

## CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

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**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2012 AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM SN15 1ER.**

**Present:**

Cllr Paul Darby, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr David Jenkins, KaylumHouse, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Bill Moss, Mr N Owen, Cllr Sheila Parker, Mrs R Ryan, Cllr Carole Soden (Chairman) and Dr M Thompson

**Also Present:**

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE

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**48 Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Laura Mayes.

**49 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Resolved:**

**To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 September 2012, subject to the recording of apologies received from Cllr Mary Douglas.**

**50 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**51 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

Cllr David Jenkins The Chairman welcomed Cllr David Jenkins on his first attendance at a meeting of this Committee and hoped that he would find the work interesting and rewarding.

Joint Budget Scrutiny Committee Meeting The Chairman reported that the 2013 meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee would take place on Thursday 7 February starting at 10.30am. This meeting would provide an opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive on their budget proposals and there was an invitation to all select committee members to attend. Further details would be available in due course.

## 52 **Public Participation**

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

## 53 **The Future Development of the Young People's Support Service (YPSS)**

Consideration was given to a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director which provided an update on the Power to Innovate (PTI) project in Wiltshire, which was requested by the former Children's Services Select Committee at its meeting in March 2012.

The Committee also received statistical information showing both temporary and permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools for the school year 2011 – 2012.

The Committee had 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. This pilot scheme was working well in Wiltshire and the Children's Commissioner was due to visit Wiltshire very shortly to inspect the Wiltshire model.

It was noted that the Trinity Centre in Trowbridge and the John Ivie Centre in Salisbury, two of the previous YPSS centres, were now organising the provision of education for the 28 young people who remained the responsibility of the Local Authority on behalf of the Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) team, as these permanent exclusions took place before the PTI came into force. The EOTAS provision for the retained young people was a closed service, there being no new referrals from secondary schools as the PTI was enabling schools to take full responsibility for the provision for those young people who would previously have been excluded and become the responsibility of the Local Authority.

This retained service was due to receive a monitoring visit by OFSTED. Although the previous three visits had noted the progress made and satisfactory judgements had been received, the new OFSTED framework placed greater

emphasis on teaching and learning and the progress made by young people as well as the personalised learning packages in place.

During the ensuing discussion, Members expressed their appreciation and gratitude to those officers involved in implementing these new arrangements and the benefits the young people were experiencing. Members also appreciated the provision of the detailed exclusion statistics which they found very helpful.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the update on the Power to Innovate (PTI) project to provide education for excluded children and congratulate those involved on the good progress made so far.**
- 2. To request that figures showing the improved pupil attendance at Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision is circulated to members.**
- 3. To request that figures showing the attainment of excluded children is included in the Pupil Performance report expected for the Committee's meeting on 31 January 2013.**
- 4. To request that an update on the Power to Innovate (PTI) project to provide education for excluded children is brought to the Committee in November 2013.**

**54 Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011-12**

The Committee received a report by Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director, in advance of the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011-12 which would be considered by Cabinet on 22 January 2013.

The Committee was informed that it was a requirement that the Executive received a report on the Local Authority's adoption agency to satisfy themselves that it was effective and was achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users. A preliminary report was therefore provided for this Committee and Members were invited to submit any comments or recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.

Carolyn Godfrey stated that the ethos of this service was that every child should have the right of adoption, if that was the best course of action for that child. She went on to explain that the process was not always straightforward, especially if the child had complex issues, and therefore the adoption process could well be extended in such cases. It was of paramount importance that the outcome achieved was what was best for the child.

There was a general discussion about how the adoption process could be improved. It was explained that traditionally delays in the adoption process had been due to problems associated with court hearings and the custom of giving the natural parents the amount of time needed for them to come to a final decision concerning the future care of their child. It was noted that a new Adoption Judge had been appointed and the whole process was being speeded up with decisions being made wherever possible before the birth of the child.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group, briefly referred to the work which this Task Group had been undertaking and stated that its remit would change to scrutinising the Adoption Service; work in this area would commence once the final report on the Task Group's current spheres of activity had been published in March 2013.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2011-12 provided, a revised version of which would be considered by Cabinet on 22 January 2013.**
- 2. To request that future reports on the adoption service include adoption statistics broken down into bands of time for adoptions to be completed, and for this to include historic comparisons and benchmarking against other local authorities.**
- 3. To request that future reports on the adoption service breaks adopters down into the following distinct categories: Single, Married, Co-habiting, Civil Partnership.**
- 4. To ask the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group to add future scrutiny of adoptions to its work programme and to include recommendations on this in its final report to the Committee.**
- 5. To ask the Corporate Director to forward the Committee's thanks to all officers in the Children and Families team for their continued hard work and dedication to the service.**
- 6. To endorse an approach where adoptions are completed in a timely way, but not at the expense of placement permanency.**

**55 Coalition Changes - Update September to November 2012**

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

A verbal update was received showing the position of Wiltshire schools in national league tables which had been released very recently. The Committee noted with pleasure that 76% of Wiltshire schools were shown as either good or improved compared with the national average of 70%.

**Resolved:**

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
- 2. To note the verbal update on Wiltshire schools' position in recently released national league tables.**
- 3. To note that the Committee's standing Coalition update reports were available for Wiltshire schools to inspect.**

**56 Task Group Update**

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

- (i) Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group
- (ii) Special School and Post-16 SEN Task Group
- (iii) Major Contracts Task Group
- (iv) Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group: Concerns raised by The Trafalgar School, Downton regarding the Task Group's Final Report

The Select Committee was informed that a letter dated 25 November 2012 had been received from Mrs Jenny Lawrie, the School's Headteacher, expressing concern regarding the executive response as follows:

- (a) there was no executive response to the statement made by the Headteacher, Mrs Jenny Lawrie, at the meeting of the Children's Select Committee in May.
- (b) In any strategic consideration of post-16 provision in the Salisbury area, the views of the Executive would be considered important evidence. As this evidence did not refer to The Trafalgar School's own plans to provide post-16 education (with a curriculum that would complement proposed and existing provision elsewhere) an external body might draw the conclusion that the Council was not interested in, or supportive of, post-16 education at Trafalgar.

Members were reminded that the School's concerns about the Task Group's final report, which were included in their statement to the Committee in May, were as follows:

In the view of the School,

- 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. Mrs Lawrie further explained 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 did not mention 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.

Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, assured the Committee that he had reported the views and concerns of The Trafalgar School's Headteacher and Governors to Cabinet (the Executive) and the post-16 aspirations of the School would be given full consideration in any Cabinet deliberation about further education in the Salisbury area. Cllr Grundy confirmed that he would be happy to meet with the Headteacher of The Trafalgar School to discuss their concerns further if they felt this would be helpful.

Dr Mike Thompson, Chairman of the Task Group, explained that various initiatives were being developed, including:

- the provision of a Sixth Form Free School in the Laverstock area, which had been the subject of formal discussions leading to an application being made to the Department for Education within the next few weeks, and
- the development of a University Technical College initiative, specialising in engineering, sponsored by the Local Authority and Southampton University.

The Select Committee was reminded that when it endorsed the Task Group's final report in May 2012 it resolved to re-establish the Task Group one year hence to consider progress. This would not actually be in May due to the local elections, a but a suitable date would be agreed. Members noted that a consideration of further education in other parts of the county might also be considered.

**Resolved:**

1. To note the updates on Task Group activity provided.
2. To note the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the concerns raised by The Trafalgar School at Downton regarding the Executive Response to the Final Report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group.
3. To welcome the developments to post-16 education in the Salisbury area reported by the Chairman of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group.
4. To note that the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group would be re-established in the Spring/Summer of 2013 to review progress.

**57 Forward Work Programme**

The Committee received the Forward Work Programme for consideration and comment, it being noted that this would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee for endorsement.

**Resolved:**

**To approve the Committee's Forward Work Programme and commend it to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee to be endorsed.**

**58 Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**59 Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved:**

**To note that the next meeting of this Committee would be held on Thursday 31 January 2013, starting at 10.30am, at the Council's Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham.**

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.00 pm)

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