

Wiltshire Council

Children's Services Select Committee

26th January 2012

Task Group updates

1. Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group

Membership: Cllr Richard Britton
Cllr Mary Douglas
Cllr Jon Hubbard
Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Jacqui Lay
Dr Mike Thompson (Chairman)

The Task Group has almost concluded its evidence gathering, having met young people, headteachers and governors from secondary schools in the Salisbury area, plus representatives from post-16 providers from in- and outside of Wiltshire.

On 2nd December, the Task Group considered a draft final report including final conclusions and potential recommendations.

On 16th December, the Task Group met with Cllr Tony Deane and Ms Isobel Scott-Clarke, member of Tisbury Shadow Community Operations Board, regarding proposals for Tisbury campus. These include a youth skills centre, which has obvious synergies with the work of the Task Group.

In January, an online survey aimed at the parents of young people in the Salisbury area will go live on the Council website. This will gather their views on the post-16 educational provision in the Salisbury area, which will be incorporated into the Task Group's evidence.

The Task Group's final report will be considered by the Select Committee 29th March.

2. Major Contracts Task Group

Membership: Cllr Peter Colmer
Cllr Jon Hubbard
Cllr Jacqui Lay
Cllr Bill Moss (Chairman)
Cllr Carole Soden

This Task Group met on 16th January to conduct its annual review of the Council's contract with the White Horse Education Partnership (WHEP).

Urgent item – (missed from the original agenda papers)

WHEP is contracted for the provision of fully serviced secondary school accommodation at Chippenham (Abbeyfield), Malmesbury and Royal Wootton Bassett. The contract was awarded under the Government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and included the design, build, finance and operation of three schools.

The following was discussed:

- Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett Schools have converted to Academy Status and Abbeyfield School are currently considering this option. This has no financial implication for the Council as obligations are on the schools for ensuring adequate funding is available to cover the cost of the PFI arrangements.
- Benchmarking (market testing) is currently being undertaken for soft services (Building Cleaning, Grounds Maintenance and Catering) and will be concluded shortly. This may have an effect on the cost of services.
- Members received an update on the issue of cracks appearing in the flooring at Malmesbury School. Members were pleased that WHEP have agreed to invest in a replacement floor surface in another area of the school as recompense.
- WHEP had achieved the BS2200 nutritional standard for all three schools. Members were also pleased to hear of progress towards a cashless catering system. This has several benefits: a) removing any stigma attached to receiving free school meals; b) removing any chance of theft of cash between pupils; c) potential monitoring of menu choices and therefore nutrition. Members intend to request that this system be recommended to all schools in Wiltshire.

3. Placements for Looked After Children (LAC) Task Group

Membership: Cllr Peter Colmer
Cllr Andrew Davis
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
Rev Alice Kemp
Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Helen Osborn

This Task Group has not met since the last Select Committee. On 31st January the Task Group will meet to:

- Receive a briefing on the new approach to educational provision for LAC
- Receive a presentation of real-life case studies describing children's journeys through the care system.

On 6th March the Task Group will meet to:

Urgent item – (missed from the original agenda papers)

- Consider the ‘final’ Children in Care Strategy, making recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

4. Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group

Membership: Cllr Carole Soden
Rev Alice Kemp
Cllr Graham Payne (Chairman)
Cllr Anthony Trotman

This Task Group are undertaking visits to all six of Wiltshire’s special schools. Members have visited Larkrise School, Trowbridge and will visit Rowdeford School and Downland School on 23rd February.

Paul Kelly – Designated Scrutiny Officer and Scrutiny Manager

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