

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 2 September 2014**

Present

Members:

Councillor Mike Brain
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers
Councillor Bob Hicks (Chair)
Councillor Julie Jackson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dave Parsons
Councillor Wallace Redford (replacing Councillor Angela Warner for this meeting)
Councillor Jenny St. John
Councillor John Whitehouse
Councillor Chris Williams

Other Councillors:

Councillor John Holland (observing)
Councillor Clive Rickhards, Chair, Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group
Councillor Bob Stevens, Portfolio Holder, Health

Officers:

Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader
Sarah Bradwell, Partnerships Manager, Secondary Phase Team
Wendy Fabbro, Strategic Director, People Group
Rachael Leslie, Acting Consultant, Public Health
Chris Lewington, Head of Service, Strategic Commissioning
June Maw, Interim Service Manager, School Organisation and Planning
Nigel Minns, Head of Learning and Achievement
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer
Lisa Robertson, Children's Early Years Commissioner
Barbara Wallace, Operations Manager, Children's Centres

Other representatives:

Sue Berry and Vicki Lant, Barnardo Services Ltd
Elaine Johnston and Caroline Loveridge, The Parenting Project
Chris Smart and Diana Turner, Warwickshire Governors Association

Members of the public:

Ellie Costello, Siblings at the Same School

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1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Angela Warner (replaced by Councillor Wallace Redford for this meeting), Councillor Colin Hayfield, Councillor Dave Shilton, Chris Smart and John McRoberts.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Whitehouse declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a Governor at St. John's Nursery and Primary School in Kenilworth and Chair of Trustees of the Kenilworth Centres.

Councillor Jackson declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that she was a governor at Oakwood Academy which has a nursery; that she was a trustee for the Nicholas Chamberlaine Schools Foundation.

Councillor Hicks declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that his daughter was employed at St Michael's School and that this daughter-in-law was employed at Stockingford School.

Councillor Parsons declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a governor at Nethersoles Church of England Academy, Polesworth, and that his son was a teacher at The Croft Primary School.

Councillor Brain declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a Governor of Quinton Primary School.

Councillor Wallace Redford declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a member of the Warwickshire Fostering Panel.

Councillor Bob Stevens declared an interest; the nature of the interest being that he was governor of Southam College.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2014

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th August 2014 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

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In respect of Item 3, 'Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reform Plan', Wendy Fabbro, Strategic Director for People Group, advised the Committee that a dedicated web page was now live, which included information on the education, health and care elements of the Reform Plan and the 12-week consultation document.

2. Public Question Time

There were no questions on this occasion.

3. Questions to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders

A question was raised in relation to the recent Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997-2013), the readiness of Warwickshire County Council to deal with potential sexual exploitation and potential implications for elected members. In response Councillor Bob Stevens, Portfolio Holder for Health, explained that the report highlighted the need for both officers and members to remain informed and vigilant. Wendy Fabbro added that the Leader of the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner had recently met officers to discuss Warwickshire's approach to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and had acknowledged that children within all local authorities were at risk of exploitation; therefore complacency was not an option.

The Committee was advised that a CSE Strategy was available on the County Council's website, which had been adopted by the Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) last autumn. The Strategy provided procedural guidance to address suspected and identified CSE cases and was currently being reviewed to ensure the viability and thoroughness of existing infrastructure. Other protective measures included the Respect Yourself website aimed at young people, the provision of an e-learning module for teachers, officers and members to provide guidance on the signs of CSE and how to refer; and multi-agency CSE meetings which enabled professionals to share concerns and evidence regarding possible victims and perpetrators.

It was reported that the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) at the George Eliot Hospital, known as the Blue Sky Centre, regularly dealt with victims of CSE and over the past year had dealt with 131 young people below 18 years of age. A survey by the WSCB had also identified around 100 children and young people at risk of CSE who were now receiving additional support. With regard to looked after children, Wendy Fabbro explained that the WSCB had established a sub-group to discuss and receive information from Warwickshire Police regarding incidents of absence or missing from home, which could indicate CSE.

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A discussion took place with regard to the pressure on social workers and whether caseloads were distributed evenly across the county, given the prevalence of deprivation and child protection issues in certain areas, such as Nuneaton and Bedworth. Wendy Fabbro advised that the caseload of social workers was closely monitored and that latest data indicated that Warwickshire was slightly higher than average in the volume of cases per social worker, but still within the advised threshold. Case management in the Nuneaton and Bedworth area was currently being reviewed.

Wendy Fabbro stressed that although she believed that Warwickshire had adopted robust procedures and systems, it was not immune to the risk of CSE.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that further detail on the risk of CSE in Warwickshire be provided as a Briefing Note.

A separate question was asked with regard to the Universal Infant Free School Meal provision and whether Warwickshire's schools had achieved the requirement at the start of the 2014/15 academic year. Nigel Minns, Head of Education and Learning, reported that 148 schools were able to provide the meals and that only a small minority required further support.

4. Children's Centre Providers

Chris Lewington, Head of Strategic Commissioning, briefly outlined the background to the recent service delivery redesign for Children's Centres and congratulated the team for the complete transition of the centres to the two providers – The Parenting Project and Barnardo Services Ltd – by 1st September 2014. She explained that all Children's Centres in Warwickshire (excluding Stockingford and St Michael's) had been transferred to the two providers in the group and collaboration model on a three plus two year contract. Each centre was required to offer at least 15 hours of activity per week and must demonstrate the delivery of the five key outcomes for children and families.

The Committee received a brief presentation from representatives of both The Parenting Project and Barnardo Services Ltd which outlined their vision for Children's Centres in Warwickshire and their key priorities, target groups and areas of focus. In response to questioning from the Committee, the following points were noted:

- 1) The group model provided the opportunity for trained staff to work flexibly across a range of sites. A consultation exercise would be undertaken with both centre staff and users to gather views regarding this approach. Members were assured that potential

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changes to service delivery methods had been communicated openly with staff and that engagement sessions for parents had been scheduled at the centres, which would also be delivered from outreach venues, where necessary.

- 2) Parents were represented on the Children's Centre Advisory Boards and, although these had limited governance power, they provided an essential role in developing links to key partners at a local level and discussing relevant issues.
- 3) There were positive intentions to maintain partnerships with nursery schools and discussions had already been undertaken with those on shared sites, to discuss shared costs and facilities.
- 4) A small number of parent groups had been terminated; however, these were specifically groups which were external to the centres' target groups. The universal Early Years service would continue across all sites, which provided a valuable opportunity to identify potential problems with a child's development at an early stage. The delivery of a universal service was the crucial start in gaining the trust and confidence of parents. Once that relationship had been achieved, sensitive issues could be discussed and bespoke Early Years or support services could be offered and were more likely to be accepted. There was also a commitment to empower parents and encourage them to self-sustain.
- 5) The new Ofsted framework had placed a greater emphasis on the provision of high quality data and had resulted in a number of Children's Centres nationally being downgraded from 'good' to 'requires improvement'. As the new framework required services to be delivered to 14 target groups, it was important that the providers could justify why particular groups had been targeted in certain areas, using necessary local data and intelligence as the evidence base.

The item continued with an update on the Children's Centres Scrutiny Action Plan which outlined the nine recommendations that the Committee had agreed following the Select Committee review of the Children's Centres consultation in August 2013. In response to a query raised regarding the relationship with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), members were informed that the CCGs had expressed a desire to work with the Children's Centres and that further clarification on the delivery of the Heath Visiting service would be provided once national guidance had been published.

The Chair suggested that members undertake site visits to the Children's Centres over the coming months.

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The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked The Parenting Project and Barnardo Services Ltd for their attendance and agreed to:

- 1) Accept Recommendation 1 to 3, as proposed by the officers;
- 2) Acknowledge the work of the Children's Centres team and providers in achieving the complete transition by 1st September 2014;
- 3) Request that a further presentation from The Parenting Project and Barnardo Services Ltd be provided, to include detail on the impact of the transition and the delivery of the five outcomes, together with an update on the Children's Centres Scrutiny Action Plan, at the meeting scheduled for 7th April 2015;
- 4) Request elected member involvement in the evaluation exercise regarding the commissioning process, which was scheduled for the end of September 2014; and
- 5) Accept that Recommendation 9 in the Children's Centres Scrutiny Action Plan had been completed.

5. Work Programme 2014/15

The Chair presented the Committee with the proposed Work Programme for 2014/15. Members noted that the Committee had received a referral from the Regulatory Committee regarding the payment of compensation to the parent of a child and had been asked to consider the County Council's process for managing ad hoc requests for school places. A report would be presented to the Committee on 4th November 2014.

With regard to the Web-links to Youth Services Briefing Note, which had been circulated on 23rd June 2014, Councillor Whitehouse requested a meeting with the Portfolio Holder for Health and relevant officers to address his concern regarding the difficulty in identifying youth activities via the County Council's website. Councillor Bob Stevens agreed to this request.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to:

- 1) Approve the Work Programme for 2014/15;
- 2) Defer the Children's Centres report to 7th April 2015, as discussed at Item 5;

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- 3) Note the update on the Transition of Mental Health Services Task and Finish Group and hold a joint meeting with the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the final report;
- 4) Request a Briefing Note on the provision of the Health Visiting service in Children's Centres, once national guidance had been made available;
- 5) Note the arrangements for the Skills Show on 14th November 2014 and extend the invitation to all members of the County Council; and
- 6) Note the update on the recommendations and actions previously agreed.

6. School Admissions Super Priority Area Task and Finish Group

Councillor Clive Rickhards, Chair of the Task and Finish Group, expressed his gratitude for the support provided by Sally Baxter in Democratic Services, the guidance of officers, contributions made by members of the public and the support of the other members of the Task and Finish Group. He reminded the Committee of the purpose of the review and the national issue regarding the number of places at reception and primary schools. An assessment of other areas had indicated that there was not a blueprint for how the prioritisation issue could be addressed. He explained that although the number of families affected by sibling displacement was low, the impact of the displacement on the family was significant.

The Committee was presented with an overview of the recommendations outlined in the final report. Councillor Rickhards reported that officers had expressed concerns regarding Recommendation 2. In response, the Task and Finish Group had explained that a two-year pilot within a defined area in Warwick and Leamington would enable evidence, rather than conjecture, to be gathered and provide an opportunity to evaluate the impact of a change in the admissions criteria and an increase in the prioritisation of siblings.

To conclude, Councillor Rickhards stressed the importance of involving local campaign groups in the evidence gathering stages of scrutiny reviews and explained that the Task and Finish Group had been open all evidence from all interested groups and individuals.

Councillor John Whitehouse, who was a member of the Task and Finish Group, expressed his support for the recommendations as outlined in the final report. He explained that the Task and Finish Group had realised at an early stage that the original Super Priority Area

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(SPA) proposal was flawed and could not successfully address the issue of sibling displacement. The aim of the pilot exercise, as outlined at Recommendation 2, was to trial an intended county-wide change in the admissions criteria within a defined area. He acknowledged the officer comments regarding the length of the pilot and explained that a two-year period would provide sufficient time to evaluate the impact of a revised criteria and engage parents who may not have been engaged during the SPA consultation exercise. He also highlighted that the issue of admissions criteria across both urban and rural areas was yet to be addressed by the County Council.

To conclude, he proposed that an additional recommendation be added to the report of the Task and Finish Group, which would request that swift action be taken to ensure that the revised admissions criteria could meet the statutory consultation requirements; as follows:

That Cabinet, if in approval of the report's recommendations, requests that the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning commissions the work necessary so that revised school admissions arrangements for 2016/17 can be published for statutory public consultation in November 2014.

June Maw, Interim Service Manager, and Nigel Minns, Head of Education and Learning, expressed a number of reservations in respect of Recommendation 2, primarily in respect of the potential implications for local children and the complexity of the education landscape in Warwick and Leamington, which could have changed dramatically by the end of a two-year pilot. Furthermore, as sibling displacement was not an existing issue in Warwick and Leamington, it would be difficult to evaluate the success of the pilot. Possible implications such as increased school transport costs and decreased developer contributions were additional areas of concern.

During the ensuing discussion, members acknowledged that the current sibling displacement issue only affected out-of-area school applications; in-area children and their siblings were allocated spaces at the same school. In light of this, a number of members expressed concern with Recommendation 2, particularly in relation to the possible displacement of local children by giving greater priority to out-of-area siblings; however, there was recognition of the significant impact that sibling displacement did have on the lives of families.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed its gratitude to the Task and Finish Group for reviewing the complex and sensitive issue of sibling displacement and:

- 1) Approved Recommendations 1 and 3 (unanimous);

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- 2) Approved Recommendation 2 (3 in favour, 1 against and 5 abstentions); and
- 3) Agreed that the following recommendation be added to the final report of the Task and Finish Group and be approved (unanimous):

That Cabinet, if in approval of the report's recommendations, requests that the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning commissions the work necessary so that revised school admissions arrangements for 2016/17 can be published for statutory public consultation in November 2014.

7. 16-19 Year Old NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

The Committee received a report from Sarah Bradwell, Partnerships Manager (Secondary Education Phase), which outlined the latest Department for Education (DfE) performance data for Warwickshire, in respect of the number of 16-19 year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In summary, Warwickshire had experienced its first increase in NEETs since 2006/07 with a recorded 5.5% of young people (approximately 1,010) identified as NEET, compared to 3.6% in 2012/13. This had placed Warwickshire in a joint 8th position within its 11 statistical neighbours.

The increase in the number of NEETs was attributed to an intensive tracking exercise, focusing predominantly in Nuneaton and Bedworth, which had identified a proportion of 'Not Known' young people as NEET; therefore the county's number of 'Not Knowns' had decreased and the number of NEETs had increased. The identification of these young people was the essential first step in providing support and assistance to help them access positive opportunities. In addition, the Department for Education methodology for capturing data had changed, which had in some cases increased the NEETs figures.

A discussion took place with regard to the number of young people in years 7 and 10 who met the 'risk of becoming NEET indicator' (RONI). In June 2014, each secondary and special school was provided with a report highlighting the number of young people at risk, to encourage targeted and preventative activity. In addition, a Careers Forum for secondary and further education professionals had been established to share best practise ideas regarding early intervention methods and activities for young people at risk. This had been extended to involve Coventry professionals and further the sharing of ideas across the sub-region. Members noted that there were ten indicators that were used to identify the risk of NEET and that the prevalence of certain indicators may be greater in certain areas of the county.

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In response to a question raised, members were advised that schools had been provided with support and guidance regarding young people who had not achieved Grade C English and Maths at GCSE and were now required to enrol on a post-16 study programme to achieve those grades.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the report and requested that:

- 1) A Briefing Note outlining the next round of Department for Education NEETs data be provided in February 2015; and
- 2) The next annual report on the number of NEET young people be presented in June 2015.

8. Academies and Free Schools Scrutiny Action Plan

Nigel Minns provided members with an update on the nine recommendations arising from the review of Academies and Free Schools which had been undertaken in July 2012. He explained that the education landscape had changed significantly since the time of the scrutiny review and that a number of lead officers, who had been assigned to implement the recommendations, were no longer employed by the County Council.

With regard to Recommendation 2, members requested that the event be scheduled at the earliest opportunity and include a focus on the role of elected members as 'champion of the learner', as outlined at Recommendation 4.

The Committee expressed concern that despite receiving approval from Cabinet in March 2013, the recommendations were yet to be fully implemented. The Portfolio Holder for Health was asked to make Cabinet aware of the delay and provide assurances that this issue would be addressed.

A discussion took place with regard to the scrutiny of academies. Nigel Minns explained that published data was used to monitor performance and the local authority had a role in assessing the delivery of statutory services, such as Special Educational Needs provision. The Department for Education had stipulated that local authorities did not have a role in the school improvement activity of academies; however, local authorities would be judged on their ability to scrutinise academies as part of the Ofsted inspection framework, so a balance between the two had to be achieved. Members were advised that the Regional Schools Commissioner would be invited to Warwickshire to discuss the performance of three academies, about which the County Council had performance concerns.

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The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the updated Scrutiny Action Plan and agreed:

- 1) That no recommendations had been fully implemented;
- 2) To request that the Portfolio Holder makes Cabinet aware of the delay in the implementation of the nine recommendations and asks Cabinet to provide assurances that this issue would be addressed;
- 3) Request a Briefing Note on the findings of the Review of School Improvement; and
- 4) Request a Briefing Note on the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

9. Proposed Changes to Home to School Transport Policy

Nigel Minns provided an update on latest position with regard to the forthcoming consultation on the Home to School Transport Policy. He explained that it was probable that the proposed decision for the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning scheduled for 24th October 2014, to agree the consultation exercise, would be deferred.

It was reported that work was currently being undertaken by officers to understand a range of complex issues which would require greater evaluation before potential savings and realistic timescales could be finalised; however, the proposed consultation document would be shared with the Committee prior to approval. Nigel Minns explained that the first savings target related to the 2015/16 financial year. Members noted that the significant reduction in the budget for transport for Special Educational Needs pupils had generated considerable discussion at the time of the decision.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the verbal update and request that a report detailing the consultation exercise proposals be presented, once available.

10. Draft Schools Sufficiency Strategy

The Committee considered the draft Schools Sufficiency Strategy. June Maw, Interim Service Manager, School Organisation and Planning, explained that the purpose of the Strategy was to outline how the County Council would plan and provide sufficient places for all mainstream schools in partnership with a range of stakeholders and through the provision of capital funding. The forecast for required school places would be calculated based on GP registration data, schools admissions data and housing development proposals. The

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evidence base would be refreshed on an annual basis according to the timescale in the capital planning cycle following the revision of pupil forecast. June Maw explained that subject to Cabinet approval on 18th September 2014, the draft Strategy would be shared with all key partners and stakeholders.

During the ensuing questions and discussion, the following points were noted:

- 1) A number of secondary schools were permitted to enrol pupils over the stated capacity limit if they could provide assurances that this was not detrimental to the standard of education.
- 2) The funding lag, which was the time between school expansion and the receipt of developer contributions, was currently being assessed by the Head of Finance. It was important that decisions regarding schools expansions were made at the right stage while acknowledging the timescales for the completion of housing developments. The risk of a funding gap between the level of developer capital receipts and the level of school expansion required to meet the increase in local demand was a further issue that had been identified.
- 3) The opportunity for infant schools to expand into primary schools was currently being assessed as a possible solution to address significant shortages in certain areas of the county, such as Rugby West.
- 4) The implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy were dependent on the approach adopted by each of District and Borough Councils' planning teams, who would have greater discretion to determine how the Levy should be allocated for infrastructure projects.

A discussion took place with regard to the proposed consultation on the draft Strategy. Members were reassured that the consultation would be promoted as widely as possible and involve school governors and elected members. June Maw advised that officer teams would be used effectively to ensure that the consultation was robust and that solutions to capacity issues could be identified and implemented in a timely manner.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the draft Strategy and agreed to submit the following recommendation to Cabinet on 18th September 2014: *That Cabinet ensures that the consultation exercise for the draft Schools Sufficiency Strategy is well planned, robust and as inclusive as possible.*

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11. Strategy for Vulnerable Learners

The Committee considered the draft Vulnerable Learners Strategy which outlined the strategic direction, objectives and commissioning intentions to improve outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. The draft Strategy, which was underpinned by the County Council's Education Vision, would be subject to a pre-consultation exercise with elected members, schools and other key stakeholders.

Nigel Minns explained that the Strategy both clarified the role of schools in supporting vulnerable learners and stipulated a range of expectations that each school would be required to achieve. The County Council had committed £500,000 to support bids from the school improvement Consortia and £50,000 to supported targeted schools to engage with the Achievement for All programme.

In response to a question raised regarding the Pupil Premium, members were informed that schools were granted £1,800 per eligible pupil and expenditure would be monitored by the Learning and Improvement officers, to assess how the funding had improved outcomes for vulnerable learners. £100 of the funding (per pupil) was retained for a dedicated advisory service to schools regarding the appropriate and positive expenditure of the Pupil Premium.

Members highlighted an ambition of the Strategy to fully 'close the gap' in the school attainment of disadvantaged children. Nigel Minns accepted that this was an ambitious target and considered that positive work could be undertaken to achieve that aim, as far as possible.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the report and request that the post-consultation version of the Strategy be presented, once available.

12. Any Urgent Items

None.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the date of the next meeting had been scheduled for 4th November 2014, commencing 10.00 a.m. in Committee Room 2, Shire Hall.

The Committee rose at 3.40 p.m.

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Chair