

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2014 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Pat Aves, Mr Ken Brough, Ms A Burnside, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Sue Evans, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Rev Alice Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Mrs Lynne Swainston, Dr M Thompson and Cllr Philip Whalley

Also Present:

Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Gordon King and Cllr Laura Mayes

50 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Miss Sarah Busby and Miss Tracy Cornelius.

51 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 June 2014.

52 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

53 **Chairman's Announcements**

- (1) **Webcasting** The Chairman announced that it had been agreed that meetings of the Full Council, select committees and some planning committee meetings would be broadcast to give the public an insight into the work of the Council. The webcasting equipment was being tested at this meeting to ensure that it was fit for purpose.

- (2) Information Session for the new Youth Service Funding** The Chairman drew attention to a briefing session for Members on the funding arrangements for the new Youth Service provision which had been arranged to take place in the Civic Centre, Trowbridge starting at 12.30pm that day. He expressed disappointment that these arrangements had been made not taking into account the scheduled meeting of this Select Committee.

54 Public Participation

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

55 Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2020

Consideration was given to a joint report by Carolyn Godfrey and Maggie Rae, Corporate Directors which provided an update on the Wiltshire Child Poverty Strategy 2014-20.

The Chairman reminded Members that reducing child poverty had been a government target for many years. The Child Poverty Act tasked local areas to produce a child poverty needs assessment and strategy and the submitted strategy document fulfilled that requirement.

The Committee noted that the strategy had been developed by the multi-disciplinary Child Poverty Group which reported to the Wiltshire Children & Young People's Trust Executive. The strategy supported both the reduction of child poverty in Wiltshire and mitigation of the effects of child poverty. It sought to provide a view of the causes, barriers and challenges of child poverty, set a shared view and encourage a coordinated approach to address child poverty and its impact.

It was pointed out that currently there were 11% of children in Wiltshire who lived in poverty and this compared favourably with the national figure of 17%. However, Members did note that there were pockets of Wiltshire where the percentage was higher, some as high as 30%. The following five key priorities had been identified to improve the delivery of services and the lives of some of the more vulnerable families in Wiltshire:-

- Objective 1 – Provide effective support to vulnerable families with 0-5 year olds
- Objective 2 – Narrowing the educational attainment gap
- Objective 3 – Develop an inclusive economy that will enable equality of economic opportunity for all
- Objective 4 – Provide locally-focused support based on a thorough understanding of needs

- Objective 5 – Promote engagement with the Child Poverty Strategy and related implementation plan

The Chairman pointed out that the Early Help Strategy Task Group had been monitoring the delivery of the Early Help Strategy 2013-17 which the Committee was due to consider later in the meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, Cllr Mary Douglas drew attention to a recent report entitled *Holding the Centre: Social Stability & Social Capital* by Jeremy Lefroy, Fiona Bruce, John Glen & Caroline Spelman, all serving Members of Parliament. This report could be viewed at <http://www.socialcapitalcommission.co.uk/holding-centre-report>

Attention was drawn to parental relationships and problems that arose in families for various reasons. It was acknowledged that there was a need to give some attention to the causes of these problems and attempt to identify remedies.

The Committee fully supported the Strategy and

Resolved:

- 1. To note the work to date on the Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2020, which will be taken to Cabinet for approval on 11 November 2014.**
- 2. To agree that decisions regarding any further scrutiny of the Reducing Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2020 will be considered under the following item, Final Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group, because of the close links between the Early Help and Reducing Child Poverty strategies.**

56 Final Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group

The Committee received the final report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group which advised on how the Committee could monitor the implementation of the Early Help Strategy going forward, including additional recommendations to the current methods in use by the Council.

In introducing the report, the Chairman stressed that it would not be possible to implement all the recommendations immediately and that therefore it would be necessary for them to be prioritised. The Task Group was fully aware of the importance of early intervention and it would be necessary for it to obtain

targeted information to monitor the Strategy's implementation. It was suggested that the views of parents and young people be obtained on the success of early help.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- 1. To endorse the final report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group and refer it to the Cabinet Member.**
- 2. To ask the executive and officers to bring an Early Help Strategy implementation scorecard report to the Committee that, where possible, reflects the task group's recommendations regarding monitoring.**
- 3. To ask the executive and officers to also consider the task group's report and recommendations when developing the implementation scorecard for the Reducing Child Poverty Strategy.**

57 Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) and funding for 16-19 student transport - Chairman's proposal

The Chairman explained that following the implementation of the provisions of the Education and Skills Act 2008, all young people were required to stay in education or training until at least their 18th birthday from 2015. Although young people would not need to remain in school, they would be able to choose one of the following options post-16:

- Full-time education, such as school, college
- An apprenticeship
- Part-time education or training if they were employed, self-employed or volunteering full-time (which is defined as 20 hours or more a week).

With regards to transport, the Department for Education had no plans for a national concessionary scheme. For 16-19 year olds in further education and training, local authorities had a statutory duty to make the arrangements they considered necessary to make sure that young people could attend education. Wiltshire Council ran a subsidised transport scheme for further education students aged 16 - 19 at the start of their course. Under this scheme, transport was provided to students attending, and living more than three miles from their designated sixth form or college. More details including the Council's post 16 transport statement could be found on the Council website's [transport to sixth forms and colleges](#) (link) page.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- with Wiltshire being a rural county, there was a need for an improved transport system.
- payment should only be made to the nearest educational establishment which provided the required course.

Resolved:

To ask the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to co-sign a joint letter to the Secretary of State requesting that the national concessionary transport scheme for children and young people in education should be extended to cover all young people in full time education and not just those up to the age of 16.

58 Task Group Update

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

- **Education for 16-19s Task Group** – It was noted that on 9 September 2014 the O & S Management Committee agreed that this Task Group should be asked to review the draft Wiltshire Education, Employment & Skills Strategy 2014 prior to its approval by Cabinet on 11 November 2014. Task group meetings for this were now being arranged.
- **Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group**
- **Schools and the Local Authority Task Group**
- **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Task Group**

Resolved:

1. **To note the update on task group activity provided.**
2. **To note that O&S Management Committee have asked the Education for 16-19s Task Group to consider the draft Wiltshire Education, Employment & Skills Strategy 2014, with conclusions and recommendations referred to Cabinet for consideration on 11 November 2014.**

59 Update on Meetings with the Executive and Directors

The Chairman reported that he and the Vice-Chairman had met with the three executive members and the two associate directors for Children's Services to review the relevant existing topics on the Forward Work Programme and to add new ones looking forward over the next 12 month period. The objective was to achieve a comprehensive, forward looking work programme focused on outcomes aligned to the Council's Business Plan.

After some discussion and on the recommendation of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman,

Resolved:

- 1. To approve the following topics as work priorities for the Committee and refer them to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for endorsement.**

School Improvement Strategy

Vulnerable Learners – Narrowing the Attainment Gap Strategy

Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People

Alternative education arrangements for permanently excluded pupils

Children's Centres

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Multi Agency Forums (MAFs)

Care Leavers

Out-of-county placements

- 2. The Committee to receive a pre-meeting information briefing on the School Improvement Strategy in Spring 2015 and establish a task group to look at the impact of the Strategy in Summer 2015.**
- 3. To review the impact of the revised arrangements for positive leisure time activities for young people (as agreed by Cabinet in May 2014) in September/October 2015.**
- 4. To establish a task group to look at Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Wiltshire. The task group to undertake an initial scoping exercise to define its terms of reference and approach and bring proposals back to a future meeting of the Committee.**
- 5. To note that the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group will undertake a 'deep-dive meeting' looking at the operation and sustainability of Multi Agency Forums (MAFs) across the county.**

6. The Committee (potentially through the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group) to consider the report of the Corporate Parenting Panel's Care Leavers working group on care leavers when it is finished.
7. To support further discussions between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman with executive members and directors to scope the agreed work priorities further where appropriate, with an update on these discussions coming to the Committee's next meeting.
8. The next forward work programme meeting with the executive and directors to include a discussion of how the committee could undertake focused work on how the Council can most effectively support parents and families.

60 **Forward Work Programme**

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

Resolved:

To note the contents of the Forward Work Programme for this Committee.

61 **Coalition Changes - Update from Department for Education**

The Committee received an update from Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, on developments relating to children's services arising from the Coalition Government as follows:-

- New early years pupil premium
- Mental health and behaviour in schools
- Promoting British values in school
- New school food standards
- Key information for parents on schools' performance
- Fairer school funding
- Education Services Grant
- SEND
- New freedoms to help local areas support vulnerable children
- New rules for adoption
- Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children
- Child poverty strategy 2014 to 2017
- Academies update

Resolved:

To note the update provided.

62 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next scheduled meeting is due to be held on Tuesday 9 December 2014, in the Kennet Room at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am, preceded by an information briefing at 9.30am to which all Members were encouraged to attend.

63 Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.15 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