

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2010

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Peter Balaam
	“ Ron Cockings
	“ Robin Hazelton
	“ Clare Hopkinson
	“ Julie Jackson
	“ Tilly May
	“ Tim Naylor
	“ Carolyn Robbins
	“ John Ross (Chair)
	“ Sonja Wilson

Church Representatives	Joseph Cannon Rex Pogson
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Invited Governor Representatives	Claire Sangster Chris Smart
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Other County Councillors	Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families)
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Officers	Geoff King, Head of Service – Commissioning Planning & Partnerships Division Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator Kevin McGovern, Operations Manager Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Manager Nick Williams, Assistant Head of Service (Pupil and Student Services)
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Also attending	Jonathan Baker, Headteacher at Shipston High School
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1. Election of Chair

Councillor Robin Hazelton, seconded by Councillor Sonja Wilson, proposed that Councillor John Ross be elected Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor John Ross be elected Chair of the Committee.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor John Ross, seconded by Councillor Tilly May, proposed that Councillor Carolyn Robbins be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Carolyn Robbins be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. General

The Chair thanked everyone attending the meeting today and over the past year for their contributions to carrying out the scrutiny function under difficult circumstances.

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Max Hyde, Alison Livesey and Councillor John Whitehouse.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Julie Jackson declared a personal interest in Item 6 as her daughter currently uses post 16 transport and as a Governor at Oak Wood School.

Councillor Carolyn Robbins declared a personal interest in Item 6 as her grandchildren use post 16 transport.

(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 December 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2009 were agreed with the following corrections:

Page 3 – Page 4 – 3.v Portfolio Holder Update

The word “not” be replaced with “no” in the eighth line.

Page 4 – 3 Supporting Schools

“DCFS” be replaced by “DCSF” in the fifth line.

Page 4 – 3.i Supporting Schools

The word “discreet” be replaced with “discrete” in the first line of point i.

Page 5 - 3.4 Supporting Schools

The word “shipping” be included between the words “secondhand” and “container” in the second line of point 4.

Page 5 - 3.4 Supporting Schools

The words “as a meeting room” be added to the end of point 4.

Page 5 - 3.7 Supporting Schools

The word “to” be replaced with the word “the” in the third line of point 7.

Page 6 - 3.8 Supporting Schools

The word “changes” be replaced by “chances” in the final line of point 8.

Page 6 - 3.9 Supporting Schools

“DCFS” be replaced by “DCSF” in the fifth line of point 9.

Page 6 - 3.9 Supporting Schools

The words “good to great” in the final line of point 9 be placed in inverted commas.

Page 7 – 4.6 Questions to the Portfolio Holder

The word “Solihul” to be replaced with “Solihull” in the penultimate line of point 6.

Matters Arising

Members noted that the following Briefing Notes had been requested and had not to date been received:

- A Briefing Note from Mark Gore setting out “staff transfers and budget for this and subsequent years” (page 3).
- A Briefing Note from Councillor Izzi Seccombe “detailing the current position, plans, progress and staffing movements, including changes to the original proposals due to local needs and local assessment” (page 6, point 2).
- A Briefing Note from Councillor Izzi Seccombe on the support being provided for teenage parents to minimise the impact on their education and to avoid any further unwanted pregnancies” (page 7. point 7).

Members had also not received a “plain English version of the indicators”, which Tricia Morrison had agreed to provide (page 9, point 4).

Michelle McHugh agreed to follow these up with the relevant officers/Member and to forward electronic copies to Members.

(4) Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Councillor Heather Timms to her first O&S meeting as Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families. He also welcomed Jonathan Baker (Headteacher at Shipston High School) to the meeting.

The Chair reminded the Committee that, in line with the Member Code of Conduct, Item 6 would be looking at the implementation of the post 16 transport decision taken by full Council on 9 February 2010, and not the decision itself.

4. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

5. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Councillor Heather Timms

1. Councillor Timms stated that she was keen to focus on the objectives set as a Council, but the key issue was educational achievement.
2. When asked what topics any future O&S Committee should be considering, Councillor Timms made the following suggestions:
 - Partnership working such as the Joint Review of Antenatal and Postnatal Support for Teenage Parents (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council).
 - Academies and the changing role of the Local Authority.
 - In light of the Munro Review on improving child protection, there was a need to ensure that the right processes and risk assessments were in place without having an adverse impact on the lives of children and parents.
3. Councillor Timms undertook to remind officers of the importance of keeping local Members informed of any issues relating to their divisions.
4. There was no obligation for any group interested in setting up a new free school to notify their Local Authority, and to date the County Council was not aware of any applications in Warwickshire.
5. In response to a query regarding school places and appeals, Nick Williams noted that every Warwickshire parent had received an offer of a school place (Primary Schools in February, and Secondary Schools on 2 March). Appeals were still ongoing and where appeals were unsuccessful, parents could still take up the original offers and put their child's name on a waiting list for alternative schools. These waiting lists would remain in place until the end of the year and parents would be

- notified if places became available at their first preference school.
6. No notification or new guidance had been received from Government in relation to Building Schools for the Future (BSF).
 7. There was broad agreement that there should not be a greater focus on achievement and added value rather than an over-focus on educational attainment.
 8. Advice to schools regarding Academy status would come from Government, and the role of the Local Authority was to support all schools regardless of their status, and continue to create the “collective family” of schools to ensure positive outcomes for all children.

The Chair thanked Councillor Heather Timms for her responses.

6. Post 16 Transport (including students aged 14-16 attending off site learning opportunities).

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families explaining the proposed changes to policies and increases in charges for Post 16 Transport in order to achieve target savings of £1.3 million over the next three years.

Jonathan Baker, Headteacher at Shipston High School and Chair of the Southern Area (Warwickshire) Association of Secondary Heads (SASH) thanked Members for being given the opportunity to address the Committee. He made the following points:

- a. He recognised the difficult job officers had to do and thanked them for speaking to SASH.
- b. There had been some discussion earlier about ensuring parity of provision, but the impact of the proposed charges would result in a lack of parity, particularly for students in places such as Shipston, where there were no education facilities for over 16 year-olds and any further education required travelling. This problem had been accentuated by Warwickshire’s policy of promoting small, 11-16 high schools, which meant those students had to travel in order to access post-16 education.
- c. Shipston was one of two Warwickshire schools achieving 100% of young people in education, employment or training, but this would be threatened by the doubling of cost of transport to parents over the next three years.
- d. The 14-16 provision was a successful programme which would be threatened by the cuts through a reduction in the number of students able to travel. A reduction in students would impact on providers being able to offer the number and variety of courses currently offered.
- e. It was felt by some that the cuts were a false economy, and any savings made in transport cuts could be less than the knock-on costs in terms of unemployment benefits etc.

- f. It was recognised that the decision could not be overturned, but SASH welcomed the consultation, and urged Members to monitor the situation, particularly where students had no option but to travel to widen the scope of their education post 14 or to continue their education post 16.

During the discussion that followed, the following points were noted:

1. The School Links Service had been introduced in 2003 following a Best Value Review of Transport. The fleet of 11 dedicated school coaches undertook school transport runs and education-related transport such as trips to swimming pools, concerts, museums and country parks. This was however only a small part of the network operating across the County, and there were limitations within which the service had to operate. Kevin McGovern added that officers were being as creative as possible in looking for solutions, including options such as off peak travel.
2. Concern was expressed about the expected impact on education and achievement, particularly in rural areas, and the consequent impact on providers.
3. The consultation exercise would help to further develop policy, and the Portfolio Holder and C, YP&F Directorate were looking at how the impacts of the review could be mitigated, particularly in terms of rural areas.
4. It was crucial that the timing of the consultation and communication between stakeholders was properly managed.
5. There was currently no maximum distance specified in terms of travelling.
6. Members requested further information on:
 - the numbers of families, children and young people affected
 - geographical distances
 - what other authorities were doing.
7. It was acknowledged that all parties had vested interests in finding solutions, including schools and colleges, and the move for the Local Authority towards one as a broker of services would have to be as part of a more general transport issue.
8. In response to a query regarding the possibility of spreading the payments, Nick Williams stated that a number of options had been considered, but the proposed arrangements had been considered the only viable option. Geoff King added that increasing the administrative burden could have a counter effect on the savings.

Members:

- (i) Noted the implications of the transport budget review and how the Local Authority, working with partners and stakeholders, was seeking to address the concerns.

- (ii) Agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up as soon as possible to oversee and monitor the implications of the transport budget review, how it was affecting people and the impact on children and young people getting to school or college.

7. Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee

The Committee noted the Forward Plan Items.

8. Any Other Items

Councillor Carolyn Robbins thanked Councillor John Ross, on behalf of the Committee, for his work done as Chair.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 11:45 p.m.