the costing was incorrect but rather that the role of the new posts of Community Youth Officer was more complex than the current posts of Youth Worker and required a higher salary.

- Members suggested that Area Boards should have the option of employing youth workers that were about to be made redundant or to have the option of providing the funding for a youth worker to remain centrally employed for their area. It was pointed out that this would not be possible as the new policy adopted by Cabinet did not allow for the employment of youth workers centrally. The redundancy process had already commenced with staff leaving at the end of September 2014.

The transition arrangements were being finalised and would be available shortly.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the Cabinet Member's response to the Final Report of the Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group.**

- (2) To request that the Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People Task Group examine the proposed communication to the Area Boards prior to it being circulated.**
- (3) To request the Chairman and Vice-Chairman consider the inclusion of youth work into the terms of reference of the Early Help Task Group when they set that Task Group's terms of reference.**

45 Task Group Update

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

- Education for 16-19s Task Group
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group
- Schools and the Local Authority Task Group
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Task Group

Resolved:

- (1) To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**
- (2) To agree that the Education for 16-19s Task Group would pause activity until September 2014, when the situation would be reassessed.**
- (3) To note that Cllr Sheila Parker and Cllr Horace Prickett had taken up portfolio holder positions and were therefore no longer members of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group.**
- (4) To appoint Cllr Gordon King as a member of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group.**

46 Coalition Changes - Update from Department for Education

The Committee received and noted a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the Coalition Government as follows:-

- The Children and families Act 2014, which would take forward the Coalition Government's commitment to improve services for vulnerable

children and support strong families, had just received royal assent. The Act reinforced wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people could succeed, no matter what their background. **(A summary of the 2013 Bill that informed the Act is attached to these minutes as Appendix 1.)**

- Reformed GCSE and A level content
- Safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges
- Careers guidance – Cllr Simon Jacobs informed the Committee about a pilot scheme on mentoring and work experience which had been working well in Devizes in association with Devizes School. A pre-meeting information briefing on how the scheme worked could be arranged and members warmly commended this initiative.
- School funding
- School accountability
- Headteacher standards review
- Priority school building programme (PSBP)
- Academies update

Resolved:

- (1) To note the update provided.**
- (2) To agree that a pre-meeting information briefing on the Children and Families Act 2014 be held at 9.30am, immediately before the next meeting of the Committee.**

47 Forward Work Programme

The Committee received a document showing the relevant items from the overview and scrutiny forward work programme.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the Forward Work Programme for this Committee.**

- (2) To encourage members of the Committee to inform the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Senior Scrutiny Officer of any additional items they might consider should be included in the Forward Work Programme.**

48 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was due to be held on Tuesday 5 August 2014 in the Kennet Room at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

However, it was pointed out that the following members and officers would not be able to attend a meeting on that date due to holiday and other commitments:-

Cllr Laura Mayes; Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director; Mr John Hawkins; Mrs Lynne Swainston and Miss Tracy Cornelius.

In these circumstances,

Resolved:

To request the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to consider the position and determine when the next meeting should be held.

49 Urgent Items

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.30 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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Children and Families Bill 2013

The Children and Families Bill takes forward the Coalition Government's commitments to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families. It underpins wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background. The Bill will reform the systems for **adoption, looked after children, family justice** and **special educational needs**. It will encourage growth in the **childcare** sector, introduce a new system of **shared parental leave** and ensure children in England have a strong advocate for their rights.

This is a joint Bill, presented by the Secretary of State for Education and on behalf of the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills and Work and Pensions and the Ministry of Justice. The Bill's provisions have been developed following several independent reviews and extensive consultation. Many clauses have undergone pre-legislative scrutiny.

Main Provisions

Adoption and Virtual School Head (VSH)

The Government wants to see **more children being adopted by loving families with less delay**. Children wait an average of almost two years between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family. The Bill supports the reforms set out in *An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay* by:

- promoting '**fostering for adoption**' so that children are placed sooner with the families that are likely to adopt them;
- ensuring that search for a **perfect or partial ethnic match does not become a barrier** to finding a child a parent;
- **improving support for adoptive families**;
- creating a new power for Ministers to **drive an increase in adopter recruitment** by requiring outsourcing if necessary.

We are grateful to the Select Committee on Adoption Legislation which carried out pre-legislative scrutiny of the provisions relating to 'fostering for adoption' and ethnicity.

The Government is committed to **improving life chances for all looked after children**. Their educational attainment, while improving, is not doing so fast enough. We know that a 'virtual school head' (VSH) can have a positive impact on the educational progress of looked after children and so the Bill will require every local authority to have a '**virtual school head**' to **champion the education of children in the authority's care**, as if they all attended the same school.

Family Justice System

The Government is **reforming the family justice system to help deliver better outcomes for children and families** who go to court after family separation or where children may be taken into care. The reform programme is tackling delays and ensuring that children's best interests are at the heart of decision making. The Bill will implement commitments the Government made in response to the Family Justice Review by:

- introducing a **time limit of 26 weeks** when courts are considering whether a child should be taken into care ensuring that they **focus on the essentials and don't get caught up in unnecessary evidence or bureaucratic delay**;
- sending a **clear message to separated parents that courts will start from the presumption that both should be involved in their children's lives** where that is safe and consistent with the child's welfare;
- introducing new 'child arrangement orders' which **will focus parents on the child's needs rather than their own 'rights'** and making sure more families have the **opportunity to try mediation** before applying to court.

We are grateful to the Justice Select Committee for its pre-legislative scrutiny of this part of the Bill.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Government is **transforming the system for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), including those who are disabled, so that services consistently support the best outcomes** for them. The Bill will extend the SEN system from birth to 25, giving children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions and ensuring needs are properly met. It takes forward the reform programme set out in *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability: Progress and next steps* by:

- replacing statements and learning difficulty assessments with a **new birth- to-25 Education, Health and Care Plan**, extending rights and protections to young people in further education and training and offering families **personal budgets** so that they have more control over the support they need;
- improving **cooperation between all the services that support children and their families** and particularly requiring local authorities and health authorities to work together;
- requiring local authorities to **involve children, young people and parents** in reviewing and developing provision for those with special educational needs and to publish a **'local offer' of support**.

We are grateful to the Education Select Committee for its pre-legislative scrutiny of these clauses.

Childcare

The Government is **reforming childcare to ensure the whole system focuses on providing safe, high-quality care and early education** for children. The enabling measures in the Bill support wider reforms to substantially increase the supply of high quality, affordable and available childcare and include:

- introducing **childminder agencies** to help more childminders into the market and offer greater support and quality assurance;
- removing bureaucracy so that it is easier for schools to offer **'wrap-around' care**.

On 29 January 2013, the Government published *More great childcare* which sets out a plan of action for how this Government will achieve its vision of a dynamic childcare market, delivering high quality early education and childcare. The childcare commission will report shortly.

Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC)

The Government wants to make sure that the **Children's Commissioner can act as a strong advocate for children**, helping to embed a culture where children's rights and interests are duly recognised. The Bill will help improve the Children's Commissioner's effectiveness, taking forward recommendations in John Dunford's *Review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner* including:

- giving the Commissioner a **statutory remit to 'promote and protect children's rights'**;
- introducing changes to make the Commissioner **more independent from Government**.

We are grateful to the Joint Committee on Human Rights for its pre-legislative scrutiny of these clauses.

Shared Parental Leave and Flexible Working

The Government is committed to encouraging the full involvement of both parents from the earliest stages of pregnancy, including by **promoting a system of shared parental leave**, and to **extending the right to request flexible working to all employees**. These reforms will help create a truly family friendly society and support economic growth by making working arrangements work better for modern life. The Bill will implement the commitments in the Government's response (November 2012) to the *Modern Workplaces* consultation by:

- enabling working **mothers and fathers to share parental leave** when a baby is born;
- allowing **prospective parents to take more time off to attend antenatal appointments**;
- bringing the **leave and pay entitlements for adopters** more closely into line with what is available to birth parents.

For more information see *Children and Families Bill 2013: Contextual Information and Responses to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny* at: www.education.gov.uk/childrenandfamiliesbill