



## CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE, on  
THURSDAY 31 JANUARY 2008.

### PRESENT:

Mr P Coleman (Vice Chairman), Mr A Davis, Mr T Deane, Dr J English, Mrs M Groom, Mrs E Hannaford-Dobson, Mr J Hawkins, Mr C King, Mrs E Leonard, Ms R MacDonald, Ms J Miller, Mr W Moss, Mrs P Rugg, Mr W Snow, Dr M Thompson, Mrs M White, Mrs C Williamson, and Mr C Winchcombe.

### OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs N Bryant (Cabinet Member for Education & Youth Development)  
Mrs B Wayman (Cabinet Member for Children & Families)

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#### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Colquhoun, Mr Oldrieve and Mrs Soden.

#### 2. **Chairman's Announcements**

The chairman made the following announcements:

- (a) to remind members of the 5<sup>th</sup> February Joint Scrutiny Meeting
- (b) to confirm that Mrs Miller, who already had a seat on the School Forum as the elected Parent Governor Representative for Secondary Schools, would also act as the scrutiny observer at School Forum meetings
- (c) the chairman invited Mrs Miller to feedback from the last School Forum meeting on a particular matter of interest, i.e. the funding and management of the Young People Support Service (YPSS). In doing so, members were informed that a report on this matter would be submitted to the School Forum and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meetings in March
- (d) sandwiches had been ordered for those members of the committee

also involved in the Corporate Parenting Group at 2.30 that afternoon, due to the likelihood that the committee meeting might not end until 2pm

- (e) the committee would take a 30 minute adjournment before proceeding with the scheduled items on the agenda, for an informal briefing with Wiltshire's new Director for Public Health (see page 10 for summary of briefing).

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**Resolved:**

**To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007.**

4. **Members' Interests**

No interests were declared

5. **Public Participation**

None.

6. **Member Requests**

Following the committee's initial consideration of a Member Request from Mr Snow in November regarding the closure of Corsley School, the committee was updated that a meeting had been held on the 7<sup>th</sup> January with the Department for Children & Education (DCE) for Mr Snow and other members of the school's governing body to discuss concerns arising from this closure. Mr Coleman, as vice-chairman of the committee, had also attended this meeting.

Despite these discussions, Mr Snow maintained a number of concerns and was especially disappointed that the minutes from this meeting had not yet been issued.

The committee was reminded that an opportunity would be given at the March meeting to consider the broader issues stemming from this Member Request, i.e. the effectiveness of the council's small schools strategy.

In the interim, the committee requested that Mr Coleman write to the Department, expressing concern and disappointment that the minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> January meeting had not yet been issued.

*NB: Confirmation was subsequently received that the minutes had been emailed to Mr Snow on the 30<sup>th</sup> January.*

7. **A Strategy for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**

The Head of Area Services (Children & Families) presented a report from the Director of DCE on the progress made in devising a CAMHS Commissioning Strategy for Wiltshire. In doing so, members were reminded that previous Annual Performance Assessments had recommended that improvements be made to CAMHS, but that delays in devising this strategy had been exacerbated by staff changes in the Wiltshire PCT.

Members were informed that an Assistant Director with commissioning responsibilities for children and families' services had been appointed by the PCT in early January, and there was therefore greater confidence that the strategy would be complete by the beginning of March.

In considering this report, members were informed that funding received in 2007/08 for CAMHS had been used to improve the care pathway for troubled children and young people, and that the main consequence of this was that more children now received the specialist provision they needed. Members noted that this care pathway model was currently the subject of an independent evaluation to ensure the most effective use of funding for all levels of need. Members also noted that a key aim in improving CAMHS was to ensure overall effective and equitable service delivery.

The Head of Area Services explained that user feedback on CAMHS showed a 38% rating of good or excellent, and that the results from this feedback would be used to inform the development of the strategy.

The committee expressed a keen interest in seeing the completed strategy at its May meeting, along with some anonymised case studies to assist members' understanding of the work involved in CAMHS. Members noted that a sub group of the Children's Trust Board would also be considering the strategy during March.

**Resolved:**

- (1) To note and thank officers for the report.**
- (2) To request that the next progress report being submitted to the committee in May 2008 include full details of the revised strategy, and anonymised case studies to assist members' understanding of the work involved in the delivery of CAMHS.**

8. **Update on Implementation of Strategic Objectives of the School Food Strategy**

The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator presented a report from the Director, DCE, which provided an update on progress made in implementing the strategic objectives of the school food strategy, many of which had been previously informed by the recommendations from the School Catering Task Group.

In doing so, she explained that the School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) was the steering group which met quarterly to monitor and evaluate the progress of the strategy, and highlighted which of the objectives had already been met and which were to be worked on in the coming months.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed support for the progress so far made, enquired about the impact of the government's requirement that all 11 – 14 year olds receive practical cookery lessons from September 2008, sought reassurance that the Young People Support Service was actively engaged in the Healthy Schools Programme, and heard that the School Food Trust's "Lets get cooking" campaign would help to engage parents, not just children, in the teaching of practical cookery skills.

In response, the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator explained that, as 25% of Wiltshire schools had no means by which to teach practical cookery, government funding had been secured, to which schools could voluntarily bid for support on a match funding basis. She also clarified that, whilst at varying stages, all of the YPSS units were working towards Healthy School status.

A key concern debated was the ongoing availability of funding for the strategy co-ordinator post. Members discussed a motion, as put by Dr English and seconded by Mr Coleman, that - "this committee views with grave concern that this post may be terminated and recommends that funding be prioritised to secure the future functioning of this post."

In discussing this motion, members were informed of the complexity surrounding the funding of this post, i.e. that the School Lunch Grant, confirmed only in December 2007, was restricted for devolvement to schools and not to fund the strategy co-ordinator's post. Members noted that there was a possibility that the post could be funded by schools on a 'buy back' basis, but that this could only be done so from other school finances, not from the School Lunch Grant itself.

However, whilst noting the support for this motion in principle, but respecting that the committee could not make a recommendation for the continued funding of a post unless it was able to identify how and where that funding would be sourced, members instead agreed to raise this matter at the 5<sup>th</sup> February Joint Scrutiny Meeting when discussing the Leader's 2008/09 budget motion to council.

A discussion then ensued on the negotiations to extend the current school catering contract from March 2008. Members noted that officers had been able to assess the level of demand for that continued service, and could therefore predict that the price of a school meal would remain the same, subject to other factors such as the Retail Price Index. Members also noted that a full report on these contract negotiations would be submitted to cabinet at the end of February.

Alongside these contract negotiations, officers explained that they had also been exploring other models of school catering provision, which included a 'framework contract' model, from which schools could access more bespoke arrangements.

An observation was made that, with the current catering contract only providing for a minority of schools in Wiltshire, the school meals strategy co-ordinator had much to do to ensure that the majority of schools promoted and facilitated healthy eating and complied with the new national requirements for school food.

The committee reasserted its request, as made by the School Catering Task Group in June 2006, that thorough and fair opportunities to comment on proposals for a future new school catering contract be ensured, so as to increase the likelihood of good buy-in into the contract.

Finally, copies of a leaflet – "Pick a Packed Lunch" - recently produced using ideas from children sought through a competition in 2007, and approved by SNAG and Community Dieticians from the Wiltshire PCT was distributed to members, to demonstrate how children were being encouraged to eat healthy packed lunch.

**Resolved:**

- (1) To thank officers for the report and the 'traffic light' illustration of progress made against the school food strategy action plan.**
- (2) To request that, as an appendix to the next progress report on the school food strategy (due in September 2008), comment be submitted by SNAG, to inform the committee of its view on how effective it considers the strategy to be.**
- (3) To request that, whilst recognising the complexities and restrictions in government grant aid, careful consideration be given to ensuring continued funding of the school meals strategy co-ordinator's post. This request would be reiterated at the Joint Scrutiny Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> February.**

9. **Executive and Partner Response to Academy Task Group Recommendations**

The committee considered a report which summarised the responses so far received to the Academy Task Group's recommendations, as issued on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

During the ensuing discussion, the chairman of the task group asked for:

- (a) reassurance that the current headmaster of Castledown School was being involved in planning for the new academy
- (b) clarification on whether more support would be given to the senior management team at the school to compensate for the extra workload involved in pursuing the academy development
- (c) a comment on why the school had had to seek independent legal advice for matters of TUPE and land transfer, rather than request this from the council
- (d) clarification on whether the additional support needed in the DCE to work on academy projects had yet been recruited
- (e) clarification on whether the design and plans for the academy buildings had been drafted.

In response, the Assistant Director (Schools) explained that:

- (a) whilst not a core member of the Project Steering Group (PSG) or Design Group, the council and Wellington College both intended to involve Mr Pender in as much of the planning as possible
- (b) the council only provided HR advice to schools for employment tribunals. It had instead advised Castledown to seek independent advice on TUPE and to claim costs against its insurance arrangements
- (c) there was no complication concerning the transfer of school staff terms and conditions, including pension arrangements, to the Academy Trust
- (d) a workshop had been held on the 30<sup>th</sup> January to develop the appropriate design quality indicators for the new school buildings, feedback from this would be communicated to members in due course
- (e) resources in the DCE would be supplemented with the recruitment of a new officer, made possible with an allocation from the Development Fund. This additional capacity would help develop curriculum plans and an accommodation schedule, supported by ICT and curriculum advice from within existing resources

- (f) time spent on the academy project by Mr Pender equated to approximately 1 day a week, and this would need to be managed within existing resources.

Noting this reassurance and clarification, members maintained concern that, particularly with respect to the involvement of Mr Pender, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) appeared to be inappropriately applying the same model of project management as it had to replacing failing urban schools with city academies. Also, the chairman of the task group remained unconvinced that the DCE was sufficiently resourced to successfully manage (in partnership with the PSG and DG) this and future academy projects.

Members then received a verbal update on the plans for the boarding facility. It was noted that, whilst Wellington College and the council remained fully in support of the development of this facility, progress in planning for it had been stalled, whilst the DCSF devised funding rules and a new 'building bulletin' for academies requiring boarding – this being the first to pursue such a facility. Members also noted that the intention was to develop a facility to accommodate 100 boarders, with two wings (one for girls and one for boys), and live-in quarters for a tutor and house parents. In order to confirm the funding rules and building bulletin, the DCSF had asked the PSG to guarantee that there was a demand for a 100 bed boarding facility. Information on the admissions' oversubscription criteria for boarders was also provided.

Other reassurance regarding the admissions policy and 6<sup>th</sup> form provision was also requested.

The committee then enquired about the plans to develop a new academy on the Laverstock site in Salisbury. In response, the Director of DCE explained that the expression of interest document for this new academy would be put to cabinet's 26<sup>th</sup> February meeting. Members highlighted the recommendation made by the task group, that consideration be given to the local authority acting as co-sponsor of future academy developments in Wiltshire. It was noted that the DCE was investigating the merits of co-sponsorship, in order to understand better the legal and financial implications, before recommending this to cabinet.

**Resolved:**

- (1) To thank all contributors to the report.**
- (2) To postpone agreeing how the committee should continue to monitor the progress of this academy, and future academy projects, to the next appropriate meeting, to coincide with the consideration of the next update report on the Wellington Academy.**

10. **Annual Performance Assessment Children's Services 2007**

The Director of DCE presented a report, which summarised the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services (2007), as carried out by Ofsted. In doing so, she highlighted how, whilst the overall grade 2 ("adequate") was disappointing, the assessment had predominantly been based on performance data for 2006/07, since when improvements had been made, especially with regard to a number of key stage results. The Director also referred to the way in which this assessment would impact upon the Joint Area Review (JAR) of children's services in June/July 2008.

During the ensuing discussion, members commented on the improvements requested for CAMHS, the importance of partnership working in ensuring effective service delivery, especially with the PCT, and the importance of learning from other grade 4 local authority children's services.

**Resolved:**

- (1) **To request that a report on the outcome of the JAR be submitted to the July meeting.**
- (2) **To note that a members' seminar would be organised to explain the meaning and significance of the JAR.**
- (3) **To request more detailed graphical analysis at future meetings of the key indicators for performance, as listed at paragraph 10 of the report.**
- (4) **To request a report on the revised Looked After Children & Young People's Placement Commissioning Strategy.**

11. **The Wiltshire Strategy for 14 – 19 Education & Training**

The Secondary Team Leader presented a report of the Director of DCE, which updated members on the progress in the delivery of the Wiltshire Strategy for 14 – 19 education and training. In doing so, he referred to the major aspects of the 14 – 19 reform programme, and how these impacted upon education and training in Wiltshire. He also explained the arrangements for the strategy's implementation, governance and monitoring, and highlighted how the Government Office of the South West, and Ofsted had given encouraging grades when assessing and inspecting these arrangements in 2007.

During the ensuing discussion, members discussed the way in which the strategy was implemented through three local areas, and the impact of the new diplomas, which would require greater collaboration between schools, colleges and across county boundaries. Also, members discussed the risk that take-up of education and training



could decline as a consequence of the distance of travel between different curriculum providers, and noted that a transport report had been commissioned to assess this risk.

Reference was also made to the funding arrangements, and to the investment required to refurbish existing college facilities, in order that they met the requirements of the strategy and were fit for purpose.

**Resolved:**

- (1) To thank officers for the full and informative update on the 14 – 19 strategy in Wiltshire.
- (2) To request annual updates on the strategy, noting the significance and pace of reforms.

12. **Holding the Executive to Public Account**

**Resolved:**

To note the items listed in the cabinet's latest rolling forward plan for February 2008 to May 2008 relevant to this committee. In particular, the chairman requested that members read the Children & Young People's Plan prior to its submission to Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> February.

13. **Urgent Items**

None.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am – 2.10 pm)

The officer who produced these minutes is Karen Linaker, Democratic & Members' Services, direct line (01225) 713056 or email [karenlinaker@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:karenlinaker@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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## **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008**

### **Summary of Informal Briefing with Maggie Rae - Wiltshire's Director for Public Health**

Maggie delivered a presentation on children and young people's health in Wiltshire (copy of presentation slides available from Karen Linaker, 01225 713056).

In doing so, she highlighted the following points:

- a) obesity (and its associated health risks), tooth decay, smoking (and other substance misuse), sexual health, mental health, and accidental injury were the key concerns for children and young people's health in Wiltshire currently
- b) £0.500m was invested in children's public health in Wiltshire, and, following the expansion of the public health team (as she would be unable to do it alone), more effective use of this funding would help to address the above mentioned health concerns
- c) the prevalence of public health problems was very variable across Wiltshire, and this therefore indicated that there were health inequalities in the county, which partners intended to address through the community area model
- d) a meeting of health professionals and voluntary sector organisations would take place on the 11<sup>th</sup> February, with the aim of devising a care pathway for the tackling of obesity in Wiltshire
- e) from recently collated statistics, it was apparent that young people were having unprotected sex in Wiltshire. To begin to tackle this, a programme of free screening would be introduced, and children from the age of 12 would be given a cervical inoculation to protect them against viruses from genital warts, from September 2008
- f) services to promote and maintain good mental health for children and young people needed to be improved in Wiltshire, recognising that the promotion of resilience and good mental wellbeing was crucial for the success of tackling other public health matters
- g) improved surveillance to assess how accidental injury was impacting upon the health of children and young people was to be introduced, and the community area model would be used as a way of engaging local people in monitoring and assessing this data
- h) much work was needed to tackle drugs and alcohol misuse amongst the young in Wiltshire. This would be tackled on a multi-agency basis and engage with businesses and the drinks industry.