

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2015 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Dr M Thompson, Rev Alice Kemp, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Sue Evans, Cllr Pat Aves, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Philip Whalley, Mr Ken Brough, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Melody Thompson (Substitute) and Miss Freya Pigott (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Laura Mayes; Cllr Richard Gamble; Cllr Alan MacRae and Cllr Christine Crisp.

48 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Miss Sarah Busby, Cllr Simon Jacobs (who was substituted by Cllr Melody Thompson), Miss Chloe Lintern (who was substituted by Miss Freya Pigott), Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Ricky Rogers and Miss Cathy Shahrokni (who was substituted by David Wragg).

49 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 June 2015, subject to the following two amendments:-

(a) Minute No. 38 – Final Report of the Children’s Centres Task Group

Sixth paragraph, first sentence to read:

“The Task Group stressed the need for an Invest to Save approach and concluded that the Children’s Centres performed a vital role and were an essential part of the early intervention process, which had overall been proven to be highly effective.”

(b) Minute No. 39 – Executive Response to the Final Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group

A fourth resolution be added to read:

“To receive a pre-meeting information briefing on the Early Help Strategy immediately before the October 2015 meeting.”

50 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

51 Chairman's Announcements

(a) Welcome to New Members

The Chairman introduced and welcomed:

Freya Pigott, who was representing Children & Young People,

David Wragg, who was deputising for Miss Cathy Shahrokni (Further Education Representative) and

Hugo Jequier, who was observing the work of this Committee as part of his work experience training.

(b) Schools and the Local Authority Task Group - Referral to Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

The Chairman reminded the meeting that on 14 April 2015, this Committee received the executive response to the Final Report of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group. The Task Group's third recommendation was that the Council identified an officer at associate director level who had overall responsibility for the Council's relationship with schools and all of the services it provided to them.

The executive response to this was that the Associate Director for Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness had overall responsibility for the Council's relationship with schools. However, this Associate Director was not responsible for all services provided to schools, such as payroll and the HR Advisory Service. The Executive did not accept that all services provided could be the responsibility of one Associate Director.

This Committee referred this to the Management Committee at its meeting on 7 July, which Cllr Philip Whalley, Chairman of the Task Group had attended together with the Chairman of this Committee. Following a vote the Committee declined to endorse the referral, noting that the

Cabinet Member had already considered the proposal and had responded. However, the Committee noted that the Chairman of the Task Group had developed an alternate proposal, and that the Children's Select Committee should seek the Cabinet Member's views on that proposal if they were still dissatisfied with the Cabinet Member's original decision.

Cllr Whalley explained that the reasoning behind this proposal, suggesting that the all-important work of classroom teaching was affected by what took place in the wider school and this could include matters to do with payroll, HR, building services and so on. In short a whole range of services could effect a school's effectiveness.

The Chairman suggested that Cllr Whalley discuss this further with Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director and report back to this Committee if necessary with any new proposal.

52 Public Participation

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

53 School Places Strategy 2015-2020

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's School Places Strategy 2015-2020 and its implementation plan, which was the topic of the information briefing which took place immediately before the start of this meeting.

It was proposed that this Strategy become a key framework document for the Council in considering any strategy proposals for changes to school organisation including the commissioning of new schools and would inform future capital investment priorities.

Members of the Committee congratulated the Head of School Place Commissioning and her team on producing such a useful and interesting document and recognised that this would be constantly changing, taking into account new housing developments, migration, changes in the birth rate and army rebasing.

The Committee was informed that this document was still very much in draft format and was likely to change prior to its consideration by Cabinet. A comprehensive consultation process would be taking place including its consideration by the Area Boards which would be given the opportunity of expressing the views of the local population.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- 1. To request that all Area Boards are invited and encouraged to respond to the draft School Places Strategy 2015-20 during the consultation.**
- 2. To request that a report is brought back to Committee in October outlining how the draft Strategy has been amended following consultation.**
- 3. The Chairman of the Committee to work with the Chairman of the SEND Task Group to identify whether scrutiny of the current review of the SEN Strategy would be beneficial.**

54 Executive Response to the Final Report of the Children's Centres Task Group

The Chairman reminded Members that at its meeting on 2 June 2015, the Committee endorsed the final report of the Children's Centres Task Group and referred it to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for response.

The Committee received the response of Cllr Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services. The Chairman drew attention to certain sections of the response which erroneously stated that this had come from the Council rather than from the Executive. It was acknowledged that these were typographical errors and would be corrected.

Cllr Laura Mayes introduced her report and considered the Final Report of the Task Group represented an excellent piece of scrutiny.

Cllr Mary Douglas, Chairman of the Task Group, welcomed the Cabinet Member's response and considered it to be positive and helpful. She reiterated the need for an Invest to Save approach and requested that this approach be revisited at the next Committee meeting in October. The Associate Director, Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness, supported this stance but stressed the need for additional monies to support this important initiative.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- 1. To note the Executive Response to the Final Report of the Children's Centres Task Group;**
- 2. To ask the Cabinet Member to amend the response, where necessary, so that it was clear the response was from the Executive rather than from the Council;**

3. **To reinforce the Committee's enthusiasm for investing in early help, as recommended in the Task Group's final report and inform Cabinet of this;**
4. **To look, in the New Year, at how the additional funding expected for Early Help transferred from the Health service would be used.**

55 **Future Delivery of Family and Parenting Support Services**

The Chairman reported Cabinet would shortly be considering a proposal to bring together the commissioned service for families requiring support who did not meet the threshold for social care intervention and the in-house service which currently worked with families who were in receipt of statutory intervention.

The Associate Director for Commissioning, Performance & School Effectiveness made a presentation in which she explained the background to this proposal. The Chairman reminded the Committee that in 2012, this Committee received a report from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on a review of the Family Information Service and Parental Partnership Service. A review had concluded that there was significant duplication around the provision of information for parents and carers, particularly parents and carers of children with disabilities/special educational needs. The Committee decided that significant changes were required to the Family Information Service and the Parent Partnership Service specifications in the Council's contract with Ask and the level of funding to be provided.

The Associate Director stressed that the aim of the proposal was to provide an improved service and Members suggested that this could well be a subject for future scrutiny.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

1. **To note the briefing provided and that a decision would be taken in the Autumn.**
2. **To request the Chairman to discuss potential scrutiny input on this decision with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Associate Director for Commissioning, Performance & School Effectiveness.**

56 Peer Care Practice Diagnostic

The Committee considered a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on the recent Peer Care Practice Diagnostic which was arranged through the Local Government Association to look at practice and outcomes around looked after children and care leavers.

The Committee noted that the Care Practice Diagnostic was a structured and standardised exercise that focused specifically on elements of care practice. The Peer Review Team was in Wiltshire from 20 to 23 April 2015 and a findings letter had been received, as attached to the report before the Committee. The key lines of enquiry that the Peer Group were asked to focus on were:

- Level of aspiration and ambition for children in care and care leavers
- Quality of provision of care planning and placement options for young people over 10
- Impact of challenge and quality assurance provided by Independent Reviewing Officers
- Quality of care and outcomes for care leavers
- Implementation of the Family Justice reforms
- Consistency of practice, interventions and outcomes for children looked after across Wiltshire.

Key messages set out in the letter were:

- Ensure that the level of your aspiration and ambitions for looked after children and young people are translated into achievable outcomes
- Review the respective roles and terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Children's Select Committee
- Strengthen the quality and consistency of practice by embedding the Principal Social Worker role and providing a toolkit of appropriate methodologies – supervision records and management decision making need to be recorded on case records
- Review and consider replacement of the current Care First ICS system
- Review the structural arrangements for Quality Assurance and the Independent Reviewing Service

- Use the new Commissioning Strategy to develop a LAC placement market development plan
- Continue to develop the adoption and fostering services to increase placement choice, more targeted recruitment and support to new carers
- Develop a clear plan with partners to provide more apprenticeships and employment opportunities for care leavers.

The Chairman reminded Members that at its last meeting on 2 June 2015, this Committee had requested that the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel be presented to this Committee prior to being submitted to Full Council and also that a six monthly report on the Panel's work be scrutinised by the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- 1. To note the outcomes of the recent peer Care Practice Diagnostic which was arranged through the Local Government Association to look at practice and outcomes around looked after children and care leavers.**
- 2. To thank all officers involved in the recent Ofsted inspection of children's services for their hard work.**

57 Children's Community Health Services Update

A report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, was received from which it was noted that children's community health services in Wiltshire were currently being retendered in order to seek a single contract/provider of children's community health services rather than currently by five organisations with some variations in service models and pathways. This new model would lead to more equitable support across the county, easier access to services and the potential for improved joint working with GPs, Wiltshire Council and other partners to improve the health and wellbeing of Wiltshire's children and young people. The evaluation of bids was currently being carried out by a core group of evaluators and it was planned to make a recommendation on a preferred provider to Cabinet.

During discussion, Members recognised the need for the new service to be evaluated and the Chairman agreed to discuss this with the Vice-Chairman, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Associate Director for Commissioning, Performance & School Effectiveness with a view to bringing back some proposals on a reporting mechanism at the next meeting.

Resolved:

- 1. To note that Children's Community Health Services in Wiltshire are currently being retendered to seek a single contract/provider and that a recommendation on a preferred provider will be agreed by Cabinet in September.**
- 2. To hold a rapid scrutiny exercise to consider how delivery of the Children's Community Health Services should be effectively monitored once funding is transferred to the Council.**

58 Promoting Family Resilience

The Committee received a briefing note on family resilience from the Associate Director for Commissioning, Performance & School Effectiveness in response to a request from Cllrs Mary Douglas and Philip Whalley.

It was noted that the Council's Children's Services played a key role in promoting and delivering improved outcomes for children and young people and that all the work of Children's Services had this key aim. However, Children's Services only worked directly with parents where there was concern about the effects of parenting on a child's development and outcomes, or the family had a child with a special educational need or disability with might place increased pressure on parents.

Cllr Mary Douglas stressed that she was keen to promote family resilience and suggested that a task group be established to identify what was already taking place to support this and the impact on families. Cllr Philip Whalley supported these views and suggested that consideration be given to establishing a joint task group with the Health Select Committee to pursue these objectives.

Miss Freya Pigott stated that schools could access information for PSHE lessons and suggested that education on relationships was often poor. The Chairman considered that schools needed to be encouraged to make use of the various resources that were available to promote family relationships and suggested that the Youth Assembly might be a forum to promote this.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- 1. To note the briefing provided on the role of Children's Services in promoting family resilience as a form of early intervention.**
- 2. To request interested members to meet with officers and discuss the provision of PHSE in Wiltshire schools and the Council's influence in this area and report back to Committee.**

3. To request Cllrs Mary Douglas and Philip Whalley to scope the potential terms of reference of a task group looking at the topic of promoting family resilience and report back to the Committee.

59 **Ofsted Inspection - Children's Services**

The Associate Director for Operational Children's Services reported that an Ofsted Inspection of Wiltshire Council Children's Services had taken place in June 2015 and a report on the findings was awaited.

Resolved:

To note the update provided.

60 **Department for Education - Update from the Department for Children and Education**

The Committee received an update from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the Department for Education from May to June 2015 as follows:-

- Early years foundation stage (EYFS)
- Keeping children safe in education
- EBacc Policy Paper
- Technical and vocational qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds
- Initial teacher training criteria
- Academies annual report: academic year 2013 to 2014
- Academies update
- Update on the Education and Adoption Bill
- Supported internships for young people with learning difficulties
- New taskforce to transform child protection

Resolved

To note the update provided.

61 **Task Group Update**

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

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Task Group
- Obesity and Child Poverty Task Group (joint with Health Select Committee)
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

- School Improvement Strategy Task Group
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Task Group

Resolved:

1. To note the update on task group activity provided.
2. To note that the SEND Task Group will now meet in September to consider progress with:
 - developing housing opportunities for young people with SEND
 - transitional housing for young people leaving care
3. To note that to date only two Members had expressed an interest in serving on the School Improvement Strategy Task Group and, in these circumstances, to send out a final request to Members asking for volunteers as a minimum of four Members were required to make the Task Group viable.
4. Following the executive response to the Final Report of the Schools and the LA Task Group received in April, Cllr Whalley to bring a revised recommendation to the committee for endorsement on 13 October.

62 Forward Work Programme

The Committee received a document showing the relevant items from the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

Resolved:

To note the Forward Work Programme for this Committee.

63 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 13 October 2015, at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am and that that this would be preceded by a pre-meeting information briefing on the Early Help Strategy starting at 9.30am.

64 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 2.30 - 5.10 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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