

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2011 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman), Rev. Alice Kemp, Mr Neil Owen, Mrs Rosheen Ryan, Dr Mike Thompson, Mr John Hawkins and Chris King.

Also Present:

Cllr Lionel Grundy.

131. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mary Douglas and Cllr Paul Darby.

132. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

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

133. **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

134. **Chairman's Announcements**

1. Cllr Mary Douglas was unable to attend the meeting but requested that the Committee consider her report on the Children and Young People's Trust Board.
2. The Director for DCE was asked to provide a steer on the DCE structure, which had been circulated at the meeting.

The Director confirmed that a newsletter had been sent to all staff in the department providing an update on the management review. The key reason that details were not provided earlier was due to the need to

conduct in excess of 150 interviews and the Director felt disclosure of the structure would not have been appropriate for those staff affected.

The newsletter was regularly updated and would be circulated before the next Committee meeting in March. Members of Committee would be added to the circulation list accordingly.

3. Visit to Melksham Oak School

The Chairman and several members of the Committee visited the new Melksham Oak School (formerly George Ward) on 13 January where they were shown around by the Deputy Headteacher, Paul Kennedy.

All those in attendance were very impressed by the facilities on offer and recommended that other members of the Committee would benefit from a similar visit.

The Chairman would write to the school thanking them for the tour.

4. Important Dates for the Diary

i) Councillor Development event: Collecting Evidence Through Questioning

A Councillor training event that would be particularly useful to all members of Select Committees, taking place in the Chestnut Room in County Hall on Thursday 3 February from 10:00am to 4:00pm.

ii) Special Joint Budget Scrutiny

The Special Joint Scrutiny Meeting would take place on Thursday 10 February to consider the Cabinet's budget proposals for the next financial year. The meeting would commence at 10:00am and take place in the Council Chamber. All Councillors were encouraged to attend.

The final budget would be considered by Full Council on 22 February.

iii) Councillor Development: Community Leadership Workshop

This would be a half-day workshop to update and refresh Councillors on all of the tools and processes available to pursue local issues on behalf of their constituents.

The event would be held at 2:00pm on 24 February at Monkton Park, Chippenham and again at 2:00pm on 2 March at City Hall, Salisbury.

Subsequent to the meeting taking place the event was postponed. Further details of the revised date would be circulated once known.

5. Deferred Items

Small Schools Strategy had been deferred for consideration in March. This was predominantly due to the national policy picture for small schools which was still unclear and therefore an update at this stage would not have been appropriate.

135. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

The Director for DCE presented an update report on Coalition Government's proposals for children's services and education and to answer questions arising.

- Clarity was provided that many changes were still taking place. The Children and Young People's Trust Board, which was no longer a statutory requirement, would be retained by Wiltshire Council although the governance arrangements would be changed to ensure it remained streamlined.
- The Education Endowment Fund had been set up to provide financial support to post-16 learners. It was unclear how to access this fund at the present time but, once known, the Department would make best efforts to do so.
- The Schools White Paper set new benchmarks in terms of floor targets with a 60% target set for primary schools and 35% for secondary. There were several schools considering academy status within the region and these schools continued to work closely with the Council.
- A Progress Check was being planned in relation to reading ability and KS2 tests were being reviewed.
- No further information had yet been provided in relation to the All Age Career Service following the wind-up of the Connexions service.

- The Early Intervention Grant would sweep up the myriad grants that the Council previously received individually. As a new combined Grant, the funding received by Wiltshire would be £3.3m less than the previous individual funds combined. Although the financial need of the Department had been assessed at £18m the amount to be received would be £14.6m.
- There had been many changes within Public Health including education (i.e. health and child poverty) where the Council had a statutory requirement to address these areas. A strategy had been developed and a consultation was currently being undertaken.

Following questions received, clarification was provided as follows:

- a) The Children's Trust Board membership had not as yet been affected although there were plans to widen the membership. The Board would meet three times per year.
- b) In relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant, there would be a recoupment process from the Council for each school moving to academy status. This equated to £9,700 within Lavington and £6,100 in South Wiltshire.
- c) A robust tendering process had been undertaken for the children's centres contract within Wiltshire. A stakeholder panel, which included key staff and local parents, were involved in the decision making process.
- d) In relation to the Pupil Premium it was clarified that, for those eligible pupils in mainstream schools, funding would be paid directly to the school where the child was registered.
- e) It was understood that academy schools were likely to be required to adhere to the same standards as those schools under local authority control.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the update.**
- 2) To ensure that issues emerging as a result of national changes would be reflected in the Forward Work Programme.**

137. Budget Monitoring - DCE

The Committee, at its meeting in November, requested a standing item be added to the agenda to allow members to receive details of DCE's latest budget and performance position. The Pupil Performance figures (Item 9) and Ofsted rating report (Item 12) will be considered later in the meeting.

Although there were no budget papers for consideration by Cabinet in January, hard copies of the full Cabinet budget papers in December were sent to members of the Committee for consideration. An edited version of these papers, which contained information relating to DCE, were included within the agenda pack.

The Head of Finance, DCE, was in attendance to answer any questions arising.

Resolved:

To note the latest budget position in relation to DCE.

138. **Integrated Working in Wiltshire**

The Committee considered an update report on progress made within Wiltshire to implement the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Lead Professional. The Joint Service Director for Commissioning and Performance attended to present the report and to answer questions arising.

- It was clarified that the team overseeing the CAF had moved into the Commissioning and Performance department in September 2010. The Strategy and Development Officer and support team would answer questions and provide advice and guidance as part of the 'Team around the Child' approach.
- CAF was highlighted as an issue in July 2008 where only 76 CAFs had been completed. The Department had made a continued effort to drive forward the importance of CAFs and had now completed approximately 1,000 CAFs to date.
- An Action Plan had been put together which had resulted in the Department now exceeding the targets set for CAFs, with approximately 1,000 completed to date.
- Further work was still to be undertaken to extend the use of CAF and ensure it remained beneficial to children and young people, and frontline workers now understood the importance of completing a CAF.
- An E-learning module was available which covered the basic principles of CAF of which 632 staff had accessed. There were also face-to-face training courses available, of which just over 300 frontline staff had attended.
- An Integrated Processes Working Group had also been established which worked with key stakeholders, the voluntary sector and schools, to provide a better understanding of the system of Integrated working, which included CAF.

- It was also clarified that CAFs did not apply to statemented children who received assistance through other arms of the organisation.

Resolved:

To note the progress made in respect of implementing CAF and Lead Professional across Wiltshire.

139. **Pupil Performance Figures**

The annual report, providing an overview of pupil performance at the end of each key stage for 2010 and details of Wiltshire's attainment against the national expectations, was presented by the Service Director for Schools and the Head of School Improvement.

- Although the results for KS1 reflected a slight decrease in mathematics (73% attainment in 2009 and 72% in 2010) an increase in attainment for both reading and writing was noted.
- It was clarified that attainment levels for KS2 had increased by 4% from last year and there had been a 3% increase within the foundation stage (to be renamed Foundation Years).
- The figures provided for the KS2 performance indicated that Wiltshire had now risen above the national average.
- The figures for KS3 remained steady and consistently high.
- Steady progress was being made in KS4 with Wiltshire above the national average in GCSE for English and Maths.
- The new English Baccalaureate indicator, which showed the proportion of young people gaining good GCSEs in a range of core subjects, also showed that Wiltshire was achieving above the national average with 18.8% of students achieving success against the national average of 15.6%.
- Within KS5 Wiltshire remained in line with the national average.
- It was acknowledged that the attainment levels for those pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM) and children within the SEN category remained lower than other categories. Work continued to narrow the attainment gap, particularly within KS2 and KS4 where a greater attainment gap existed. Research on the factors attributing to this gap had already been undertaken and reducing the attainment gap remained a priority for the department.

- Changes within the department's structure would result in the education team coming together for the first time from April 2011. It was felt that this would allow greater cohesion which would further improve attainment levels across the board.

The Committee acknowledged the hard work undertaken by the department which was reflected in the increase in attainment levels but requested more detailed statistical information in future reporting. This should include details of areas of good practice.

To assist with Councillors' understanding of the current strategies within the department, the Service Director would circulate details to include a brief description of the strategies themselves.

The Service Director proposed that Councillors may benefit from primary school visits to better understand the lessons and expectations on children and the methods being taught.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the contents of the report.**
- 2) **To congratulate all staff and children whose key stages have shown an improvement in their attainment levels for 2009/10.**
- 3) **To receive further detailed analysis data once available.**

140. **16-19 Learning and Skills ~ Strategic Priorities for 2011-12 and update on the transfer of responsibility from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to the Local Authority**

At its meeting in September 2010, the Committee received a report providing details of the progress made by the Council following the transfer of responsibility for 16-19 learning from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) from 1 April 2010.

A further report, presenting the draft Strategic Priorities Statement for Wiltshire 16-19 year olds in 2011/12 was presented to the Committee which also included an update on progress following the Council's new responsibility. The Head of School Improvement attended to present the report and to answer questions arising.

The following updates had occurred since circulation of the papers:

- The Education Maintenance Allowance funding was now likely to be released for learners following the same pattern as those in receipt of free school meals.

- A recent announcement relating to the Post 16 capital funding indicated that for 2011/12 £57m was likely to be made available for 6th form colleges nationally. £30m of this would be provided to support basic needs and would be distributed to colleges, 6th forms and academies with a focus on demographic changes.

Following questions raised by the Committee the following clarifications were provided:

- a) Transport to learning facilities - The department was working closely with colleagues as part of the transport review as well as working within the local community with providers.
- b) All providers within Wiltshire were working closely together for both pre 16 and post 16 learners and there was a desire to increase the range of provision as it currently stood.
- c) The local authority had a direct responsibility for schools and 6th forms which were inspected as part of the Schools Inspection provision. Where schools had a level 3 grading in quality of provision the authority was engaged with those providers.
- d) Although the Council did not have direct responsibility for Further Education colleges and training sector providers the Council in many cases did work alongside many of them.
- e) Those schools becoming an academy or those schools given an outstanding grading would not be subject to inspection at the same level.

Resolved:

To note the report.

141. **Basic Skills Update**

In July 2010, the Committee received a report on the level of Basic Skills (amongst adults) in Wiltshire and required an update in six months time.

The Director for Economy and Enterprise and Economic Development Manager presented an update report providing details of the work being undertaken to increase Basic Skills attainment levels.

- In addition to the information in the report, it was clarified that details of all activities planned, including those available for the unemployed for a year or more, would be submitted to the Wiltshire Assembly at its next meeting.

- The Team were working internally with the HR and Organisation Development department to develop a programme for staff, which had been delayed due to the recent management review.
- The Employment and Skills Board would be overseeing the work of the Team who were now also likely to submit a Local Enterprise Bid to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- It was acknowledged that further importance should be given to apprenticeship schemes as set out by central government. It was now less prescriptive on how providers could fund placements and schools were also being encouraged to promote this avenue. With the current economic climate there was limited funding for the private sector in terms of apprenticeships, and potential employees would be required to pay a subsidy. However, the team were looking creatively at other ways of incentivising employers to follow the apprenticeship route.
- Members of the Committee felt that the Council should lead by example in this area and promote the apprenticeships scheme internally. However, it was understood that this may not be applicable at the moment with the cuts required across the organisation. At the most appropriate time, progression through the organisation should also be encouraged to free-up available posts for apprenticeship options.
- It was confirmed that those students leaving the County for degrees were unlikely to return to Wiltshire for employment thereafter although current figures indicated that 1 in 5 graduates were currently unable to seek employment, of which a number were returning to Wiltshire. Part of the Spatial Planning Strategy would be to encourage employers to the Wiltshire region as figures released in 1991 indicated that at that time 50,000 commuted out of the county to work and 30,000 commuting in.
- Following a member request, the Service Director would provide the Committee with the number of young people receiving degrees within Wiltshire.

Resolved:

To note the progress made in improving the level of Basic Skills attainment in Wiltshire and the current and planned activity for maximising and sustaining this improvement.

142. **OfSTED Children's Services Annual Rating 2010**

The Corporate Director for DCE presented a report informing members of the Ofsted assessment of children's services within Wiltshire. The report was also considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 25 January 2011.

Wiltshire had been awarded a rating of 'Performs Well' as outlined in the Ofsted rating letter dated 9 December 2010, attached to the agenda papers. There had been improvements on last year's performance as well as some areas identified for further improvement which included the quality of childminding, primary schools and the attainment of children from low income families or those with special education needs.

Due to time constraints members of the Committee were requested to e-mail further questions relating to the report directly to the Corporate Director following the meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) **To note the report.**
- 2) **To congratulate all staff working with children and young people in Wiltshire on receiving a rating of 'Performs well' from Ofsted following its assessment of Children's Services in Wiltshire.**

143. **Task Group Update**

An update on the work of the Committee Task Groups was provided with the Agenda.

The Committee noted the updates provided with the following additional information:

Major Contracts Task Group

That the next meeting of the Task Group would take place on 1 February and not 2 February as indicated in the update.

144. **Forward Work Programme**

It was agreed that the Committee would monitor the impact of future increases to the cost of education.

It was understood that the youth service would be reviewed and that preliminary discussions had taken place. No immediate changes were to be made but the item would be added to the Forward Work Programme for consideration by the Committee at a later date.

The impact of additional academies within Wiltshire would be discussed between the Chairman and officers and details provided to Cllr Helen Osborn.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme.

145. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 17 March 2011

146. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for discussion.

(Duration of meeting: 10:30am – 1:30pm)

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

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