

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 20 June 2012

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillor Martyn Ashford (replacing Cllr Carol Fox)
Councillor Peter Balaam
Councillor Jim Foster
Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Julie Jackson
Councillor Mike Perry
Councillor Clive Rickhards
Councillor John Ross
Councillor June Tandy

Invited representatives

Chris Smart
Diana Turner

Other councillors

Councillor Bob Hicks (to provide update on Safeguarding Task and Finish Group – in relation to item 8, Work Programme)
Councillor Dave Shilton (attending for Councillor Martin Shaw)

(Councillor Shilton advised the Committee that he was aware that the formal notification of his attendance had not been submitted within the time requirement of 3 clear working days and that he would not, therefore, take part in any voting on any issue).

Officers

Hugh Disley - Head of Service for Early Intervention
Mark Gore - Head of Service, Learning and Achievement
Peter Hatcher - Service Manager, Targeted Youth Support
Janet Purcell - Democratic Services Manager – Resources Group
Yvonne Rose - Service Manager, Secondary Phase
Shona Walton - Principal Inspector, Secondary and Special Schools

1.0 General

1.1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Councillor June Tandy proposed that Councillor Julie Jackson be Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2012/13. Councillor Rickhards seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

Resolved

That Councillor Julie Jackson be Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2012/13.

Councillor Mike Perry proposed that Councillor John Ross be Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2012/13. Councillor Peter Fowler seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

Resolved

That Councillor John Ross be Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2012/13.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Carol Fox, Councillor Martin Shaw, Alison Livesey, Joseph Cannon, Councillor Heather Timms and Wendy Fabbro (Strategic Director, People Group).

1.3 Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

A general declaration of interest was noted for all members in their roles as school governors and/or trustees.

1.4 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

1.5 Matters Arising

1.5.1 Minute 1.4.2 - Passenger Transport Assistants

Mark Gore updated the meeting on the position with regard to Passenger Transport Assistants and referred to a letter that had been circulated to members.

1.5.2 Mark advised that the £700,000 savings target (referred to at Minute 2.4c) was based on there being 48 primary buses with assistants, costing an average of £25 per day, and a further saving as a result of increased competition for routes of around £10 per day (a total of approximately £320,000). There were 50 taxi services also making similar savings, bringing the total to just under £700,000.

1.5.3 Mark reminded members that the assistants were not automatically removed and that each route is assessed. Given this, it may not be possible to reach the level of savings originally envisaged in this area but the overall savings target on transport would be met. Mark assured the meeting that he would report back on this.

1.5.4 Councillor John Ross said he was aware of three taxi services for Etone School, one carrying only one child, and wondered why they could not be combined. Mark Gore explained that there could be any one of a number of explanations for this but gave his assurance that there is a very clear policy and criteria followed for allocation of transport.

1.5.5 It was agreed that the letter that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder had sent in response to the questions at the last meeting would be reissued to members.

1.5.6 Minute 4 - Area Behaviour Partnerships, Provision for Excluded Pupils and Pupils at Risk of Exclusion

Mark Gore updated the meeting on progress of the Eastern Area Behaviour Partnership. Councillor Julie Jackson questioned whether progress was taking place quickly enough and was advised that work had been taking place since the last meeting, including involving an independent consultant to look at best practice. A further meeting was being held the following week looking at ways of working and at services about to be commissioned for excluded pupils and those about to be excluded. Mark stressed that success would depend largely on the appointment of a very good coordinator.

1.5.7 Councillor Clive Rickhards asked whether there was adequate provision of learning support units (LSUs). Mark advised that schools in the East were developing a range of provision including LSUs to prevent exclusion. Mark agreed to circulate the latest figures.

1.5.8 Minute 4.4(g) – Keresley site

Mark Gore confirmed that there is no playing field at Keresley, but that there is an outdoor area which was considered satisfactory. Children will be there for a further 12 months but numbers are small and declining.

Councillor Julie Jackson undertook to visit the site to see what is on offer and welcomed any other member who also wished to visit to notify Mark Gore.

1.5.9 Minute 6.2 – Work Programme and Children’s Health Issues

In relation to play areas, it was noted that rules had been relaxed and that secondary schools were now being developed without playgrounds on the basis that they were not required in schools with fully structured days. Members expressed concern that this could be detrimental to the health of children. Councillor Martyn Ashford and Councillor Dave Shilton (as Vice-Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee) both highlighted the cross-over between these two Committees in relation to children’s health issues. This was particularly evident in the CAMHS item programmed for the next meeting of that Committee.

1.5.10 The Committee agreed that it would welcome a joint meeting for such specific items at the appropriate time.

Resolved

- Mark Gore to circulate a breakdown of transport costs (as summarised above) and to re-circulate letter from Cllr Timms in response to questions on Passenger Transport Assistants.
- Report on Passenger Transport Assistants is programmed for November 2012.
- Report on Area Behaviour Partnerships is programmed for November 2012.
- Visit to Keresley site to be arranged by Mark Gore for the Chair and any others who express an interest.

- A joint meeting with Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be scheduled for an appropriate time to consider Children's Health issues.

1.6 Chair's Announcement – Sharon Ansell, Parent Governor

The Chair announced that Sharon Ansell had given notice that she had to step down from the Committee due to ill health. The Committee requested that their thanks be forwarded to Sharon for her support of the Committee and their best wishes for the future.

2.0 Public Question Time

None

3.0 Portfolio Holder Question Time

Members expressed their disappointment that this was the second meeting that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Schools had been unable to attend and that it would be helpful if at least the support Cabinet member had been present.

The Committee considered that the absence of the Portfolio Holder presented a difficulty in undertaking both its overview and scrutiny roles and agreed that Councillor Timms be requested to attend meetings wherever possible.

4.0 Impact of "Transformation of Services for Young People" on past and future work with young people

4.1 Hugh Disley presented a report setting out the impact of the savings plan and transformation of services for young people. Hugh expressed his gratitude to the Council for the strategy it has adopted as it had maintained a level of support and a positive future for the service, unlike that found in many other local authorities. Hugh acknowledged that the transformation had not been easy but the reaction from communities had proved positive and his continuing engagement with young people, particularly through the Youth Council, revealed an understanding of the pressures on the Council and the need to change.

4.2 Hugh recognised, however, the need to remain vigilant especially for those who were most in need of the service. One area of potential support for organisations working with young people was through the individual budgets now allocated to members to use in their local area. Hugh stressed that the voluntary sector plays an important role in many areas and that it was important to maintain and build their resilience.

4.3 Diana Turner asked how services could be of benefit to wider groups of young people, not just those who are the subject of targeted support. Hugh explained that the gap would be bridged by working with the voluntary sector.

4.4 Councillor Clive Richards questioned whether the service was purely reactive, relying on referrals from other agencies, and sought an explanation of the

term 'commissioned youth offer'. Peter Hatcher explained that there is a systematic collation of information and needs analysis in order to identify the young people who are likely to need support as well as those who evidently need support. Referrals are based on both analysis and contacts with organisations. In some cases, organisations are approached for help, in others a youth worker will be allocated to the young person, depending on the individual need.

- 4.5 Councillor Peter Balaam asked what mechanism is in place to monitor the outcomes for young people and the effectiveness of the new approach. Peter Hatcher replied that various factors are monitored, including positive destinations, health outcomes, the number in employment, education or training and involvement with criminal behaviour. There are no longer national indicators and therefore the service uses its own.
- 4.6 Councillor June Tandy raised the issue of young people engagement at local forums, recognising that although forums themselves had raised concern about young people and had them as a top priority, these were not meetings that young people were interested in attending. Councillor Tandy added that she was particularly concerned that NEETs were continuing to rise and that targeting would only work for those who wanted to be targeted. Hugh Disley responded that there were effective youth forums at district level, but that the issue at community forum level was more to do with finding ways of meeting the needs of people than expecting them to necessarily attend formal meetings.
- 4.7 Peter Hatcher reported that the message from young people and adults was consistently that there is not enough for them to do and so the service would continue to work on ensuring open access. The service does focus on those not attending school and on tackling NEETs. He added that the impact of the new approach would take time to take measurable effect.
- 4.8 Councillor Julie Jackson expressed concern that it would be two years before a significant impact is likely and, while recognising that 6 months would be too short, did wish to see progress reported in a shorter time scale.
- 4.9 In response to a question from Councillor Dave Shilton, Peter Hatcher updated the Committee on the position with the transfer of premises in the Warwick District area (as listed in the appendix to the report) and noted that these were completing over the next few months. There remained one outstanding in Stratford as the landlord had still to be identified.
- 4.10 Councillor Peter Fowler welcomed the positive progress in his local area and also reported that the borough council are considering a new leisure centre in Coleshill (possibly as part of a school) and he was pressing for the opportunity to be taken to include a youth facility.
- 4.11 Councillor John Ross referred to other positive local action in his area, which included a thriving boxing club, but also noted that volunteers were hard to retain for any period.

- 4.12 Councillor Julie Jackson referred to the approach in her area where young ambassadors had been appointed to attend meetings and played an important role in teaching adults (e.g., on drugs and alcohol). Peter Hatcher undertook to get young people to attend any forum meeting if requested by members.
- 4.13 Councillor Julie Jackson concluded the item by requesting that a report on the effects of the transformation programme in terms of the outcomes for young people be brought to the Committee in 12 months time.

Resolved

That a report on the effect of the transformation programme on outcomes for young people be brought to the Committee in June 2013.

5. Review of 16-19 Provision in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton & Bedworth, March 2012

Councillor June Tandy reported that she had agreed with a request that this report be deferred and that a member seminar be arranged so that wider discussion could be undertaken.

The Committee noted that this would take place on Wednesday 11 July at 10.00 a.m. at Shire Hall, Warwick. The invitation would be to all members, including the co-opted and invited representatives of the Committee.

6.0 Performance of Warwickshire Children and Young People in 2011 National Tests and Examinations

- 6.1 Mark Gore advised that the Committee should have received a full report on examination results at its meeting last November 2011 but this had not happened, for which he apologised.
- 6.2 Mark outlined the main issues, reporting that performance remained good and was generally above or in line with statistical neighbours. There did, however, continue to be lower performance in the north of the County, particularly in deprived wards. Mark added that the results for looked after children were improving but still disappointing and indicated a need to focus still more on this group of children. There was a significant attainment gap of 26% at KS4 between children on free school meals and those who are not. During the debate, Mark reminded members of the many factors that impact on a child's capacity to engage in education and how the Troubled Families agenda was, among other things, about ensuring wraparound care, so that young people can engage in education.
- 6.3 In relation to NEETs, this was difficult to track as the level fluctuated according to the time of year and was generally higher in June, lower in September and increases again in November when young people drop out of courses. Mark

explained that this was why the impartial advice and guidance to young people was essential to ensure they are on the right course. The raising of the participation age to 17 in 2013 will also provide a challenge. Councillor Jim Foster requested that in the further report the outcomes of young people be mapped to show employment destinations.

- 6.4 The new Ofsted framework changes mean a number of primary schools are now regarded as requiring intervention. The reduced Learning and Achievement Team will have to focus carefully on the schools in most need. The results of 25 inspections now have 11 schools moving from good to outstanding category, 11 from satisfactory to good and 3 from good to satisfactory. Only two schools are in special measures (compared to a neighbouring county that has 18).
- 6.5 Members noted the gap between boys and girls in English attainment and Shona Walton explained how this is worse in England than in other European countries. This had fluctuated over the years and appears linked to changes in aspiration/motivation of young people.
- 6.6 It was noted that it was too early to measure the impact of the English Baccalaureate as this had been applied retrospectively and schools had not had time to amend curriculums.
- 6.7 It was also noted that all secondary schools are engaged in vocational courses now and there were now very high requirements required for apprenticeships. Shona advised that alternative provision can be very important and that there are now more creative pathways opening up for young people.

Resolved

- A report to be brought back in September on NEETs (Spokespersons to agree who to invite but to include Steve Stewart from CSWP).
- A full report on attainment in November to include:
 - How the council is addressing the attainment levels of vulnerable children, including children in care.
 - How the council is addressing the differences in performance between areas.
 - The Council's strategy, including success measures, timescales and costings.
 - A comparison of how effective measures have been this year against last.
 - An explanation of how the Council is engaging with academies and with councillors in their area
 - A breakdown of attainment results for each school and area.
 - Unemployment levels, if possible for each area/locality (so that it can overlay the map in the report).

The Chair requested that information be circulated well in advance of the meeting so that members can be prepared to scrutinise effectively.

7.0 A Framework for Organising Education Provision in Warwickshire in 2012

- 7.1 Mark Gore presented this proposed framework, which responds to the statutory requirement that local authorities 'plan effectively for school organisation'. Councillor June Tandy commended the report for indicating clearly how the local authority will be different in the future, and the pressures it will be under, including that from the forecasted further decline in rural school numbers and growth in urban areas. Councillor Tandy asked whether it was becoming more acceptable to have all-through primary provision rather than separate infant and junior schools. Mark Gore confirmed that the trend was to establish all-through primary schools and the new funding formula will encourage this as there will be a lower funding for infant schools than has been the case to date in Warwickshire.
- 7.2 Mark added that the authority has a responsibility to ensure sufficient places whilst also addressing the issue of surplus places. There are around 25 (mostly rural schools) with less than 120 pupils. More than 25 have surplus places, 11 are in federations or in academy chains. Chris Smart expressed the view that federation did not necessarily represent good value for money and in some cases a split-site allowance costs less than federation. Chris urged the Council to use its influence in getting governing bodies to work together and come up with fair solutions in the primary sector and give clear policy direction.
- 7.3 Diana Turner advised that leadership is the key factor and attracting applicants to positions. Diana also expressed the view that a more flexible approach be considered with reorganisation of different size infants and juniors into the most appropriate size infant or junior. Councillor John Ross added that he was aware of an under-subscribed junior school close to an infant school, which suggested an amalgamation may be possible. Mark Gore advised that opportunities were taken as they arose (for example, changing a JMI into an infant school). Timing was important and the primary focus had to be on those governors who were willing to consider change.

8.0 Work Programme 2012-13

- 8.1 Councillor Bob Hicks, Chair of the Safeguarding Improvement Task and Finish Group, updated the meeting on the work of the Group, referring to the interim report circulated to members. Councillor Hicks thanked Richard Maybey for his support of the Group and preparation of the report.
- 8.2 Councillor Hicks explained that the Group had been established to look at the implementation of the improvement plan following the Ofsted inspection. The Group had held a series of meetings in May to examine various aspects of this improvement plan, calling in officers to provide evidence and talking to carers from the Fostering Service which had been very informative.

- 8.3 It was noted that the ambition had been to take a final report to the June meeting of the Children and Young People OSC. However, it became apparent during the review that certain information from the NHS Arden Cluster would not be available until later in the year. Therefore, members have decided to issue an interim report now, and then resume the review when the pending information is available. Provisionally, they expect to take a final report to Committee in January 2013.
- 8.4 The Chair thanked Councillor Hicks, on behalf of the Committee, and looked forward to the final report.
- 8.5 The Committee noted its work programme and agreed that, given the items proposed for the November meeting, allowance should be made for this meeting to be an all-day meeting and for all members to be notified accordingly.

Resolved

That the programme be agreed with the updates made in response to issues raised at this meeting and to include the reservation of a whole day for the meeting on 6 November.

9.0 Urgent Item – Payment Ordered by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to education not provided

The Chair agreed that this item be taken as urgent business.

Mark Gore presented a report outlining a case considered by Regulatory Committee on 12 June, which had agreed to comply with the Ombudsman's proposed settlement of £6,000 in respect of a case of education not provided, plus an award of £500 for trouble and inconvenience to the parent. It had also been agreed that an officer be appointed to investigate and identify learning and action points.

It was noted that this incident was within the Eastern Area again and it was agreed that the report already scheduled on progress with the Partnership include an update on the lessons learned from this case. It was also agreed that the ombudsman report be circulated to members.

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Chair

The meeting closed at 12.45pm