

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Rev Alice Kemp, Kim Hunte (Substitute), Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Sue Evans, Cllr Pat Aves, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Simon Jacobs, Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Mary Champion, Cllr Bill Moss, Cllr Helen Osborn, Cllr Philip Whalley, Mr Ken Brough, Miss Sarah Busby and Miss Tracy Cornelius

Also Present:

Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Richard Gamble, Cllr Simon Killane and Cllr Trevor Carbin

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ricky Rogers, Dr Mike Thompson, Mrs Lynne Swainston and Ms Amanda Burnside, who was substituted by Ms Kim Hunte.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 December 2014, subject to the following amendment:-

Minute No 69 – Early Help Strategy 2014 – 2017 – Implementation Scorecard Fourth paragraph to read:-

It was noted that there was no national dataset or benchmarks for early help and it was therefore necessary to develop and build on locally set benchmarks. However, there was national research information available but in a different form.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

1. Pupil Performance data

Members were reminded that the Committee had been scheduled to receive the annual Pupil Performance data giving attainment in Wiltshire at this meeting.

The timing of the release of data had sometimes been an issue for this report in previous years because data for vulnerable learners had only been released during the last two weeks of January. This year (for 2014 outcomes) would not be available until two days after the meeting on the 29th and so the decision had been taken to defer the report until the next meeting on 24 March.

Using validated data was especially important as vulnerable groups might not contain large numbers of pupils and therefore could demonstrate greater volatility and the published data provided both national and local comparators that were not available from any other source.

2. Attendance at Cabinet

On 6 January 2015 the O&S Management Committee formally agreed that the chairman, vice-chairman, task group chairman or a nominated committee member would always attend Cabinet meetings when a relevant topic was being discussed.

3. Scrutiny Story of the Week

Members were directed toward a new(ish) section of the Elected Wire, which was called the Scrutiny Story of the Week. These were brief stories about topical scrutiny activities taking place, such as interesting pieces of evidence gathering, final reports being published or invitations to non-executive members to get involved in a new task group.

5 Public Participation

There were no questions received from members of the Council.

Members of the public addressed the Committee as set out in Minute No. 7 below.

6 Final Report of the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group

The Chairman reminded Members that in December 2013 the Committee discussed its work priorities for 2013-17 and agreed that schools should remain a key part of the forward work programme. It was agreed that the Coalition Government's reforms to the education system in recent years, particularly the academies programme, had significantly changed the relationship between local authorities and schools and that Wiltshire's response to this was an important area for investigation.

Following a scoping exercise with the executive and officers, the Task Group concluded that Wiltshire's schools were the primary route through which the Council could influence the attainment of Wiltshire children on a daily basis. It was therefore agreed that the Task Group should investigate how the Council should continue to provide the most appropriate services and support to Wiltshire schools in order to promote excellence and fulfil its statutory duties.

Cllr Philip Whalley, as Chairman of the Task Group, introduced his report and presented the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Group for endorsement. He explained that the Task Group's terms of reference were as follows:-

- (1) To explore how the Council promotes excellence and fulfils its statutory duties to children and young people in Wiltshire's schools.
- (2) 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.

Cllr Whalley went on to inform the Committee that the majority of Wiltshire's secondary schools (20 out of 29) were academies and the number of primary academies was growing; overall 22% of Wiltshire schools were academies. The Task Group had commissioned an online survey of all Wiltshire schools of which 68 had responded, which represented 28.9% of all Wiltshire schools.

The results of the survey showed that there was a good take up of services offered by the Council to academies but there was a need for a customer contact management system to ensure that schools received a good customer experience. There had been some dissatisfaction from some schools regarding the level of customer support they received, the issues relating to:-

- response time to enquiries,
- inconsistent advice or information being given, and
- a lack of clarity over which team or officer was the appropriate contact.

The Task Group concluded that action was required to:-

- a) ensure there was complete clarity around who in the Council was doing what in relation to schools, and
- b) enable strategic oversight of the Council's services to, and relationship with, schools, regardless of which directorate they sat within.

During the ensuing debate, Members expressed their general support for the recommendations of the Task Group but expressed disappointment that the on-line questionnaire and summary of responses had not been made available to the Committee.

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the Task Group's final report and refer it to the Cabinet Member for response at the next meeting of this Committee.**
- (2) To request that copies of the on-line questionnaire and summary of responses be attached to the minutes of this meeting as an appendix.**
- (3) To thank the Task Group for their thorough and detailed work and also to the Senior Scrutiny Officer for his excellent support throughout the process.**

7 Final Report of the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Task Group

The Chairman introduced the report by reminding Members that in October 2013 this Committee discussed its work priorities for 2013-17 and agreed that children and young people with SEND should remain a key part of the forward work programme. Following a scoping exercise that included officers and executive members, the SEND Task Group decided to explore how best to prepare young people with SEND for adulthood, with a focus on the four main themes of education, employment, housing and community inclusion.

The following members of the public then made statements:-

- Janet Kenward, Principal & Chief Executive of Fairfield Farm College, expressed concern that if the provision, at Fairfield Farm College, which had a programme of continuous improvement both in terms of curriculum and facilities, was not used it would be lost as a resource to the county. The college was in the middle of a building programme to further improve its teaching facilities and this had been supported by the EFA Capital improvement programme with a grant of £712,000 and by two large trust funds.

She further stated that the college wished to work collaboratively with the Council, Wiltshire College and special school sixth forms to enable young people from Wiltshire to have a choice of post 16 environments in which to

learn, to ensure that each young person had a person centred individualised programme of learning, felt safe and had the best opportunity to progress to supported employment or other meaningful daytime activity and to live as independently as possible.

- Dr Tina Pagett, Principal of Fairfield Farm College, w.e.f. from 1 April 2015, stated her appreciation to the Members and Officers for the work carried out in producing the report but she requested that consideration be given to including an additional recommendation that encouraged Council Members and Officers to explore working in collaboration with Fairfield Farm College, alongside other providers, to ensure that young people with SEND in Wiltshire had 'choice' and could benefit from the full range of facilities and experiences available 'in-county'.
- Mrs Debra Elliott, parent, fully supported the recommendations of the Task Group but was disappointed that the Task Group were unable to undertake wider consultation with parent carers and reflect views throughout Wiltshire. She requested that choice be extended in Wiltshire rather than the provision of just one preferred option that, at best, would prioritise the local authority's needs.

She further requested that the Committee should investigate the provision of appropriate and meaningful activity for those unable to find employment. This would have the greatest impact on daily life for the majority of adults with the most severe and complex needs.

- Mrs Jan Winfield, parent, expressed her concerns regarding issues covered in the report regarding educational provision and respite provision. She was surprised to see that the Task Group had 'reported' on the relative costs of educational provision at Wiltshire College and Fairfield College – without providing accurate data to support their assertion. Her understanding was that the average cost of education provision for a day student at Fairfield College was approx. £22,000 – not the £60-70,000 or more, claimed in the report. The cost of a residential student's accommodation was met by social services funding, not education. No doubt many students with SEND attending Wiltshire College would also have additional social care needs which would have to be similarly funded, for example, housing and/or additional support for independent living. She questioned if the Task Group's comparison could be regarded as a fair or equivalent one if it did not compare like with like.

In the matter of respite provision, she felt that there was an urgent need for the provision of an age appropriate respite facility for young people aged 18 - 25 in Wiltshire.

Rev Alice Kemp as Chairman of the Task Group explained that it had examined a number of areas as follows:-

- (i) Local education and training options, including managing transitions.
- (ii) Planning for employment and supporting local employers to employ young people with SEND.
- (iii) Providing housing options to support young people with SEND to live in their communities.
- (iv) Developing communities that are inclusive, welcoming and supportive of young people with SEND.

She reported that the Task Group had identified much good work that was being undertaken including some meaningful daytime activity; however, this area was so broad that there was really insufficient time for this to be considered in depth and could well be undertaken as a piece of work in the future.

She also informed the Committee that the Task Group had given some initial consideration to the need for respite for young people with SEND but further work was required. It had been noted that respite facilities were available at Canon's House, Devizes but it specialised providing for young people aged 5-17 with severe learning disabilities and consequently were unable to provide sufficient short breaks for the needs of other young people.

Members also were informed that young people aged over 18 were not eligible for care at Canon's House and were directed towards a suitable residential adult care provider. Some parents had expressed concern that this led to their 18 year old young person being supported alongside people who were much older, some of them elderly. Parents were also concerned that, unlike the pre-18 respite provision, adult provision did not always provide structured activities that developed the young person's independent living skills.

During discussion, Cllr Simon Jacobs explained that Devizes Area Board was building links between employers and young people with SEND, thus demonstrating that many assumed barriers to employment could be removed. A grant of £2,600 had been made by the Devizes Area Board towards the production of a film highlighting the challenges and opportunities for SEND young people in the Devizes area trying to find employment. He offered to make the film available to this Committee and also to other area boards once it had been finalised. The Chairman thanked Cllr Jacobs for this offer which he suggested should be shown to Members immediately before the next meeting of this Committee. Furthermore, he would draw the attention of Cllr Chris Williams, Portfolio Holder for Area Boards & Libraries, to this film for possible discussion at the next Area Board Chairs' meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the Task Group's final report and refer it to the Cabinet Member for response at the next meeting.
- (2) To request the Cabinet Member to respond to the points raised by Janet Kenwood, Principal & Chief Executive of Fairfield Farm College.
- (3) To request the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to raise the issue of scrutiny exploring meaningful activities for 18-25 year old SEND young people who would find it challenging to undertake employment or further training/education at their next meeting with the executive and officers.
- (4) To review the implementation of the Task Group's recommendations in 12 months' time.

8 Report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group

The Chairman reminded Members that in August 2014, the Committee had received the Early Help Strategy 2013-17, which set out the Council's proposals for Wiltshire's early help offer. The Early Help Strategy Task Group was formed and subsequently presented a report advising the Committee on how it could monitor the implementation of the Strategy going forward. At the same meeting, the Committee received the first draft of the Early Help dataset. The Task Group was asked to reconvene in order to:-

- review this dataset;
- consider whether it was a suitable mechanism for monitoring delivery of the Early Help Strategy, and
- whether it met the Task Group's recommendations.

In the absence of a Task Group member who had attended the relevant meeting to answer any questions,

Resolved:

To note the update report and to request a further update at the next meeting of this Committee.

9 Task Group Update

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

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Task Group
- Education for 16-19s Task Group
- Obesity and Child Poverty Task Group
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group

- Children's Centres Task Group

The Chairman requested that Members with an interest in serving on either the Child Sexual Exploitation Task Group or the Children's Centres Task Group should contact Henry Powell, Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the update on task group activity provided**
- 2. To agree that the Child Sexual Exploitation Task Group will focus on the 'Prevent' strand of the CSE action plan's 'Prevent, Protect, Pursue' themes, which will involve looking at how well we are raising awareness of CSE across Wiltshire, and how much training in CSE is taking place. It will also start its work by receiving a comprehensive briefing on work to tackle CSE that is already underway in Wiltshire.**
- 3. To disband the Education for 16-19s Task Group.**
- 4. To note that discussions are underway regarding a possible joint Obesity and Child Poverty Task Group with the Health Select Committee and an update will be brought to the next meeting.**
- 5. To note that the Safeguarding Children and Young People's Task Group has considered the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) Annual Report 2013/14 and Business Plan 2014/15.**
- 6. To endorse the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group's recommendation that the format of future WSCB Annual Reports and Business Plans be amended to be more reader-friendly by including an executive summary of the key points covered.**
- 7. To formally establish the Children's Centres Task Group and agree that it will contribute to the council's re-commissioning process by considering what the new children's centres contracts should include to achieve maximum impact and value for money.**

10 Forward Work Programme

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

The Chairman stated that the next meeting with the executive and officers was due to be held in April and he requested Members of the Committee to send details of any issues they would like considered at that meeting to himself, the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Jacqui Lay or the Senior Scrutiny Officer, Henry Powell, explaining how the issues aligned with the priorities set out in the Business Plan.

Resolved:

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

11 Coalition Changes - Update November 2014 to January 2015

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

- School admissions code
- Standards for school food in England
- School exclusion
- National curriculum framework for key stages 1 to 4
- Technical and vocational qualifications for 14 to 19 year-olds
- Ofsted inspection of LA school improvement functions – revised Framework
- DfE Consultation: Revisions to working together to safeguard children
- Sexual exploitation of children – Ofsted report
- DfE consultation: Young carers' draft regulations
- Academies update

Resolved:

To note the update provided.

12 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

To note that the next scheduled meeting was due to be held on Tuesday 24 March 2015, in the Kennet Room at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am, preceded by a pre-meeting information meeting on the School Improvement Strategy to which ALL Members of this Committee were invited.

(Note: Since this meeting the date of the next meeting has been changed to Tuesday 14 April 2015, starting at 2.30pm.)

13 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.35 pm)

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