

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillors Chilvers, Dahmash, Fowler, Hicks, Jackson, Kendall, Morson, Perry, Rickhards, and St. John.

Others

Diana Turner (Schools Forum)
Joseph Cannon (Catholic Diocese representative)
Max Hyde (Teacher representative)
Cllr Timms (Portfolio Holder for Children & Schools)
Councillors Kondakor, Tandy, and Whitehouse

Officers

Ross Caws, Commissioning Development Manager
Sheila Dentith, Senior Learning Improvement Officer
Hugh Disley, Head of Service for Early Intervention
Kate Harker, Joint Commissioning Manager
Chris Lewington, Head of Strategic Commissioning
Sally Lightfoot, Family and Parenting Support Service Manager
Lisa Robertson, Strategic Planning Programme Manager
Mike Taylor, Interim Strategic Director, People Group
Barbara Wallace, Operations Manager for Children's Centres

2 members of the public attended the meeting.

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Parsons (replaced by Cllr Morson)

1.2 Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Jackson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Nicholas Chamberlaine's School Foundation and as a Governor of Oak Wood special school.

1.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2013 and matter arising

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

Matters Arising

Councillors requested an update on Welcome Hills Special School (page 7). The Portfolio Holder agreed to circulate an update outside of the Committee.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

- 2.1 Ellie Costello, representing Siblings at the Same School (an action group lobbying for changes to the school admission policy) asked Cllr Timms, Portfolio Holder for Children & Schools, for a reaction to the press release from the National Union of Teachers Warwickshire Division, Warwickshire Teacher Trade Unions, and Siblings at the Same School entitled 'What price community cohesion? Teacher Unions add their voice to Warwick primary school parents' demand for proper consultation' (June 2013). The press release calls for WCC to, "reconsider its Primary School admissions policy and bring it into line with many local authorities who have established sibling entry as a fundamental criteria, grasping the significance of catchment family contributions to effective schools."
- 2.2 Cllr Timms responded that she had not seen the press release but would provide a response in writing to the questioner and the committee after the meeting.

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

- 3.1 Cllr Rickhards asked Cllr Timms, Portfolio Holder for Children & Schools, what educational goals were being undertaken to achieve the Early Years offer of foundation stage literacy and numeracy. Cllr Timms responded that there was a gap between Warwickshire and its statistical neighbours that needed addressing. WCC's strategy for closing that gap was detailed in 'Item 4 - Warwickshire Early Years Core Offer 2013'.

4. Warwickshire Early Years Core Offer 2013

- 4.1 Sally Lightfoot, Family and Parenting Support Service Manager, presented the report which detailed proposals for a revised delivery model for the Early Years offer in Children's Centres.
- 4.2 The Early Years offer was focussed on the importance of preparing children well for their entry into school. Due to an agreed budget saving target for 2014 of £2.3 million the delivery model for Early Years needed to be revised. The new model was based around groups and collaborations configured to meet the needs of the most deprived children and families.
- 4.3 The £2.3 million savings would be achieved through management restructuring, shared budgets and services (reducing duplication), economies of scale, and income generation (whether by selling services or charitable giving).
- 4.4 WCC had drawn together profiles for 12 areas that would be organised in the group and collaboration model. The groups of Children's Centres would have a shared 'core purpose' and would deliver the full Early Years offer across the group, rather than individually. Officers believed that model gave the best opportunity for retaining provision to children and families.

4.5 An 8 week public consultation on the changes launched on 19 June and was due to close in August. Following the consultation the proposals would incorporate the feedback from users and stakeholders and a final proposal would go before Cabinet on 12 September 2013 seeking approval to re-tender the services.

4.6 Councillor Questions and Debate

4.7 Cllr Rickhards asked for more detail about the management of the groups. Sally Lightfoot responded that there would be one manager for each group and one coordinator for every two centres. Ofsted would inspect the group as a whole - not the individual Children's Centres.

4.8 Cllr Chilvers expressed concern that management restructuring would not deliver the necessary savings and money would have to be top-sliced from all of the Children's Centres budgets. Chris Lewington, Head of Strategic Commissioning, responded that the savings would come from re-tendering services at the lower budget level. Budgets would be better targeted to areas of need but there would be reductions in the offers that individual Centres would provide.

4.9 Cllr Perry asked if other Local Authorities were using the groups and collaboration model. Sally Lightfoot responded that others are looking at implementing the model. The Ofsted framework that enables this model was still new though.

4.10 The Chair asked how the deprivation profiles drove the allocation of resources. Chris Lewington said she would bring this information back to the next meeting of the Committee. Hugh Disley, Head of Service for Early Intervention, added that Children's Centres had always been funded through deprivation profiling.

4.11 Cllr Rickhards expressed concern that grouping Children's Centres could disguise or dampen deprivation scores and unfairly disadvantage certain areas.

4.12 The Committee requested a longer consultation period to ensure Children's Centres had a fair opportunity to submit detailed responses to the proposals over the traditional holiday period. Mike Taylor, Interim Strategic Director, People Group, responded that the service would explore an extension to the consultation period but noted that any extension would place pressure on the tendering process timescale to have contracts in place from 1st April next year. Barbara Wallace added that Children's Centres were often at their busiest with parents and children during the summer break and officers felt this was an appropriate time for consultation.

4.13 Cllr Kondakor expressed concern that, for parents with several children, the group and collaboration model would create transport and accessibility problems. Barbara Wallace, Operations Manager for Children's Centres, responded that accessibility was a key issue, particularly in rural areas. The service was focussed on ensuring there were enough centre's to deliver the early years offer in hard to reach areas.

- 4.14 Cllr Jackson noted that there was an income disparity across the County and had concerns that income generation would vary across the groups. Sally Lightfoot responded that centres were not charging families - they were selling training and support services. Chris Lewington added that WCC had a market facilitation team that could be deployed to look at income opportunities and build up those skills within the less developed centres.
- 4.15 The Chair asked officers why the collaborative model could not be considered for the proposed merger of St. Michaels and Bulkington Children's Centres. Officers responded that the proposals would be amended to include collaboration in the consultation.
- 4.16 The Chair proposed that a select committee was undertaken during the consultation period in order to examine this issue in more detail and get input from users and stakeholders. The Committee agreed the proposal.
- 4.17 Cllr Chilvers suggested that the select committee was held in a Children's Centre to give users easier access to the process.
- 4.18 Resolved**
1. That the Committee review proposals for a revised Early Years offer and a revised delivery model for Children's Centres.
 2. That the committee will arrange a select committee to examine the proposals in greater detail and gather the views of key stakeholders.

5. Championing the Learner - A Collaborative approach to school improvement

- 5.1 Sheila Dentith, Senior Learning Improvement Officer, presented the report which presented a model for school improvement set in the context of political and local change.
- 5.2 The education system is undergoing unprecedented change. The old approach of the Local Authority is not sustainable. WCC needs a cost effective and robust new approach. WCC believes that schools know best with regards to school improvement and the Local Authority will have a key role facilitating and supporting schools to continually improve. The new approach will include all schools and education providers, including academies.
- 5.3 In the new model schools will have a greater ability to affect policy changes through the Schools Forum. Schools will also be able to directly commission services and hold providers to account.
- 5.4 Councillor Questions and Debate**
- 5.5 The Chair noted that there was a risk of schools not engaging with the new school improvement model. Sheila Dentith responded that there was a similar risk with the

professional learning communities yet now all schools are joined up. Everyone knows school improvement has to change, once schools see it working they will join.

- 5.6 Joseph Cannon, Catholic Diocese representative, welcomed the principle of the proposals but asked where accountability resided in the new model. Sheila Dentith responded that existing governance arrangements (school governors etc.) would remain the same.
- 5.7 Cllr Rickhards asked how the current cluster model intersected with the new consortia. Sheila Dentith responded that there would be overlap but the geographical areas would not have to be the same. Officers have produced guidance on the arrangements. There is an optimum size of around 18-20 but ultimately it would be for the schools to decide themselves.
- 5.8 Cllr Dahmash asked where the potential resistance to this model was currently. Sheila Dentith responded that some academies are now in 'chains' and they would look to their chains for support. Some of these chains are spread across the country. There are also some questions around who the consortia lead would be and what accountability they would have.
- 5.9 Councillors asked what the level of funding would be for the consortia. Sheila Dentith responded that there would be a categorisation system; the consensus was that the system would use 'incontestable data' as a mechanism to engender funds. Officers are currently investigating using existing funding streams to pump prime the project. There are different options available for funding the consortia - e.g. a base level then a certain amount per pupil etc.

Councillor Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder for Children & Schools left the meeting

- 5.10 Diana Turner, Schools Forum, noted that there was a statutory framework for representation on the Schools Forum but the proposals looked to change the Governance. Sheila Dentith responded that officers would look at that aspect of governance in more detail.
- 5.11 Cllr Jackson expressed concern that if the consortia were to be primarily based on geographical areas then some areas would be disadvantaged as there were higher numbers of struggling schools in some areas. There was a disparity in the expertise available in certain areas. Sheila Dentith responded that the model does not constrict working across the County. Schools can choose how to organise themselves.
- 5.12 Cllr Tandy asked if this model would leave the Local Authority uninformed about the improvement measures that schools are undertaking. Sheila Dentith responded that WCC's school improvement team would still exist under this model and they would directly interface with the consortia.
- 5.13 The Chair requested that the Cabinet report on this topic scheduled for September be brought to Overview & Scrutiny prior to Cabinet.

5.14 Resolved

1. That the Committee noted the significance of new policy drivers for schools improvement.
2. That the Committee recognised the resource implications to support school improvement.
3. That the Committee endorsed consultation with schools and key stakeholders, including the Governors Forum, to decide how the proposed new delivery model would work in practice.
4. That the Committee requested pre-Cabinet scrutiny of the final report on the new model in September 2013.

6. Annual Review of Children, Young People and Family Services 2012/13

6.1 Lisa Robertson, Strategic Planning Programme Manager, presented the document which provided Warwickshire with an overview of performance and priorities within the local authority's children, young people and family services.

6.2 The document has been consulted on extensively, particularly with the Children in Care Council and Vox Youth. A special young person's version of the document will be produced shortly with their input.

6.3 Councillors Questions and Debate

6.4 Cllr Jackson noted that there was nothing in the document about addressing the achievement gap. Chris Lewington responded that the annual review was a high level document and there would be more detailed work in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that was coming to Overview & Scrutiny in September. The JSNA would include detail on targeted provision focussed on narrowing the gaps.

6.5 Max Hyde, teacher representative, requested that in future the document included a short summary of recent and relevant significant changes to education to give the figures context.

6.6 Resolved

That the Committee endorsed the draft Annual Review of Children, Young People and Family Services 2012/13.

7. Consultation on the Integrated Disability Service (IDS)

7.1 Kate Harker, Joint Commissioning Manager, presented the report which detailed proposed changes to the IDS. The IDS currently worked with 2,300 disabled children and their families. Services are delivered by both the Local Authority and partner providers. The Council had agreed a savings target for the service of £1.7 million. £0.9m will be internal savings that won't affect the frontline support. The remaining £0.8m of savings was the focus of the consultation and affected the short breaks service, the family key worker role, and the social care service.

7.2 The consultation started on 15 May and was due to finish on 8 August. Seven consultation events were to be held across the County and there would be service representation at parent and carer forums.

7.3 The proposal was to streamline the current offer to make it more consistent across the County and target users who were most in need of support.

7.4 Councillor Questions and Debate

7.5 Cllr Rickhards asked if a reliance on online assessments would lead to wrongful assessments. Kate Harker responded that a successful pilot had been undertaken in Warwickshire and assured Councillors that qualified social workers checked all of the assessments.

7.6 Cllr Chilvers asked if savings made by the changes to IDS would lead to more money having to be spent on other services. Ross Caws responded that whilst an increase in the number of requests for a social care assessment was anticipated, a rise in the number of families requiring specialist support was not. The forecast for the number of families accessing different parts of the proposed Local Offer is based upon a review of the current IDS caseload.

7.7 Cllr Whitehouse informed the Committee that many residents and carers had expressed concerns about the reductions to the short breaks service. Carers were unsung heroes and should not have further pressure put on them.

7.8 Cllr Chilvers asked whether there was any merit in having a third tier of hours - a 24 hour offer for example. Kate Harker responded that there had been similar suggestions submitted during the consultation and this would be considered, however this suggestions would have a financial impact. Ross Caws clarified that the hours were an average and not a limit. The level of support depended on the need of the users.

7.9 Cllr Perry asked if there were ever unspent funds from personal budgets. Kate Harker responded that money had been reclaimed where it has not been spent.

7.10 Resolved

That the Committee noted with regret that the IDS is being reduced, but recognised the work of officers to introduce the proposed changes in a sympathetic way.

8. Work Programme 2013-14

8.1 The following amendments were made to the committee's work programme:

- Area Behaviour Partnership - to be added as a regular item (first report in September or November).
- Warwickshire Education Services (WES) Trading Update - to be moved forward to September or November.

- Briefing Note - Ofsted updates - messages from Ofsted reports in Warwickshire and how WCC responds to those messages.

The Committee rose at 12:45pm.

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Chair