

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 31 MAY 2012 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

Present:

Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Peggy Dow, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Kim Hunte, KaylumHouse, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Mr N Owen, Cllr Sheila Parker, Cllr Carole Soden and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Richard Britton, Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE and Cllr Laura Mayes

1 **Membership**

The membership of the Select Committee as appointed by Council at its annual meeting on 15 May 2012 was noted.

2 **Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Bill Moss.

3 **Election of Chairman**

Resolved:

To elect Cllr Carole Soden as Chairman of the Select Committee for the ensuing year.

Cllr Carole Soden in the Chair

4 **Election of Vice-Chairman**

Resolved:

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

5 Declarations of Interest

Mr Neil Owen, Mr John Hawkins and Mrs Kim Hunte each declared a personal interest in Item No. 10 – Final Report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area task Group, because of their involvement with further education at St Edmund's School, Salisbury, St Joseph's School, Salisbury and Wiltshire College respectively.

They would each take part in the debate but Mr Neil Owen, as a Non-Elected Voting Member, would not vote.

6 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Cllrs Peggy Dow and Sheila Parker as new members of the Committee and also Mr Kaylum House as the new Children's & Young People's representative.

7 Public Participation

The Committee noted the rules on public participation and the manner in which the meeting would be held.

8 Terms of Reference

The Select Committee noted the following terms of reference as agreed by Council at its meeting on 15 May 2012:-

- Deliver the children's services elements of the overall work programme (as directed by the Management Committee) in line with the overview and scrutiny procedure rules set out in the Constitution
- Membership to include co-opted voting parent governor and church representatives in accordance with the Constitution
- Report and make recommendations to the Management Committee through its minutes
- Establish ad hoc task groups
- Six meetings per year will be fixed in the Council diary

The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that a review of the scrutiny committee structure had been undertaken which culminated in Council agreeing a new committee structure as circulated. Although the revised structure appeared rather similar to the previous structure there were some significant changes as follows:-

(1) The new Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee would sit above three select committees, viz. Children's, Environment and Health.

(2) The Management Committee would have the following two functions:-

- (i) To undertake scrutiny of corporate issues (as before), and
- (ii) To manage the overall O & S work programme.

Resolved:

To note the new Overview & Scrutiny Committee structure and the Children's Select Committee's terms of reference as agreed by Council on 15 May 2012.

9 Legacy Issues and Development of Future Work Programme

The Senior Scrutiny Officer explained that there would shortly be compiled a single O & S work programme which would be coordinated by the Management Committee. It was envisaged that it would choose what scrutiny activities the select committees would undertake but the Management Committee recognised these committees, being the experts in their individual areas, would propose work topics which the Management Committee would then approve.

Each Select Committee was being asked to prioritise its work programme in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and Directors and ensure that they were closely linked to the Council's Business Plan. The results of this exercise would then be considered by the Management Committee at its next meeting on 17 July 2012 which was scheduled to be held before the next meeting of this Select Committee on 26 July 2012.

During discussion Members stressed the importance of recognising that the scrutiny function should be proactive and not responsive in policy development and accordingly that Cabinet should involve the scrutiny function at an early stage in the process.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the core scrutiny values as adopted by the Management Committee.**
- (2) To request the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Director, to compile a priority list of items from the Select Committee's existing work programme for consideration by the Management Committee at its next meeting.**

10 **Final Report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group**

Dr Mike Thompson, the Chairman of the Task Group, gave a presentation by way of introduction to the Task Group's report on further education in the Salisbury area.

Dr Thomson explained that this Task Group had been established to undertake a review of the post-16 education available in the Salisbury area, following on from a visit by several members of the Committee to three secondary schools co-located in the Laverstock area of Salisbury. During the visit, a number of students and staff expressed a wish for the schools to have their own joint sixth form provision. The Committee had also received reports of significant numbers of students from the Salisbury area travelling large distances, often outside of Wiltshire, to access post-16 education and it was this broader issue that the Task Group was later established to consider.

Mrs Jenny Lawrie, Headteacher of The Trafalgar School, Downton then addressed the Committee setting out her views and those of the School's Governing Body on the Task Group's recommendations. She stated that:-

- The report misrepresented the School's views, suggesting that the needs of the students at that School would be served simply by their not having to travel long distances to Salisbury for post 16 education. She went on to explain that although it could well be disadvantageous to the area to lose so many young people to Hampshire provision, there was evidence to show that these students were not educationally disadvantaged by receiving their post 16 education in Hampshire.
- The report made no mention of the School's candidature for the Middle Years Programme of The International Baccalaureate (IB) which would lead perfectly on to the IB's post 16 qualification – the higher regarded Diploma. There was a clear gap in the Salisbury area for an international curriculum. The School's aim was to offer the IB Diploma.
- A significant proportion of secondary school students in Salisbury wished to remain at their individual schools for their post 16 education where they felt a sense of belonging, whereas there was evidence to show that some students found transition to a new school and joining an existing cohort difficult. Students from The Trafalgar School would continue to prefer to study at the Hampshire Colleges rather than to attend a new facility in Salisbury.

- The report suggested that students at The Trafalgar School would be the only 16 year olds in the Salisbury area who would not be able to stay on at their school for post 16 education. Bearing in mind the stated policy in Wiltshire was for every secondary school to offer education to 11-18 year old students, the Board of Governors at The Trafalgar School were aghast that this policy appeared to have been ignored by the Task Group and thus lead to the isolating of this School to a less favoured status and therefore threaten its future viability.

Dr Thompson confirmed that the Task Group was most impressed by what was seen on its visit to the School and assured Mrs Lawrie that her School's concerns would form part of the submission to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and that the needs of the School would be taken into account.

Cllr Lionel Grundy confirmed that discussions were already being held with representatives from the Laverstock schools and also the College to take this forward.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:-

- Young people from the south west of Wiltshire, especially from the Mere and Tisbury areas, were attending secondary schools in Dorset at Gillingham and Shaftesbury, this arrangement having been formalised as part of the three tier review of education in the south of Wiltshire several years ago.
- There was an apparent lack of understanding amongst parents as to what sixth form facilities were available in Wiltshire. It was important that the services in Wiltshire were adequately marketed. How many sixth form places in Wiltshire remained unfilled and how many students chose to undertake their sixth form studies outside of the County?
- A suggestion was made that sixth form provision be made at Amesbury, Salisbury and Downton but it was recognised that there were considerable financial restraints on what could be provided.

Dr Thompson reported that a good proportion of students interviewed had expressed the desire to continue with their sixth form studies within Wiltshire. However, if all the sixth form places in Wiltshire were taken up there would still be a shortage of 500 places.

Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, welcomed the report and considered it a useful document to share with the Education Funding Agency. She explained that the Local Authority was not the strategic commissioner of sixth form provision.

Resolved:

- (1) To express the Select Committee's thanks to Dr Thompson and the Task Group for producing an excellent and comprehensive report and to Henry Powell, Senior Scrutiny Officer for drafting the document.**
- (2) To endorse the final report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group and refer its recommendations, together with the concerns expressed by the Headteacher and Board of Governors of The Trafalgar School, Downton, to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for response at the Select Committee's meeting on 26 July 2012.**

11 Wiltshire's Readiness To Meet The New Requirements For Raising The Participation Age (RPA)

The Select Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director which provided an overview of Wiltshire's readiness to meet the new statutory duties for Local Authorities set out in the Education & Skills Act 2008, to Raise the Participating Age (RPA). These duties would increase the minimum age at which young people in England could leave learning, requiring them to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015. The report was requested at the last meeting of the Children's Services Select Committee.

It was noted that the requirements of the 2008 Act required young people to choose one of the following options:-

- Full-time education, including school sixth form, college or home education.
- Work-placed learning, such as Apprenticeship.
- Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.

After discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.**

- (2) **To request a short update at the November meeting of the Select Committee and a further more detailed report in 12 months' time.**

12 **Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and LAC Services and DfE Adoption Scorecard**

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, informing Members of the March 2012 Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in Wiltshire and the Department for Education Scorecard.

It was noted that Wiltshire's safeguarding services overall effectiveness was graded by Ofsted as inadequate but its capacity for improvement was graded as adequate. The overall effectiveness of Wiltshire's looked after children's services was graded as adequate and its capacity for improvement was graded as good.

The report set out the measures that had been, or was about to be put in place to deal with the weaknesses Ofsted had identified. It was anticipated that Ofsted would carry out a re-inspection within a year.

It was noted that a Task Group had been set up to look at Safeguarding Children & Young People and this Task Group was already focusing specifically on the results and implications of the Ofsted report. Cllr Hubbard, Chairman of the Task Group, stated that the Task Group would welcome input from other Members of this Select Committee either by attendance at meetings or by submitting their views. He also undertook to provide the Select Committee with regular updates.

After discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) **To note the contents of the report.**
- (2) **To receive regular progress reports from the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group.**

13 **Coalition update March to May 2012**

The Select Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director on developments relating to children's services arising from the Coalition Government.

Arising therefrom:

- School Funding Reform Mr J Hawkins reported that as part of these new funding arrangements, the service children's allowance was disappearing. This was confirmed but the Committee was informed that discussions were taking place with officials at the Department for Education bearing in mind that Wiltshire contained the second highest number of service families in the UK.

14 **Report of the Family Information Service rapid scrutiny exercise**

The Select Committee received a report presenting the conclusions and recommendations of the Family Information Service rapid scrutiny exercise which had been established by the Children's Services Select Committee on 29 March 2012. It had met on 11 May 2012 and elected Cllr Jon Hubbard as Lead Member.

Cllr Hubbard introduced his report and explained the recommendations which were as follows:-

1. The Rapid Scrutiny Group welcomes the proposed six month review of the reconfigured Family Information Service, but recommends that a wider subset of agencies, partners and service users be involved, including the Police, health visitors, voluntary groups (such as the Trussell Trust), nurseries, pre-schools and the providers of the Family Information Service;
2. The Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that
 - a) those children and families previously or currently receiving outreach services from Ask must be 'picked up' by outreach services provided by children centres;
 - b) the potential benefits of a 'one stop shop' for family information should not be lost as a result of this service reconfiguration;
 - c) the reconfigured Family Information Service must be monitored to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of vulnerable users;

and therefore recommends that the Council and Ask work closely together to ensure that these concerns are addressed, including in the proposed six month review of the reconfigured service.

Mr Keith Hillman, representing ASK, confirmed that ASK was fully committed to working with the Council and supported the recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny Group.

After discussion,

Resolved:

To endorse the recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny exercise and refer them to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for response.

15 Multi-Agency Thresholds document - update

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director which provided an update on progress on the implementation of the Multi-Agency Thresholds Document. It was noted that this document had been distributed to schools and other partner agencies in July 2011 to provide a framework for integrated working within Children's Services and to provide guidance on whether children and young people's needs should be met in universal, targeted or specialist services. This had first been brought to the Children's Services Select Committee in September 2011 and Members had requested an update in six months' time.

After discussion,

Resolved:

To note the update.

16 Task Group update

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

- Placements for LAC Task Group
- Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group
- Major Contracts Task Group

Resolved:

(1) To agree/note:

- (i) That the Placements for LAC Task Group is replaced by the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group and that this be a Standing Task Group;**
- (ii) That the Task Group will focus on scrutinising safeguarding arrangements, but will retain the ability to consider LAC issues by exception;**

- (iii) The following terms of reference as adopted by the Task Group:
- a) To monitor and scrutinise implementation of the improvements to safeguarding arrangements required by Ofsted following its inspection of Wiltshire's Safeguarding and LAC Services in March 2012;
 - b) To support Wiltshire Council and its partner agencies in developing robust safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Wiltshire;
 - c) To monitor and scrutinise the impact of safeguarding arrangements in Wiltshire on outcomes for children and young people; and
 - d) To monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the Children in Care Commissioning Strategy and its impact on outcomes for Wiltshire's looked after children and their families/carers.
- (iv) That Cllr Hubbard has been elected as Chairman of the Task Group;
- (v) That Cllrs P Colmer and H Osborn have withdrawn from the Task Group and that Cllrs C Soden and B Wayman have joined the Task Group, therefore the new membership is:
- Cllr Andrew Davis
Cllr Jon Hubbard
Revd. Alice Kemp
Cllr Bill Moss
Cllr Carole Soden
Cllr Bridget Wayman
- (vi) That the Chairman of the Task Group will sit on the Safeguarding Improvement Board in order to maximise communication and collaboration between the two groups.

(2) To note the contents of the report.

17 Forward Work Programme

The Select Committee received the Forward Work Programme for consideration and comment.

Resolved:

18 **To note the Committee's Forward Work Programme.
Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

19 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 26 July 2012, starting at 10.30am, at Monkton Park. Chippenham.

(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

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