

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 October 2011

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillor Julie Jackson
Councillor Mike Perry
Councillor Carolyn Robbins
Councillor John Ross (Vice Chair)
Councillor Martin Shaw
Councillor June Tandy (Chair)
Councillor Claire Watson (replacing Councillor Sonja Wilson)
Councillor John Whitehouse (replacing Councillor Peter Balaam)

Co-opted members

Sharon Ansell (Parent Governor)
Alison Livesey (Parent Governor)
Rex Pogson (Church Governor)

Invited representatives

Chris Smart
Diana Turner
Max Hyde

Other County Councillors

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety)
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse
Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools)

Officers

Elizabeth Featherstone, Head of Service – Early Intervention Services
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Learning and Achievement
Liz Holt, Head of Children's Strategic Commissioning
Ettly Martin, Joint Commissioning Manager – Sexual Health
Richard Maybey, Democratic Services Officer
Peter Thompson, Service Manager – Learning and Achievement
Lesley Tregear, Warwickshire Youth Justice Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Peter Balaam (replaced by Councillor John Whitehouse)
Councillor Carol Fox
Councillor Clive Rickhards
Councillor Sonja Wilson (replaced by Councillor Claire Watson)

(2) Members' declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

Councillor Julie Jackson declared a personal interest in item 4 as her husband works for Nuneaton & Bedworth Leisure Trust, and in item 6 as a former member of the PRU Management Committee.

Councillor John Whitehouse declared a personal interest in item 4 as a member of a youth club management committee.

Chris Smart and Alison Livesey declared personal interests in item 6 as members of the Warwickshire School Admissions Forum.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2011

Matters arising

With reference to R21 in paragraph 4.3 (page 3 of 8), greater clarity was sought over the definition of a “local authority representative”, and who exactly the Council is encouraging schools/Academies to include on their board of governors.

On request from the Chair, Richard Maybey agreed to request confirmation from Greta Needham (Head of Service, Law & Governance) and report back to the Committee.

Diana Turner brought attention to paragraph 6.2 (page 5 of 8), stating that no action was taken to ensure the School Governors Forum had opportunity to respond to the consultation on the proposed closure of the PRU, and there was a general lack of information being shared with the Forum.

Elizabeth Featherstone stated that the School Governance service sits within the Council’s Resources Group, and agreed to inform David Carter (Strategic Director of Resources) of these comments.

Minutes

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

2. Public question time (Standing Order 34)

None

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

Children’s Centres

Alison Livesey asked the Portfolio Holder to explain the remit and purpose of the review of Children’s Centres and to confirm if members were satisfied with the consultation process.

In reply, Councillor Heather Timms stated that:

- The purpose of the review is to ensure that Children’s Centres meet the needs of parents and children

- The consultation process is robust and seeks the views of key stakeholders, including clusters of parents
- The report is unlikely to be taken to the Cabinet meeting in December

School transport passenger assistants

Councillor John Whitehouse asked if the Portfolio Holder was satisfied with the robustness of the risk assessments undertaken ahead of the removal of passenger assistants from school transport services. Comments made at the 11 October Warwick Area Committee suggested that assessments have only observed children getting on and off the vehicle, not the full extent of their journey. As a result, Warwick Area Committee had made a request to the 13 October Cabinet, as an item of urgent business, to consider suspending further removals pending more comprehensive risk assessments.

In reply, Councillor Heather Timms stated that:

- The consultation period had been extended to fully inform parents of the consequences of the decision
- Many parents have been concerned that there would be no one to assist with putting seatbelts on, but this was not within the remit of the assistants anyway
- More information needs to be shared with parents about the changes
- She was aware of the request to Cabinet, but would not confirm if they would accept it as an item of urgent business

National school funding formula

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked if any update could be provided on the national school funding formula following the emails sent to Rugby members in relation to funding arrangements for Rugby High School.

Councillor Heather Timms stated that a briefing note would be circulated to all members by Mark Gore. Chris Smart added that the email confuses two separate funding streams: the local school funding formula and post-16 funding allocated by the Young People's Learning Agency.

Councillor Mike Perry asked if there was any allowance in the formula for granting capital for small improvements – and if so, how the allocations would be prioritised.

Councillor Heather Timms stated that there is a shortage of primary school places, and capital spending is therefore prioritised on primary schools where extra capacity is needed. Details of the specific schools are available in the relevant Cabinet reports.

4. Warwickshire's Respect Yourself Campaign: Tackling the Under-18 Conception Rates

- 4.1 Officers introduced the report, which highlighted a reduction in the U-18 conception rate in Warwickshire, but a relatively high rate overall. The following points were noted:

- a) The national reduction target is ambitious, but the authority is working hard through its Respect Yourself campaign and with multi-agency partners to reduce rates
 - b) There is a time lag associated with conception rate data, due to the period between conception and birth, but trends can still be identified that enable targeted interventions
 - c) The campaign now has an evidence base of what interventions work best to improve sexual health and well-being, and this can be translated into significant cost benefits
 - d) The evidence base will be useful to determine which services are prioritised as funding is reduced
 - e) A long-term, multi-agency strategy is needed that focuses on the priority for young people, which is accessibility and communication of sexual health information
- 4.2 During the members' discussion, the following points were raised:
- a) Access to conception rate data of individual schools would enable better targeting of programmes and promotion of teacher training
 - b) It is important to understand what happens to young mothers after the birth, especially those living in deprivation
 - c) The potential reductions in the Care to Learn grant could hinder young mothers in accessing education
 - d) A jointly commissioned research project into the needs and issues of young people would be a valuable tool for schools on which to base their sexual health programmes. This would have to be properly targeted at the right age group, as there is a trend towards younger pregnancies
 - e) The Local Involvement Network is starting a project to understand how young people want to communicate and access information about health issues. This could be joined up with the work of the Respect Yourself campaign
 - f) The education of young fathers is important, but they are often hard to find. Work is underway to map them and develop appropriate services
 - g) Children's Centres can play a strong role in preventing secondary pregnancies
 - h) Reducing teenage pregnancy will be a priority for the Youth Service as it moves to targeted support, and consideration is needed for how best to commission services and work with young people
- 4.3 In response to specific questions from members, officers agreed to:
- a) Provide data on the proportion of births that result in adoption
 - b) Provide data on the proportion of young mothers who are taken into care
 - c) Provide data on the proportion of children taken into care
 - d) Consider a pilot exercise with ante-natal clinics to gather data on the specific school that each expectant mother attends
 - e) Inform the Committee of the authority's decision on whether to respond to the consultation on the Care to Learn grant
 - f) Update the Committee on findings of the visit to Holland
 - g) Update the Committee on findings of the visit to Leicestershire, which has achieved the highest rate reduction among Warwickshire's family group
 - h) Commend the importance of sexual health information to all head teachers and chairs of governor boards, including Academies

Resolved:

That the Committee receives a future report detailing:

- The proportion of U-18 births that result in adoption
- The proportion of U-18 births and mothers that enter the care system
- Feedback and findings of the visits to Holland and Leicestershire
- Progress of the recommendations from the *Joint Review of Antenatal and Postnatal Services for Teenage Parents in Warwickshire* (Autumn 2010)

5. First-Time Entrants to the Youth Criminal Justice System

- 5.1 Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety) and Lesley Tregear introduced the report, highlighting the following points:
- a) Once young people enter the justice system, they tend to become persistent offenders. Therefore, reducing the number of first-time entrants (FTEs) offers long-term benefits
 - b) While Warwickshire has been successful in reducing its FTE rate and compares well with authorities in the same family group, maintaining this performance as funding reductions take hold will require strong partnership work and a multi-agency approach
 - c) The Youth Restorative Disposal (YRD) is an effective pre-court disposal for low-level offences that reduces the FTE rate and results in low re-offending rates. YRDs are also seen as a particularly effective intervention for vulnerable young people, who make up 90% of all young offenders
 - d) However, the future of pre-court disposals is uncertain, with the government appearing to lessen its focus on diverting offenders from the criminal justice system
 - e) If there are changes to pre-court disposals, the local authority would still like to see a comprehensive assessment of each young person and each individual offence to identify the most appropriate intervention
 - f) The government's proposal for payment by results (which will include FTE targets) could reduce in-year funding by 25% should quarterly targets be missed. This could impact on the ability of the service to complete its planned work-programme activities
- 5.2 During the members' discussion, the following points were noted:
- a) YRDs are not issued instead of custodial charges simply in order to meet FTE targets. The local authority can only make recommendations to the police and Crown Prosecution Service who make the final decision
 - b) As budgets reduce, more information is needed on which interventions are most effective. There could be a role for Overview & Scrutiny to advise the Portfolio Holder on which services to prioritise
 - c) With responsibility for Public Health returning to the local authority, members should consider the best approach to scrutinising these issues – especially as they cut across a number of organisational bodies. Also, as funding is reduced, there may be benefit in joining up with other bodies – such as neighbourhood planning and school clusters – to undertake targeted work

- d) The measure of FTEs could be reviewed in light of the changing focus from government. A better measure may be around “life chances” or “ambition”, which is something the Shadow Health and Well-being Board are discussing
- 5.3 Members asked for more detailed information to be shared in future reports, including: the success rate of various interventions; the lifestyle and family factors that influence young offending (alcohol and substance misuse etc); and data on the educational status of young offenders (in school, truant, excluded, without a place etc).
- 5.4 Councillor Richard Hobbs informed members that these issues are embedded within the Youth Justice Plan, which falls under the remit of the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Consequently, there would be overlap of reporting and scrutiny should this Committee continue its interest.
- 5.5 Cllr Jerry Roodhouse suggested that the following recommendation be made to the Overview & Scrutiny Board:

Recommendation:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Board, upon consideration of the advice of the Strategic Director for Communities, decides how future scrutiny of youth justice be conducted, given that certain issues fall within the remit of both the Communities and Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

6. Warwickshire Secondary Schools In-Year Fair Access Protocol

- 6.1 Peter Thompson introduced the report, highlighting that the In-Year Fair Access Protocol (IYFAP) is a relatively new protocol, with only one full year of data available, and that it is currently being reviewed.
- 6.2 The directorate is currently redesigning the monitoring process and building a more analytical database to better understand who the children are and why they fall under the protocol. The new process will hopefully remove the stigma associated with the IYFAP and lead to a fairer distribution of places.
- 6.3 Due to budget and staff reductions in the Educational Social Work service, there will be less work done to address school attendance. Therefore, the authority will need to look at how families can best access the support of other relevant services, such as through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- 6.4 During members’ discussion, the following points were noted:
- a) Academies must cooperate with the IYFAP. If an Academy refuses, the local authority can ask the Secretary of State, via the Young People’s Learning Agency, to direct them to comply
 - b) Within the current IYFAP, the Chair of the Area Behaviour Partnerships (ABPs) makes the final decision on where a child is placed. This process will be reviewed

- c) Priority given to 'children returning to an area' only applies to children who fall within the IYFAP criteria
- d) Currently, the majority of places allocated through the IYFAP do go to schools with spare capacity. However, the new IYFAP process should lead to a more even distribution
- e) The authority is working closely with schools to encourage them to fulfil their responsibilities to the protocol
- f) A draft protocol for primary schools is being developed. Because the location of schools is more important to pupils at primary level than at secondary, this protocol will focus more on local agreements between clusters of schools

Resolved:

That the Committee review the revised In-Year Fair Access Protocol at a future meeting.

7. Work Programme 2011-12

The Chair confirmed that at the next Committee meeting, representatives from the various Area Behaviour Partnerships will be invited to set out their views on how the partnerships should work. A further report will then be brought to the March 2012 meeting to review progress of how the partnerships are working.

As a future item of work, Alison Livesey proposed that the Committee should consider the findings of Cabinet's review of Children's Centres.

8. Any other items

There were no urgent items.

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Chair

The meeting rose at 12.45pm