

**Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Minutes of the meeting held at 10.00am on 25 April 2012**

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillor Peter Balaam
Councillor Jim Foster
Councillor Peter Fowler
Councillor Julie Jackson
Councillor Mike Perry
Councillor John Ross (Vice Chair)
Councillor Martin Shaw
Councillor June Tandy (Chair)
Councillor Chris Williams (replacing Cllr Carol Fox)

Co-opted members

Joseph Cannon (Church Governor)

Invited representatives

Max Hyde, Diana Turner

Other County Councillors

Councillor Carolyn Robbins

Officers

Ross Caws, Commissioning Development Manager
Wendy Fabbro, Strategic Director, People Group
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Learning and Achievement
Richard Maybey, Democratic Services Officer – Law & Governance

1.0 General

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Councillors Jim Foster and Peter Fowler as new members of the Committee.

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Sharon Ansell, Councillor Carol Fox, Alison Livesey, Councillor Clive Rickhards, Chris Smart and Councillor Heather Timms.
- 1.2 Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests
- Councillor Julie Jackson declared a personal interest as her daughter is an employee of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
 - Councillor June Tandy declared a personal interest as her daughter is an employee of North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
 - A general declaration of interest was noted for all members in their roles as school governors and/or trustees
- 1.3 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2012 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

1.4 Matters Arising

1.4.1 Memorandum of Understanding with Academies

Mark Gore stated that a large piece of work is currently being undertaken to understand how each service area is affected by the conversion of schools to Academy status. This needs to be completed before guidance is issued to schools. Mark agreed to bring this guidance before the Committee at the appropriate time.

1.4.2 Passenger Transport Assistants

Councillor Jackson asked why no response had been given to the Committee by the Portfolio Holder in relation to its resolution at paragraph 2.7. The Chair asked officers to pursue this response.

1.4.3 Mark Gore added that since the discussion at the last meeting, the risk assessment process has been tightened. A panel of officers are now required to assess proposals for each route and reach unanimous approval before any changes go ahead. New guidance has also been circulated to operators. The Chair asked that this guidance be circulated to the Committee.

1.4.4 Access to apprenticeships

Max Hyde stated that she would be attending an event organised by David Willets (Minister of State for Universities and Science) and would raise the Committee's concerns about the difficulty young people have in accessing apprenticeships if they do not have specific experience or qualifications.

1.4.5 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Mark Gore stated that the service is working with schools to help them understand their responsibilities when the duty to provide IAG transfers to them in September 2012. The Chair asked that a briefing note on this matter be issued to the Committee when appropriate.

2.0 Public Question Time

2.1 Caroline Adams and Richard Cobb, parents of children at Ferncumbe Primary School, were in attendance to ask the following questions about the removal of Passenger Transport Assistants:

- a) Why did the Portfolio Holder seemingly give so little consideration to the resolution that was passed by the Committee at its last meeting, providing a response within just 24 hours?
- b) Will the Council's strengthened risk assessment be applied retrospectively to the Ferncumbe bus route?
- c) If yes to question 2, can the PTAs be reinstated until that assessment is carried out?
- d) What measures are in place to monitor the health and safety procedures of bus operators where no PTAs are on board?

2.2 In the absence of the Portfolio Holder, Mark Gore offered the following responses:

- a) Cllr Timms had meetings with the relevant officers immediately after the last Committee meeting to give the route in question proper consideration
- b) Officers will consider carrying out the strengthened risk assessment retrospectively on the Ferncumbe route
- c) In line with agreed Council policy, the outcome of the initial risk assessment will apply to the Ferncumbe route until such time as a different outcome is determined. Therefore, the PTAs will not be reinstated during the interim
- d) No further incidents or concerns have been reported to the local authority since the last communication issued to all elected members. Officers will ensure that operators are aware of how to report incidents

2.3 Referencing recent correspondence from a member of the public, Cllr Balaam questioned the accuracy of the estimated savings figure of £700,000 expected from the policy decision

2.4 Mark Gore explained that the estimate was based on a number of factors, including:

- a) Removal of PTAs from school buses
- b) Removal of PTAs from taxis
- c) Increased competition among operators for re-tendered contracts

Mark agreed to ask the Transport Operations team for confirmation of how the £700,000 savings target had been reached

2.5 The Chair thanked the members of the public for attending, and the Committee resolved that:

A monitoring report is brought to the November 2012 meeting, outlining how the new arrangements for school transport without PTAs are working. This should include any incidents reported by operators, schools or parents regarding the health, safety and behaviour of young people travelling on those routes.

3.0 Portfolio Holder Question Time

3.1 North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth 16-19 Strategic Area Review

Referencing a future Cabinet decision (scheduled for 24 May 2012) to agree a framework for considering requests for 16-19 provision and structural change in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton & Bedworth, Cllr Balaam asked:

- What consultation has taken place in drawing up this framework?
- Should there be a role for scrutiny in this process?

3.2 In the absence of the Portfolio Holder, Mark Gore stated that Cllr Timms is considering what consultation should take place and the framework will likely be shared with all relevant institutions in the north of the county.

- 3.3 Mark also highlighted how the environment of post-16 provision has changed as a result of the Academies Act, citing the example of Ash Green School, which had been denied post-16 provision by the Local Authority, but is now bringing forward new proposals as an Academy.
- 3.4 Cllr Julie Jackson asked if the removal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), combined with removal of transport subsidies, had resulted in a decline in the number of students attending post-16 education. Cllr Balaam stated that he was currently chairing a Task & Finish Group looking at this issue, which would report its findings back to the Committee at a future date.

4.0 Area Behaviour Partnerships – Provision for Excluded Pupils and Pupils at Risk of Exclusion

- 4.1 Ross Caws introduced the report, stating that the Area Behaviour Partnership (ABP) pilot has been running since September 2011, and there has been a positive reduction in the number of exclusions both at primary and secondary level.
- 4.2 Ross noted that the reports of the four ABP Chairs indicate varying levels of success across the county. But of particular concern was the lack of alternative provision being offered by the Eastern ABP.
- 4.3 Ross confirmed that the initial problems with the Shaftesbury Young People contract – which works with some of the most challenging pupils in the county on the Keresley site – had been overcome.
- 4.4 During discussion, the following points were noted:
- a) The reduction in exclusion numbers is positive and the new approach should be celebrated
 - b) A best-practice report will be shared with all ABPs highlighting what has worked well in different areas of the county
 - c) The data shows that as funding was made available to the ABPs in November, exclusion numbers began to drop
 - d) The pilot will continue until the end of the current academic year. From September 2012, it will be fully implemented. A longer list of providers will be developed and devolved funding will increase from £1.6m to £2.4m. This should reduce the exclusion rate further
 - e) Concern was raised about the lack of expertise being established in the Eastern ABP around alternative provision, and how this would impact on young people when the PRU closes fully in September
 - o Mark Gore responded that the local authority has a statutory duty for excluded children, and would make short-term arrangements for them until the ABP establishes a longer-term plan. This includes essential family support services
 - o The good practice protocols of the Northern ABP will be shared with the Eastern ABP to help them fill this gap in expertise

- f) Members asked what the local authority is doing to address the lack of assistance for drug-related and mental health concerns, highlighted by some of the ABP Chairs
- o Ross Caws explained that the Compass service has been offering one-to-one support since December 2011, and has made 20 referrals since February. Schools can now make referral directly, rather than having to go through Connexions
 - o Ross also confirmed that the local authority provides a range of statutory services (e.g., drug and alcohol misuse, youth offending and children's mental health services) to schools, which can also be bought back by Academies
- g) In response to a query about whether improvements had been made at the Keresley site, particularly the provision of an outdoor area, Mark Gore agreed to provide the Committee with an update
- h) The future use of the PRU buildings will be influenced by the outcome of the tendering exercise for alternative provision. They have not yet been declared surplus to requirements by the Learning and Achievement Business Unit

Resolved

The Committee requested an update on the Eastern Area Behaviour Partnership under Matters Arising at the next meeting, and an update report in 6 months to include:

- Progress of the Eastern Area Behaviour Partnership
- How the barriers identified in the Chair reports are being overcome
- Attendance figures for pupils in alternative placements

5.0 Quarter 3 Performance Report – for functions within the remit of the Committee

- 5.1 Wendy Fabbro highlighted that this report was prepared by the Performance team, not officers within the People Group, and she had concerns over the relevance of some of the data presented.
- 5.2 Specifically, Wendy raised concerns over the Red, Amber, Green rating system, which fails to provide sufficient context about the relevance of the targets. She recommended that a national benchmark figure be included alongside each indicator in future reports.
- 5.3 Wendy questioned the accuracy of the red ratings for Safeguarding (page B2 of 6), given that Ofsted had rated the service as "good" in December 2011.
- 5.4 Members added the following points:
- a) Future data should show performance at district/borough level, as well as county-wide level
 - b) National benchmarking data will be useful to provide overall context
 - c) The NEET data is misleading, as the target has been reduced and there are likely to be young people not included in the figures who are unknown to the authority

Resolved

The Committee requested that future performance reports should be more targeted, with input from the business units to provide relevant and contextualised information

6.0 Work Programme 2011-12

6.1 The Chair reminded members of Warwickshire's current scrutiny improvement project, which is being supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. She introduced the idea of being more selective and specific when requesting reports from officers, with a focus on forming recommendations that improve services and/or outcomes. Reports for information or noting should be received outside of the Committee.

6.2 The following changes to the work programme were agreed:

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	How the authority is helping schools to fulfil their new IAG responsibilities	Briefing note, when appropriate
Memorandum of Understanding with Academies/Free Schools	To review the draft guidance to schools	Report, when appropriate
Annual Ofsted inspection of children's services	To monitor the implementation of the Action Plan put in place following last year's inspection	Report, in November
Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)	Scrutiny will remain with the Adult Social Care & Health OSC for the time being, with oversight by the Children & Young People OSC	Briefing notes or information reports, when appropriate
Health & Wellbeing Board	The Overview & Scrutiny Board will consider if a Task & Finish Group should be established to scrutinise how children's services will be affected	Task & Finish Group
Academies	The Overview & Scrutiny Board will consider if a Task & Finish Group should be established to look at the Council's future relationship with Academy schools	Task & Finish Group

.....
Chair

The meeting closed at 12.15pm