

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2012 AT COMMITTEE ROOMS A - C, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM.

Present:

Mrs Di Dale, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Peter Davis, Cllr Mark Griffiths, Cllr Russell Hawker, Mr J Hawkins, Cllr Jon Hubbard, KaylumHouse, Rev. A Kemp, Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Cllr Sheila Parker and Dr M Thompson

Also Present:

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE, Cllr Graham Payne and Cllr Anthony Trotman

20 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Peggy Dow, Cllr Peter Fuller, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Bill Moss, Mrs Rosheen Ryan and Cllr Carole Soden.

21 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 31 May 2012.

22 Declarations of Interest

Revd Alice Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was Vice-Chairman of the Governors of St Nicholas School, Chippenham, which would form part of the discussion in Agenda Item No. 8 – Final Report of the Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group (See Minute No 27 below)

23 Chairman's Announcements

Members were informed that Cllr Carole Soden, the Chairman of this Select Committee, had sent her apologies because she was undergoing hospital treatment. Members expressed their best wishes for a full recovery.

24 **Public Participation**

The Committee noted the rules on public participation and the manner in which the meeting would be held.

25 **Executive response to the Final Report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Task Group**

The Select Committee received a report which set out the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the Final Report of the Further Education in the Salisbury Area Scrutiny Task Group which was endorsed by this Committee at its last meeting on 31 May 2012. The Committee was invited to note the Cabinet Member's response and decide any further action that needed to be taken.

Ms Di Dale, Principal of Wiltshire College, stated that she generally welcomed the findings of the report but did have concerns regarding the following two recommendations which were directed towards Wiltshire College:-

Recommendation 9 (see paragraphs 4.2.49 for further info)

Whilst recognising the challenging economic climate, Wiltshire College considers providing their own student transport service as is currently offered by some of its major competitors.

Di Dale stated that Wiltshire College had looked at, in detail, creating its own transport infrastructure. Detailed work had been completed; looking at where students travelled from, what would be the best routes to maximise pick up and what size buses would be most appropriate. However, as noted in the recommendation, the economic climate for Colleges and the public sector as a whole played a significant role with an anticipated budget reduction of 13% over the next two years. One full-size coach would cost the College c£35K and a small minibus c£20K – this price only included one collection in the morning and one return at the end of the day. Therefore, the cost was prohibitive. She also informed the Committee that some of their competitors were subsidising their transport for one final year and would be reducing services due to cost.

However, she confirmed that the College would welcome any consideration that the Council could give to putting in place a universal bus-pass scheme, such as that operated by Somerset County Council.

Recommendation 13 (see paragraphs 4.2.82 for further info)

Recognising the challenges inherent in being a city-centre provider, the Task Group recommends that Wiltshire College considers the potential impact on learner retention and attainment of its 16-19 learners having such flexibility to leave the Salisbury campus when not in lectures and, if appropriate, implements measures to encourage students to remain on campus.

Di Dale stated that the College was currently funded to provide 480 hours of learning per student, per annum for full-time 16-18 year olds over a 35 week academic year. Whilst the coalition government had given a commitment to ensure parity of funding between school sixth-forms and colleges, Wiltshire College had maximised on its resources to create what Ofsted had recognised to be an exemplary Community Campus (enrichment) programme. Furthermore, the College made clear to all students, specifically those studying for A-level or vocationally equivalent qualifications, that a significant amount of independent study outside of formal classes was expected.

Finally, Di Dale explained that as a further education college, students operated in an adult environment, where they were treated as such. Through this approach, the College was continually committed to prepare students for the working world and/or higher level study, which was underpinned by a 'good' with 'outstanding features' academic support and engagement system.

Ms Ruth Johnson, Principal of Sarum Academy expressed her concern about the Task Group's findings regarding the Academy and also that the School had not yet received a hard copy of the Task Group's Report and had therefore been unable to make any representations to this Committee when it considered the recommendations on 31 May 2012.

Firstly, Sarum Academy was anxious to correct the misrepresentation of the ability levels of its students. The Academy had found it disappointing that the report suggested that their curriculum was designed only to suit those with lower academic attainment. Sarum Academy offered a very broad programme of courses and qualifications to suit young people of all abilities as outlined in the vision and ethos document that Wiltshire Council itself had been involved in drawing up. The historic lower than average attainment at GCSE was being rapidly addressed and already 81% of Year 11 pupils had achieved 5+ A*-C this year, a figure significantly higher than that achieved by certain other schools in the area last year and the Academy was expecting to see a significant rise in their 5+ figure including English and Maths. Current predictions for Year 13 expected outcomes were above national post 16 indicators that set targets that would place a subject in the top 25% in the country. Sarum Academy's predicted average total point score for this year was also above the national average with pupils expected to achieve an average of AAB grades. A higher number of students from the Academy were going on to higher education this year than ever before. It was important to note that Sarum Academy was not just for lower attaining pupils and it wished the report to be amended to reflect this.

The second area of concern related to the collaborative development of the post-16 provision. The Report, suggesting that there was no sixth form provision in central Salisbury meeting the needs of those who wished to study AS/A2 course, was inaccurate as Sarum Academy offered a wide range of both academic and vocational courses. The recommendations of the report for the

three institutions of the Laverstock site and the college to work together not only ignored the provision Sarum Academy had on offer which was designed to meet local needs but also ignored the vision of the Academy to work in partnership to avoid duplication of courses and enhance provision. Sarum Academy wished to be an active partner in any collaborative venture.

Finally, Ms Johnson challenged the comments made about recruitment into post-16 provision. She reminded the Committee that the report stated, "it seems unlikely that this school will be successful in attracting significant numbers from outside of its KS4 cohort in the near future" but this was not borne out by evidence as Academy applications had increased by 160% from last year with almost 100 applications for Year 12, most citing the Academy as their first choice establishment and drawing from across Salisbury. Sarum Academy was confident that it would play a key role in post-16 provision within Salisbury, given that it offered specialisms in Maths and the Arts, two identified curriculum areas which learners left Salisbury to study in Hampshire. Sarum Academy was an emerging centre of excellence in BTEC provision (verified by all of the Academy's moderators' reports) which complemented existing AS/A2 courses, with a new fit for purpose sixth form centre which would be operational for up to 300 learners next September.

The Committee was informed that these concerns had been raised in a letter dated 21 June 2012 sent by the three sponsors of Sarum Academy (other than Wiltshire Council) to Carolyn Godfrey and had been responded to by Dr Mike Thompson as Chairman of the Task Group.

Dr Mike Thompson, as Chairman of the Task Group, expressed regret that the School felt its provision had not been reflected correctly and also that a copy of the Task Group's Final Report had not been sent to the Principal of the Academy. It had certainly not been the wish of the Task Group to undermine the excellent work undertaken by Sarum Academy but the Task Group had been somewhat handicapped in that it had not been provided with a vision ethos for the Academy as had been provided in respect of other schools. He promised to arrange for a hard copy of the Final Report to be sent to the Principal as soon as possible. He also welcomed the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services which he regarded as being very positive.

Cllr Lionel Grundy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, introduced his report and explained that officers had acted swiftly and had already held two meetings with the Headteachers of the schools on the Laverstock campus regarding future strategic planning of the site. He assured the Committee that the officers would continue to work for a satisfactory conclusion to the various issues that had been raised as far as the responsibilities of Wiltshire Council permitted.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:-

- Some concern was raised at the large amount of migration out of the County for the pursuit of sixth form studies and it was noted that there were insufficient places available in the south of the County to meet the demand for places.
- With regard to the provision of transport for sixth form students, it was noted that there was no funding available.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the Task Group's recommendations.**
- (2) To note the response of Wiltshire College to recommendations 9 and 13 in the Task Group's final report and to thank the College for providing this information.**
- (3) To request the Task Group to reconvene to consider the concerns raised by the Principal and three sponsors of Sarum Academy and report back to this Committee.**
- (4) To circulate the letter from three of the Sarum Academy sponsors detailing their concerns about the Task Group's final report and the reply from the Chairman of the Task Group to members of the Committee.**
- (5) To request clarification of the funding arrangements in place for transport for post-16 learners in Wiltshire.**

26 Executive response to the Final Report of the Family Information Service rapid scrutiny exercise

The Select Committee received a report which set out the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the final report of the Family Information Service rapid scrutiny exercise which was held on 11 May 2012 and was endorsed by this Committee at its last meeting on 31 May 2012.

Members were reminded that the Children's Services Select Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise on 29 March 2012 following receipt of a report on a review of the Family Information Service (FIS) and Parent Partnership Service (PPS). It had been decided that significant changes to the FIS and PPS service specifications and contracts were required and proposed a number of changes that reduced the service specifications in the Council's contract with Ask and the level of funding to be provided. At the time of the Committee meeting on 29 March, a final decision had not been made as to the

continuation of this contract and the level of funding to be provided in the future. The Committee resolved to undertake a rapid scrutiny exercise to explore further the nature of any duplication in the provision of the Family Information Service and plans for how the service would be provided in future.

The Committee was invited to note the Cabinet Member's response and decide any further action that needed to be taken.

A written question had been submitted by the Ask Board of Trustees which was read out by Ms Liz Garrett, Chair of Ask. A response had been prepared by the Service Director, Commissioning & Performance which was read out and circulated to Ms Garrett and members of the Committee. (*Appendix 1 to these minutes*)

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To note the response of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to the rapid scrutiny group's recommendations.**
- (2) To request the outcomes of the review of the Family Information Service scheduled to be undertaken between January and April 2013.**

27 Final Report of the Special Schools & Post-16 SEN Task Group

The Committee received the final report of the Special Schools and Post-16 Task Group.

Members were reminded that the Task Group had been established by the Children's Services Select Committee in September 2010 with the following terms of reference:-

- a) To establish the strengths and weaknesses of current special school and post-16 SEN provision in Wiltshire, taking into account the views of service users, parents and other stakeholder groups;
- b) To consider examples of best practice in special school and post-16 provision in Wiltshire and other authority areas;
- c) To make recommendations with respect to how special schools and post-16 SEN provision can be developed to ensure improved outcomes for Wiltshire residents with SEN.

Cllr Graham Payne, as Chairman of the Task Group, introduced the report and explained that the Task Group had concluded early on in its work that its terms of reference were very broad and could potentially encompass a huge area of work. It had agreed that it would be more productive to focus on particular

areas of concern or interest as they arose through the Task Group's evidence gathering, starting with the physical condition and capacities of the six special schools.

The Task Group had visited each of these six special schools in Wiltshire and also Studley Green Special Learning Centre for Complex Needs and Speech & Language, this resource centre being attached to Studley Green Primary School, Trowbridge. During these visits further issues were highlighted which subsequently became part of the Task Group's review and recommendations, as set out on pages 15-17 of the Task Group's report.

During the following discussion the following points were made:-

- Concern was expressed that disabled access, in particular wheelchair access, was not available in some areas of certain special schools. It was suggested that discussions take place with Wiltshire College regarding this provision.
- Cllr Tony Trotman, a member of the Task Group, stated that during the visits made the dedication of the staff had been very noticeable as had been the support and help given to them by parents and families.
- Ms Di Dale, Principal of Wiltshire College, reported that the College had not yet been visited by the Task Group and extended an invitation to the Task Group members to examine the quality of its SEN provision. She pointed out that the report's reference in para. 49 to financial difficulties encountered by the College was incorrect. She explained that Central Government had reduced the College's funding but this had not led to financial difficulties.
- Some concern was expressed about the level and funding of healthcare provision in Wiltshire's special schools, particularly at the three Severe Learning Disability schools at Exeter House in Salisbury, Larkrise School in Trowbridge and St Nicholas School in Chippenham. Concern was also expressed about the weight of responsibility this placed upon school staff and the potential risk it could pose to children's health and safety.
- Evidence had been received by the Task Group that some local authorities had a funding matrix whereby local health bodies contributed some funding for in-school nursing provision and the question was raised as to why there was not a similar agreement in Wiltshire. In response, the Service Director, Commissioning & Performance stated that certainly in Bristol this funding arrangement related to a very small number of children.

After further discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To endorse the final report and recommendations of the Special Schools and Post-16 SEN Task Group, subject to an amendment in paragraph 49 so that it reads, “the Task Group is aware from recent reports in the local media that Wiltshire College’s funding from Central Government has been reduced”.
- (2) To request a response from the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and other parties where appropriate to be received at the Committee’s next meeting.
- (3) That following the receipt of the responses, the Task Group reconvenes to undertake further work, to include:-
 - a visit to Wiltshire College’s provision for post-16 learners with SEN.
 - consideration of the identification of Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BSED) in primary school aged children.
 - an investigation to identify out of County resources being used by Wiltshire.
 - an examination of mainstream schools to identify the level of SEN provision they make.

28 Interim report of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group

Consideration was given to a report which updated the Committee on the work of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group since it was established on 29 March 2012.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Task Group, reported on the activity to date undertaken and informed Members that a detailed presentation had been received from the Community Safeguarding Head of Service on progress that had been made with implementing improvements to the Council’s Referral and Assessment processes.

Cllr Hubbard also advised that the Task Group was kept informed of progress with the implementation of all the improvements required by Ofsted by receiving updates on the Safeguarding Improvement Plan. Weekly bulletins were also received that were now sent to all Wiltshire Council social care staff. It was also noted that Cllr Hubbard had spoken to staff and had explained the roll of the Task Group.

Resolved:

To note the update on the work of the Safeguarding Children & Young People Task Group.

29 **The Role of Wiltshire Council in Informal Education**

The Committee considered a report by the Service Director, Schools & Learning, which presented the outcome of the consultation on adult education in Wiltshire which had now been completed. The Committee was invited to consider the results which would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 10 September 2012 and the options for future delivery of informal adult education from the following three options:-

- (i) To take no action and have no role in respect of informal adult education.
- (ii) To facilitate the provision of informal adult education at a local level.
- (iii) To coordinate and promote informal adult learning opportunities offered across the County.

After some discussion,

Resolved:

- (1) To recommend that Cabinet adopt options 2 & 3:**
 - (i) To facilitate the provision of informal adult education at a local level.**
 - (ii) To coordinate and promote informal adult learning opportunities offered across the County.**
- (2) To extend the Committee's thanks and appreciation to the Principal and staff at Urchfont Manor for their outstanding contribution to adult education.**

30 **Update on the Academy Schools Programme**

The Committee received a report by the Service Director, Schools & Learning, which provided an update on the Academies Programme in Wiltshire. Appended to the report was a briefing paper 'Academy Types and Governance Models', which outlined the background to academies and free schools both nationally and locally and which had been sent to all Members of the Council on 25 May 2012 following a request from this Committee.

Resolved:

To receive and note the contents of the report.

31 **Coalition Changes update - May to July 2012**

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

Arising therefrom:

- School Funding Reform It was noted that Secretary of State had announced final details of the school revenue funding system which was aimed to simplify the local funding system for 2013-14 and help to secure greater consistency and equivalence in how funding was distributed to schools.

A full review of Wiltshire's funding formula for schools had been carried out in order to be compliant with the new arrangements. The Schools Forum considered the proposed formula at its meeting on 13 July 2012 and schools would be consulted during September which would include an impact statement showing each school the likely impact of the revised formula on its funding. Roadshows would be held during September to provide further details to headteachers and governing bodies on the proposed funding arrangements and the implications.

It was pointed out that the new proposals appeared to be based on an urban model and consequently rural authorities such as Wiltshire were faced with greater changes to their funding formulas. Members were informed that the Leader of the Council was writing to the Minister about this.

32 **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.

33 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items of business.

34 **Date of Next Meeting**

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of this Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday 27 September 2012, starting at 10.30am, at the Council's Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.50 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