

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2013 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Pat Aves, Ken Brough, Miss Sarah Busby, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Sue Evans, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Simon Jacobs, KaylumHouse, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Sheila Parker, Dr M Thompson and Cllr Philip Whalley

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Simon Killane, Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Laura Mayes and Cllr Jonathon Seed

107 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Ricky Rogers.

108 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 October 2013

109 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of disposable interest or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee.

110 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman introduced Miss Sarah Busby, Headteacher of St Edmund's Girls' School, Salisbury and welcomed her on her first attendance at a meeting of this Committee. She would be representing secondary school headteachers.

111 **Public Participation**

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

112 **Early Help Strategy 2013-16**

Julia Cramp, Associate Director (Joint with CCG) for Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness introduced and explained the Draft Early Help Strategy 2013-16 prepared by Wiltshire Children & Young People's Trust and Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board. This followed on from an information briefing which was provided for Members immediately prior to the start of this meeting. The Strategy was out for consultation until 27 December 2013. Members were reminded that the Committee had previously agreed that Early Intervention was one of its work priorities for this Council.

Julia Cramp explained that the Early Help Strategy set out the improved outcomes the Council wished to see implemented for children and young people and the following priority objectives to achieve this:

Objective 1: Ensure the best start in life

Objective 2: Gaining the skills required to begin school

Objective 3: Being ready for adult life

Objective 4: Develop a family-based approach to early help

Objective 5: Develop effective structures and processes to access early help

It was noted that the Early Help Strategy would play a pivotal role in securing the high level outcomes set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2012-2015. A range of early intervention and prevention key impact indicators were being developed as follows:

- Tackling inequalities in low birth weight to improve health outcomes in childhood and adulthood
- Readiness of children to start school at age 5
- Improving foundation stage profile results for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- Improving literacy and numeracy attainment at ages 11, 16 and 19
- Success in closing the gap in educational attainment between children and young people from different socio-economic backgrounds
- Reduction in the number of children and young people missing school
- Reduction in persistence absence
- Reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies
- Reduction in the number of children and young people experiencing poverty
- Increased numbers of children and young people self-reporting a high level of wellbeing
- Increased numbers of 16-18 year olds participating in education, employment and training

- Increased numbers of young people engaging in positive activities
- Reduction of anti-social behaviour
- Reduction in the number of young people offending including first time entrants to the criminal justice system
- Reduction in re-offending rates
- Number of contacts made to children's social care
- Percentage of referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment
- Number of children requiring statutory child protection intervention
- Reduction in the number of children and young people in residential home placements including a reduction in the number placed in homes rated as less than "good" by Ofsted
- Reduction in the number of SEND young people going to residential, out of county, educational or social care settings
- Analysis of patterns and trends in young people attending GUM (Genito Urinary Medicine) clinics
- Analysis of patterns and trends of Child Trafficking Investigations
- Levels of children and young people admitted to hospital for non-accidental injuries including self-harm
- Reduction in substance abuse
- Reduction in inappropriate caring responsibilities
- Improving attendance and attainment of looked after children
- Number of children in need under Section 17 of the Children Act
- Supporting parents in to work and sustaining employment

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Concern was expressed that networking was beginning to fall apart due to inconsistencies in partners' training, especially Police. However, it was explained that the Police were keen to work with other partners and also take part in partner training that was still ongoing. It was pointed out that partners were signed up to the Workforce Development Programme.
- The proposals for early intervention were warmly welcomed but it was stressed that help and advice especially to parents should be made available even before the child was born so as to provide the best possible environment for the child's development.
- It was considered that a single point of access for early help should be provided centrally in Wiltshire from where the most appropriate help or advice could be drawn down.

- It was pointed out that there was a need to continue to improve the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) and TAC (Team Around the Child) processes by:
 - (1) Linking the CAF (Early Help Assessment) with the Social Care Single Assessment to support the child from early help to Children's Social Care and 'step down' back to early help where appropriate.
 - (2) Improve the capacity and quality assurance role of the CAF Coordinators to create additional resource to support effective early help.
 - (3) Improved training, advice and support offer to lead professionals.

- There was a need for all targeted services to be linked and also for primary schools to work very closely with children's centres in order to create a seamless move for children from pre-school to primary education.

It was noted that the key impact indicators being developed, as set out above, would be reviewed at six monthly intervals and after further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the Draft Early Help Strategy 2013-16.**
- (2) To request the final Strategy and draft implementation plan for the next meeting in January 2014 following the closing date for representations.**
- (3) To request progress reports immediately after the key impact indicators had been reviewed at about six monthly intervals.**
- (4) To thank Officers for the excellent draft report and to support the 'invest to save' approach of Early Intervention as an effective use of Council money, particularly its focus on outcomes.**

113 Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group - 18-month Review of Progress

The Chairman reported that an 18 month progress review of further education in the Salisbury area was expected to be circulated as a late supplement. The Task Group, chaired by Dr Mike Thompson, undertook their review on 14 November 2013 at which was considered a range of evidence, including written and verbal contributions from a number of schools and post-16 providers from the Salisbury area, as well as officers and executive members.

The Task Group then agreed its findings and circulated their draft report to providers for comment. Unfortunately, some of the responses received impacted on members' initial conclusions and recommendations quite significantly and it was therefore felt that more time was required to reconsider the report's contents.

Resolved:

To defer consideration of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group's review of progress until the Select Committee's next meeting on 28 January 2014 to allow further discussions to take place.

114 Rapid Scrutiny Exercise - Overnight Short Breaks for Children & Young People with SEND

The Chairman reminded Members that at its last meeting, the Select Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise to consider the proposals under a joint review between the Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group on overnight short breaks for disabled children and young people in Wiltshire. This included a proposal to close Hillcote short breaks unit in Salisbury.

The rapid scrutiny exercise took place on 7 November 2013 and several members also attended a public meeting about the proposals held in Salisbury the previous day. The report of the rapid scrutiny was referred to the Clinical Commissioning Group Governing Body, the decision maker on this matter, and also to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

In the light of concerns expressed by many parties on the proposals, the CCG Governing Body decided to defer their decision on this matter until their next meeting on 28 January 2014, the same day as the Select Committee's next meeting.

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, made the following comments on recommendations contained in the rapid scrutiny report:

1 The proposals have not been properly costed

The figure of £40,000 per specialist carer had been arrived at through discussions with two neighbouring authorities who had specialist carers providing overnight short breaks for disabled children (Dorset and Gloucestershire). Although the two schemes were slightly different, the cost was roughly the same. The cost included adaptations and equipment. A member of staff from Wiltshire Council had gone through the costs in detail with contacts in these two authorities.

The new specialist carer scheme was highly unlikely to have any impact on the future use and sustainability of Canon's House. It was known that some families preferred residential provision, whilst others were happier with their

child being looked after in a family home. There will always be a need for a residential unit in a county the size of Wiltshire.

The proposal was cost neutral in that the CCG had signed up to re-investing the funding currently used to run Hillcote in other overnight short breaks and earlier support for families with a disabled child. This commitment was included in the minutes of the CCG Governing Body meeting. There was no intention on the part of the CCG to make a saving from the proposed closure of Hillcote – this was what cost neutral meant.

2 Potential difficulties in recruiting specialist carers

The Council had held detailed discussions with the two adjacent local authorities who had no difficulty recruiting specialist carers. In Dorset, these carers were recruited from their Family Link Scheme. In Wiltshire, interest had already been expressed in being a specialist carer by a member of Hillcote staff. It was right to point out that it would be difficult to recruit a number of Specialist Carers before April 2014, but this was not an option that any of the five families of the young people currently using Hillcote wanted to explore.

3 Quality assurance and safeguarding checks of specialist carers

It was right that specialist carers were subject to the same quality assurance and safeguarding checks as foster carers. These were rigorous checks. Children and young people who were looked after by foster carers were often vulnerable in a variety of ways and this was why safeguarding checks were so important. The intention of a specialist carer scheme to provide overnight short breaks for disabled children was that the specialist carer and the family of the disabled child formed a good relationship and knew each other well. It was not expected that any parent would leave their child with somebody that they did not feel comfortable with.

4 Continuity of provision for service users if a specialist carer decides to stop operating

Specialist carers were recruited, on a contract, to provide a specific amount of overnight short break support. Carers would need to give notice if they decided to stop operating. If this happened, then discussions would take place with families about alternative support. It was right to note that long term support could not be guaranteed.

5 Not demonstrated that proposed specialist carer scheme will be able to provide care at short notice

Within the contracts agreed with a specialist carer, some flexibility could be built in so that they could support families at short notice. However, the position was no different than with a residential unit. Hillcote was only open for part of the week, so would not always be available at short notice. When a parent could not care for a disabled child at short notice, Children's Social Care would make

arrangements for the child to be looked after if the family did not have relatives/friends who could provide help.

6 Parents have not been made aware of or offered provision at Hillcote when it may have been appropriate

Access to overnight short breaks was only given following an assessment by a Social Worker within the Children's Disability Teams. All families with a significantly disabled child were in contact with a wide range of professionals. In Southern Wiltshire, all these professionals would be aware of Hillcote, that it provided overnight short breaks and that access was via the Children's Disability Teams. These teams were not aware of any families being referred that met the criteria for overnight short breaks and who had not been offered support. Two of the families that used Hillcote actually lived closer to Canon's House than to Hillcote. The decline in the use of Hillcote was not related to a lack of information, but it was a specialist service and was therefore not 'advertised' as it was only offered to those families with the highest level of needs. For other families with a disabled child, there were other options (including Wiltshire's Short Break Scheme which was accessed by approximately 1,000 families).

7 What emergency plans will be put in place if Canon's House was temporarily unable to operate

All service providers had business continuity plans. If Canon's House were temporarily unable to operate then other arrangements would need to be made for those children and young people who had planned overnight short breaks at the unit. The closure of Hillcote would not make any difference to the position now. There were no spare buildings for any service just in case there was a fire.

8 No information provided on early intervention services and how their effectiveness has been assessed

If Hillcote closed, then some funding would be re-invested in early intervention services (in line with the views of parents and carers of disabled children across the county who had been telling the Council for a number of years that they wanted help before things reached crisis point, for example help with challenging behaviour, sleep and continence). The CCG already funded a Children's Learning Disability Nursing Service that worked with families struggling with, for example, behaviour or sleep routines for a learning disabled child. However, this only had the equivalent of 3 full-time members of staff for the whole county. This service would be expanded so that help could be provided for a larger number of families at an earlier stage. An expanded Children's Learning Disability Nursing Service would work closely with both Canon's House staff and specialist carers, alongside families with a learning disabled child.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the report of the Overnight Short Breaks for Children and Young People with SEND Rapid Scrutiny Exercise and to note the Cabinet Member's comments.**

- (2) To note that the Wiltshire CCG Governing Body had elected to defer consideration of the proposals of the Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group until their meeting on 28 January 2014.**

115 Task Group Update/Forward Work Programme

The Select Committee received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups since the last meeting together with the Committee's Forward Work Programme:-

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group
- Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group
- Further Education Task Group – It was noted that the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee had endorsed the setting up of this Task Group as part of the O&S forward work programme and all Members had been emailed inviting interest in taking part. The following Members of this Committee so far had offered to serve on this Task Group:
Cllr Jon Hubbard; Cllr Jacqui Lay; Dr Mike Thompson; Kaylum House.
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Task Group - The Chairman reminded Members that at its meeting on 1 October 2013, the Committee agreed that children and young people with SEN and Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD) would be a key part of its forward work programme. This also reflected the topic being a priority within the Council's Business Plan 2013-17. A task group was established and authority was delegated to the Chairman to seek membership.

The Chairman had asked Alice Kemp to lead on developing the task group given her role as the Committee's SEN parent governor representative, her knowledge of SEND and her experience on the Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group. The Chairman had met with Alice Kemp, the Senior Scrutiny Officer and executive members to discuss the executive's priorities for SEND and where the Task Group might add the most value. They proposed that the following terms of reference be adopted:-

To explore how we can best prepare young people with SEND for Adulthood, including:

- Local education and training options, including managing transitions
 - Planning for employment and supporting local employers to employ young people with SEND
 - Providing housing options to support young people with SEND to live in their communities
 - Developing communities that are inclusive, welcoming and supportive of young people with SEND
-
- Schools and the Local Authority Task Group – It was reported that following on from the last Select Committee meeting, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cllr Philip Whalley had met with the Associate Director (joint with CCG) for Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness, the Head of School Effectiveness and the Portfolio Holder for Schools to discuss this and gain the executive's views on where scrutiny could contribute. During discussion the following aspects of the academies' programme had been considered:
 - (i) The process schools followed when becoming an academy. It was concluded that there was limited opportunity to add value here for the following reasons:
 - Schools received advice direct from the DfE and other bodies on process when pursuing the academies option.
 - The LA had a limited role in advising schools on process.
 - (ii) The best leadership models for academy schools. It was concluded that there was limited opportunity to add value here for the following reason:
 - The LA had no role in directing schools in their choice of leadership model.
 - (iii) The take-up and effectiveness of services sold to academy schools by the LA. It was concluded that a scrutiny exercise could be effective in this area by examining the following:
 - Is the LA offering schools the services they want?
 - Are these services popular and effective?
 - The services task group focuses on should be around 'educational excellence' rather than HR, payroll etc

The following members of this Committee so far had offered to serve on this Task Group:
Ken Brough, John Hawkins and Cllr Philip Whalley.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the update on Task Group activity provided.**
- (2) To endorse the appointment of Ken Brough to membership of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group.**
- (3) To appoint the following members to serve on the Further Education Task Group - Cllr Jon Hubbard; Cllr Jacqui Lay; Dr Mike Thompson; Kaylum House.**
- (4)**
 - (a) To agree the suggested terms of reference for the SEND Task Group.**
 - (b) To seek nominations to serve on this Task Group.**
- (5) (a) To agree the following terms of reference of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group:**
 - (i) To explore how the Council promotes excellence and fulfil its statutory duties to children and young people in Wiltshire's schools.**
 - (ii) To explore whether the education services offered by the Council meet the needs of schools and students, and if not, how they could be developed to help improve outcomes.**
- (b) To seek nominations to serve on this Task Group.**

116 Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001

The Chairman reported that over the past year, two unsuccessful appointments processes had been carried out to seek a new Secondary Parent Governor Representative to serve on this Committee. He explained that one of the reasons why these attempts had been unsuccessful was that the 2001 regulations stated that all Parent Governor Representatives should be appointed from maintained schools and there were now far fewer maintained secondary schools in Wiltshire than when the legislation was introduced as a large number of them had sought and gained academy status.

Resolved:

To ask the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to co-sign a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Education requesting a change in the legislation to reflect the current situation across the County in terms of school designations.

117 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.

118 Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

119 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of the Select Committee was due to be held on Tuesday 28 January 2014 at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.30 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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115