

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

14 October 2014

Update on Meetings with the Executive and Directors

Purpose

1. To report outcomes of the meetings between the committee Chairman, Vice-chairman and relevant Executive members and associate directors held on 3 October. This was to discuss the Council's priorities for children's services and the potential future work priorities of this Committee.
2. To propose some Committee work priorities for discussion, prior to referral to the O&S Management Committee for endorsement.

Background

3. Following local elections in 2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee supported discussions between the select committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman with the relevant Cabinet members, portfolio-holders and directors to gain a more informed understanding about Executive priorities. Outcomes from these were reported at committee and, where agreed, formed the single overview and scrutiny forward work programme. This approach is being repeated this year and the meetings for the children's select committee were held on 3 October 2014.

Proposed work priorities

4. Having considered the priorities of the Executive the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would like to propose the work areas below as Committee priorities approximately for the next 12 months. In some cases further work is needed to refine a topic's scope and decide how it will be approached. This list is intended to aid discussion and develop this committee's element of the O&S forward work programme, prior to endorsement by the O&S Management Committee.
5. The Chairman and Vice-chairman have been mindful that greater value can be added by focusing on a few key areas than by attempting to cover everything. They have also referred to the criteria listed below when selecting the suggested topics:
 - Is the topic considered a priority by the Executive? Is it included within the Council's Business Plan 2013-17?
 - Is the topic a major area of Council spend?
 - Can the Council have a real impact on this issue? (i.e. is it a national issue or decision that is largely beyond the Council's control)?

- Does the topic effect a large number of people, or a smaller number of people very significantly?

School Improvement Strategy

6. The School Improvement Strategy is currently in draft and will cover one year (2014/15). Schools will be consulted with during the Autumn term and the Strategy is projected to be finalised by Christmas. Because a one-year strategy has already been developed for the coming academic year, and work is underway with schools on how it will be implemented, the Chairman and Vice-Chair felt that little value could be added by Scrutiny involvement this year. However a review towards the end of the academic year could provide helpful insight into the drafting of the following year's strategy. Therefore the following approach to providing scrutiny input is proposed:
 - a) In Spring 2015 the committee to receive a pre-meeting information briefing on the Strategy.
 - b) In Spring/Summer 2015 (after the briefing) the committee establish a task and finish group to look at the impact of the Strategy during its first year and consider recommendations for development.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following Key Deliverable:

"4. [We will] Provide opportunities for every child and young person to improve their attainment and skills so they can achieve their full potential."

Vulnerable Learners – Narrowing the attainment gap Strategy

7. It is proposed that the committee considers the implementation of Vulnerable Learners – Narrowing the Gap Strategy. This could include an analysis of the impact of past approaches to narrowing the attainment gap, and/or different schools' uses of the Pupil Premium. Further discussion is need to confirm an approach and timescale for this work and this will be reported at a future meeting of the committee.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following aspiration:

"There is a much narrower achievement or aspiration 'gap' for children and young people from vulnerable groups (such as looked after children, children who receive free school meals or have disabilities, special education needs or mental health issues)."

Positive Leisure Time Activities for Young People

8. In January 2014 Cabinet considered a report proposing that it reviews how it meets its duty to secure young people aged 13-19 access to positive leisure-time activities that improve their wellbeing, and sufficient facilities for such activities. The committee established a task group to respond to the consultation and submitted a detailed report to Cabinet with its findings when the final decision was taken in May 2014.

9. It is proposed that in September/October 2015 the committee reviews the impact of the revised arrangements for positive leisure time activities for young people as agreed by Cabinet in May 2014. This may be undertaken by the original task group.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following Key Deliverable:

“3. [We will] Further enhance the role of area boards and Youth Advisory Groups, developing innovative community-led approaches to designing and delivering services.”

Educating permanently excluded pupils

10. The Children’s Services Select Committee received a report proposing the closure of the Young People’s Support Service (YPSS) in November 2011. The service had been placed in Special Measures in May 2011 and was subsequently closed in August 2012. In its place, Wiltshire used the Department for Education’s (DfE) Power to Innovate (PTI) to delegate the responsibility for educating permanently excluded students to secondary schools, who received the devolved funding. Wiltshire was one of 11 local authorities taking part in this PTI pilot scheme. The committee last received an update on this scheme in November 2012 and members congratulated those involved on the good progress made thus far.
11. It is proposed that an update report is brought to committee in December 2014 or January 2015.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following Key Deliverable:

“4. [We will] Provide opportunities for every child and young person to improve their attainment and skills so they can achieve their full potential.”

Children’s Centres

12. It is proposed that the committee provides input into the re-commissioning of children’s centres as an important element of the council’s early help strategy. Further discussion is need to confirm the appropriate approach and timescale for this work and will be reported at a future meeting of the committee. The Chairman and Vice-Chair were keen for Scrutiny to play a proactive role in the re-commissioning of children’s centres and it is likely that a dedicated task group will be required to undertake the work. Members are invited to express their interest taking part in this important task, with a timescale to be confirmed following further discussions.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** emphasises the importance of focusing on prevention and early intervention; finding ways of predicting and reducing demand for services before it happens. It includes the following aspiration:

“Children in vulnerable families with multiple social, economic and health issues are less likely to achieve their potential. Focusing on prevention and early

intervention can narrow the gaps for children at risk of poorer outcomes by encouraging public services to work together more effectively.”

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

13. The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services has asked the committee to undertake work on preventing and tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Wiltshire. An implementation plan for the Wiltshire CSE Strategy is being developed and it is proposed that the committee establishes a task group to play a role in developing this further. This will be a significant piece of work encompassing the roles and responsibilities of departments across the council as well as council partners. Members are invited to express their interest taking part in this important review.

The Business Plan 2013-15 includes the following Key Deliverable:

“5. [We will] Continue to improve our safeguarding services to protect the most vulnerable in our communities.”

Multi Agency Forums (MAFs)

14. In community areas across Wiltshire, early years practitioners, primary and secondary schools and partner agencies meet on a regular basis to discuss how best to support individual children and young people who have been identified as requiring additional help. These forums are called MAFs. An effective MAF is likely to have input from the range of educational inclusion support services (ie, Early Years Inclusion Advisers, Educational Psychology, Education Welfare, Behaviour Support and Specialist SEN Service (SSENS), Integrated Youth Services, community health services and the voluntary sector).
15. It is proposed that the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group look at the operation of MAFs across the county to ensure that they are working effectively and are sustainable. The Task Group’s 2013 report included a recommendation that “future Scrutiny of safeguarding should include the monitoring of attendance at MAFs (Rec 9)” and MAFs are already included on the task group’s forward work programme.

Care Leavers

16. The council’s Corporate Parenting Panel are establishing a working group to look at the accommodation and support given to young people as they leave care in Wiltshire. This ties in with the national ‘Beyond Care’ campaign recently launched by Barnardo’s. The campaign seeks to help identify what local authorities can best do to support care leavers, and the barriers they face with this. Barnardo’s provide a list of key questions that members can ask to assess their local authority’s work in this area.
17. It is proposed that the committee (potentially through the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group) considers the final report of the Corporate Parenting Panel’s Care Leavers Working Group once finished. Committee

members interested in joining the working group are asked to contact the senior scrutiny officer (contact details below).

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following aspiration:

“All children in care have stable, long-term placements and there is a good supply of well-trained and supported adopters and fewer children in care have criminal records.”

Out-of-county placements

18. It is proposed that the committee considers out-of-county placements commissioned by the council, potentially including their quality, choice, outcomes for the young person, cost and the council's commissioning and monitoring arrangements. Local authorities are responsible for all of their own looked after children, whether they live within or out of the local area. Further discussion is need to confirm the appropriate approach and timescale for this work and will be reported at a future meeting of the committee.

The **Business Plan 2013-17** includes the following aspiration:

“All children in care have stable, long-term placements and there is a good supply of well-trained and supported adopters and fewer children in care have criminal records.”

Proposals

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.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman, Children's Select Committee
Cllr Jacqui Lay, Vice-Chairman, Children's Select Committee

Report author: Henry Powell, Senior Scrutiny Officer,
01225 718052, henry.powell@wiltshire.gov.uk