

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2012

Present:

Members of the Committee

Cllr Ashford (for Cllr Fox, no voting rights)
Cllr Balaam
Cllr Foster
Cllr Fowler
Cllr Jackson (Chair)
Cllr Perry
Cllr Rickhards
Cllr Ross (Vice Chair)
Cllr Shilton (for Cllr Shaw)
Cllr Tandy

Co-opted members

Joseph Cannon
Alison Livesey

Others

Cllr Compton
Cllr Timms (Portfolio Holder)
Diana Turner

Officers

David Bristow (Learning Improvement Officer, Secondary Phase Team)
Ross Caws (Commissioning Development Manager)
Sheila Dentith (Senior Learning Improvement Officer)
Mark Gore (Head of Service, Learning and Achievement)
Sara Haslam (Schools Funding and Strategy Manager)
Richard Maybey (Democratic Services Officer)
Jessica Nash (Service Manager, Special Educational Needs)
Steve Pendleton (Lead Improvement Manager for Vulnerable Children)
Simon Smith (Strategic Finance Manager, Resources and Schools)
Shona Walton (Principal Inspector, Secondary and Special Schools)

1.1 Apologies for absence

Received from Cllr Carol Fox, Cllr Martin Shaw, Max Hyde and Chris Smart.

1.2 Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

1.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2012

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

Paragraph 1.3 - Mark Gore agreed that information about vocational training (destinations and numbers) would be provided within a future report on NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training).

Paragraph 2.7 - Mark Gore confirmed that the Local Authority (LA) had re-contacted the family regarding the offer of a place at a school in Camp Hill.

Paragraph 3.3 - Diana Turner confirmed that a reminder about responsibility for sport will be issued at the next School Governors Forum meeting.

Paragraph 8 - Cllr Balaam proposed the following motion regarding Cabinet's response to the report of the Post-16 Transport Task & Finish Group, which was seconded by Cllr Tandy:

This committee is concerned that the Report and Recommendations of the Post-16 Transport Task and Finish Group, endorsed by this committee, were only "noted" rather than "agreed" at cabinet on 18th October. We welcome the statement by the Leader of the Council that "the findings of the Task and Finish Group . . . would be given due consideration". This committee is also aware of the requirement of the Localism Act 2011, that the executive should "respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the executive proposes to take".

We therefore request that cabinet should provide a written response to the specific recommendations in the Report and, in particular, should address the following concerns raised in the Report:

(a) There is evidence from Warwickshire College & Stratford College that young people are missing out on their education because of transport costs.

(b) Because the low-income subsidy is only available to young people who happen to use WCC sponsored transport, there is a postcode lottery for this subsidy.

(c) Young people have to pay the full yearly amount of £660 for a WCC bus pas even if their course only requires, for example, two terms or two days a week.

Resolved

The Committee passed the above motion by 6 votes to 3

1.4 Announcements

- The Chair announced that it would be Alison Livesey's last meeting as a co-opted member and thanked Alison for her dedicated attendance and contribution to the Committee over the last two years.
- The Chair also announced that it would be Mark Gore's last meeting prior to his retirement from the LA. The Chair and Vice-Chair thanked Mark for his hard work, commitment and co-operation over many years and wished him well for the future.

2 Public Questions

None

3 Portfolio Holder Questions

Cllr Rickhards asked for a progress update on how the LA is building capacity for the extension of free childcare provision for disadvantaged children to two year olds, which comes into effect from September 2013:

- Cllr Timms stated that a project steering group is in progress with a focus on ensuring a high quality of provision. Also, a pilot scheme is up and running successfully in Nuneaton.
- Cllr Rickhards welcomed the response and asked if education was being included within the childcare provision. Cllr Timms stated that the LA is seeking to increase and expand the range of childcare provision available for vulnerable 2 year olds.

4 Passenger Transport Assistants

- 4.1 Mark Gore introduced the report, stating that the removal of passenger transport assistants (PTAs) has been slower than anticipated:
- a) This is partly due to the implementation of new procedures to assess the suitability of all routes (previously welcomed by the Committee)
 - b) The initial savings target of £700,000 was based on the removal of PTAs from all routes, which is not now going to happen following assessment. Mark agreed to investigate a more realistic savings target
 - c) Eventual savings will be significant when all other routes have been retendered
- 4.2 Cllr Timms added that the process of removing PTAs has been deliberately slow to safeguard children's safety and to allow parents and schools sufficient time to adapt to the changes.
- 4.3 Following discussion, Cllr Ross (seconded by Cllr Perry) proposed that the Committee notes this report and receives a further report in 12 months when more information is available to properly assess the savings achieved.

Resolved

The Committee asks for an update report to be provided in 12 months

5 Area Behaviour Partnerships (ABPs)

- 5.1 Mark Gore introduced Steve Pendleton, who has taken post as the Lead Improvement Manager for Vulnerable Children, and summarised the key points of the report:
- a) Approximately half of all secondary schools now have Learning Support Units (LSUs), which are largely funded via the ABPs
 - b) The Eastern ABP is making good progress, having appointed a co-ordinator with significant relevant experience
 - c) The reports of the ABP Chairs will be considered by the project steering group, which is chaired by Cllr Timms
 - d) The project is seeing a significant reduction in the number of exclusions; which will improve as the Eastern ABP develops
 - e) There is now a good range of alternative provision for pupils with different needs, including those with the most severe needs (e.g., alcohol, drug abuse, persistent absence) who can't be placed in schools

- 5.2 During discussion, the following points were noted:
- a) Providers have to pass a series of assessments to become approved
 - b) Providers that fail the assessments will have an opportunity to refresh and resubmit their application, and the LA will work with known and trusted providers to bring them up to standard (e.g., Warwickshire College)
 - c) There is ongoing monitoring of approved providers by LA officers, and an automated registration system is being developed so the LA can monitor attendance at those providers on a daily basis. There is also monitoring from an independent external assessor
 - d) The main responsibility for substance misuse referrals lies with schools, although all providers are made aware of the services available. The LA monitors progress of treatment and re-referrals (of which there are few)
 - e) Since the last report to Committee, a further £20,000 has been devolved for LSU provision
 - f) The creation of Steve Pendleton's role will help the ABPs and coordinators to overcome the barriers highlighted around communication and cohesion – i.e., by helping to make links with relevant support agencies
 - g) While the focus has been primarily on secondary schools, the project steering group does recognise that primary schools also need addressing. Work is underway in six pilot areas, aided by limited funding from the LA, to prevent primary exclusions using managed moves etc.
 - h) The prevalence of behavioural issues in Key Stage (KS) 3, highlighted by the ABP Chair reports, links back to issues at primary school. The LA continues to employ family support workers in order to address these, and the Troubled Families initiative will provide additional support
- 5.3 Members raised specific concerns regarding:
- a) An exclusion in 2010-2011 categorised as “reason unknown” (B2 of 3)
 - b) The view of the Northern Area ABP Chair that “sending vulnerable KS3 girls to external providers raises significant safeguarding issues” (C4 of 5)
 - c) The view of the Northern Area ABP Chair that a number of LA agencies are not aware of the role of the ABP and have not adapted their protocols accordingly (C5 of 5)

Resolved

The Committee welcomes the progress made to date, and asks that:

- a) Alternative provision continues to be rigorously monitored and assessed
- b) All exclusions are recorded with a clear reason (“reason unknown” is not acceptable)
- c) The role of the ABPs is understood by all teams working for the LA, particularly the Looked After Children (LAC) team
- d) The safeguarding issues highlighted in the Northern Area ABP Chair's report are referred to the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services for immediate investigation
- e) The Southern Area ABP Chair's report is provided to members at the next meeting
- f) A verbal update is provided at the next meeting on the progress of Warwickshire College in seeking to become an approved provider
- g) An update report is brought to the Committee in 9 months to address the concerns raised, including those at KS3

6 Performance of Warwickshire Children and Young People in 2012 National Tests and Examinations

- 6.1 To supplement the written report, David Bristow presented further attainment data to the Committee. Key points from the presentation were:
- a) There are 42 LAC who did not achieve 5 or more A-G GCSEs, all of whom had significant barriers that may have contributed to this
 - b) Attainment data at a locality level will be released in December (KS2) and January (KS4), with data for individual institutions available in January
 - c) One secondary school and four primary schools were below the 2012 floor standards (and another secondary school was very close)

The Committee broke for lunch at 12.30pm, and resumed at 13.15pm

- 6.2 Shona Walton, Sheila Dentith and David Bristow fielded questions from members, and clarified the following:
- a) Work is on-going to monitor how the Pupil Premium is being used in schools, looking at case studies of where it has worked well, with a view to sharing best practice
 - b) Socio-economic data will be useful in analysing the reasons behind lower attainment, and this could be provided at a confidential member seminar
 - c) Warwickshire complies with all examination requirements by monitoring and moderating tests across the county; performing unannounced visits during SATS week; and ensuring headteachers are aware of their responsibilities
 - d) The LA monitors improvement in schools, assisted by data it receives from the school census, the Fischer Family Trust and via a data-sharing agreement with academies

Resolved

The Committee noted the report and presentation, and asks that:

- a) A report on the use of the Pupil Premium in schools, including best practice, is brought in 6-12 months
- b) All elected members have an annual opportunity for a one-to-one briefing about school performance in their locality
- c) A seminar is arranged for elected members to look at attainment data by locality, including the relevant socio-economic data

7 The 2012/14 Schools Funding Reforms

Simon Smith introduced the report, highlighting the following points:

- a) All relevant groups have been consulted on the proposed reforms
- b) Some of the consultation responses were inconclusive
- c) The response rate from schools was relatively low at 64%
- d) Options 1 and 2 focus on money following the pupil, with a top-up for pupils with additional needs
- e) Options 3 and 4 give more weighting to deprivation and additional needs
- f) The recommendation from the Schools Forum was for Option 4

Resolved

The Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Schools Forum (Option 4) and noted, with regret, the low response rate to the consultation by schools

8 Progress of the SEN Green Paper 'Support and Aspiration' Disability and Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reform

- 8.1 Jessica Nash introduced the report as an update on the government's SEN reforms:
- a) The driver for change has been about narrowing gaps
 - b) The policy details are still being finalised, and ministers have established a select committee to interview relevant stakeholders
 - c) The LA will retain certain statutory duties, which will cut across both LA-maintained schools and academies
 - d) There is a clear alignment in the Department for Education with the new Ofsted inspection regime that bases its judgements on all groups (not just the majority). This will have a positive impact for those with SEN
 - e) The LA is engaging with the Health & Wellbeing Board about the sharing of data to enable single plans to be developed
- 8.2 The following points were raised during discussion:
- a) Issues around children's health (of which SEN are just one) are not covered in full by either this Committee or the Adult Social Care and Health Committee
 - b) It is important that the LA makes provision to help people with accessing and using their personal budgets
 - c) While the government proposals include a focus on SEN education provision through to age 25, the funding arrangements for this are unclear

Resolved

The Committee noted the report, and asks that:

- a) An update report is brought at an appropriate time
- b) The LA ensures that provision is made to assist people with personal budgets
- c) The Overview and Scrutiny Chairs collectively consider how children's health issues should be scrutinised in future

9 Work Programme 2012-13

Resolved

The Committee agreed its work programme, subject to the following additions:

- Report of the Southern Area Behaviour Partnership Chair (*30 January 2013*)
- Verbal report on the progress of Warwickshire College in seeking to become an approved alternative education provider (*30 January 2013*)

- Update report on Area Behaviour Partnerships to address the concerns raised, including those at KS3 (*3 September 2013*)
- Update report on Passenger Transport Assistants, including financial information on the savings achieved (*6 November 2012*)
- Report on the use of the Pupil Premium in schools, including best practice (*18 June or 3 September 2013*)
- Update report on NEETs, including information on vocational training (*when appropriate*)
- Update report on progress of national SEN reforms (*when appropriate*)

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Chair

The meeting closed at 14.40