

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 May 2006**

### **Present:-**

#### **Members of the Committee**

Councillors Jose Compton (replacing Helen McCarthy for this meeting)  
Jill Dill-Russell  
Michael Doody (replacing Heather Timms for this meeting)  
Richard Grant  
John Haynes (replacing Raj Randev for this meeting)  
Katherine King  
Mike Perry  
John Ross  
Kam Singh  
John Wells  
John Whitehouse

Church Representative                      Rev Terry Hum

Parent Governor Representative      Nick Lambert

**Portfolio Holders**                      Councillors John Burton (Schools)

**Invited Guests**                      Claire Sangster  
Chris Smart

**Officers**                      Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnerships and School Development  
Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need  
John Harmon, Assistant Head of Service – Capital and Property  
Dahlia Harrison, Asset Management Plan Officer  
Ann Mawdsley, Snr Committee Administrator  
Kevin McGovern, Operations Manager, Transport  
Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Gereint Stoneman, Corporate Review Officer  
Nick Williams, Education Officer

Before opening the meeting for business, Councillor Richard Grant noted Councillors' shock and sadness at the sudden death of Councillor Anita Macaulay. He added that the Committee would miss her expertise and wise words. The Committee stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to Councillor Macaulay.

## **1. Appointment of Chair**

Councillor John Wells, seconded by Councillor Kam Singh, proposed that Councillor Richard Grant be appointed Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Richard Grant be appointed Chair of the Committee.

## **2. Appointment of Vice-Chair**

Councillor Richard Grant, seconded by Councillor John Wells, proposed that Councillor Katherine King be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Katherine King be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

## **3. General**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those Councillors who were replacing regular members of the Committee and those officers who were attending the Committee for the first time.

### **(1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Howard Smith and Linda Wainscot.

### **(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as District/Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillor Jose Compton - Warwick District Council  
Councillor Michael Doody – Warwick District Council  
Councillor Mike Perry – Stratford-on-Avon District Council

### **(3) Minutes of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 March 2006**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 March 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

## **Matters arising**

The Chair noted that there were many issues arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March in relation to the continued work from the Children Act Project Team and the Children's Act. It was agreed that the best way forward for Groups or individual members of the Committee to bring forward issues to their Spokespersons for discussion at the Chair/Spokes briefings.

### **(4) Chair's Announcements**

None.

### **4. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

## **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

### **5. Report of Task and Finish Group - Home to School Transport - Transport for non-entitled pupils**

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Task and Finish Group - Home to School Transport outlining the Group's recommendations for transport for non-entitled pupils.

Councillor John Wells, Chair thanked the Group for their commitment and work done and thanked officers for their work in support of the Group. He added that the overriding principle for the Group in carrying out their brief to look at transport for pupils not entitled to free transport, transport to denominational schools and costs to the County Council, had been fairness. They had built on the work that had already been done on this issue and noted the following:

- i. the interests of children covered by the current policy were protected
- ii. the new policy was restricted to Warwickshire residents
- iii. there were currently a number of different policies operating across the County and the new policy would be consistent for all Warwickshire pupils.

Councillor John Whitehouse thanked Councillor John Wells for his work chairing the Group.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. The Committee noted their concerns that low income families may not be in a position to pay termly instalments and there was some

- discussion around which would be the best method of instalments, taking into account the practical implications and costs to the Council.
2. It was noted that the actual current cost of £95,000 per annum applied to the 257 pupils currently in the contributory scheme and highlighted the massive discrepancy between the income generated and the actual costs of providing the transport.
  3. The LA based their assessment of entitlement to free transport on the basis of those in receipt of income support and income based job seekers allowance, and this would also apply to the new policy.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that:

1. They agree the recommendation of the Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group to introduce a Vacant Seats Policy on vehicles operated under contract to the Council which are not registered as local bus services from September 2007.
2. Officers to look into the best way of breaking up costs into instalments, balancing the needs of people on low income and the cost of administration for the Council.

#### **6. Report of Task and Finish Group - Home to School Transport - Transport to denominational schools**

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Task and Finish Group - Home to School Transport outlining the Group's recommendations for transport to denominational schools.

Councillor John Wells noted that in looking at transport to denominational schools, the overriding principle for the Group had again been fairness.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. The current criteria to receive transport to denominational schools was merely attendance at a denominational school.
2. Denominational schools set admission criteria and children had to fulfil these to attend a denominational school. This information was provided to the LA who liaised with schools on admissions.
3. The Committee noted the response to the consultation received from the Catholic Archdiocese and Rev Terry Hum confirmed that from a Catholic school perspective the broad recommendation covering all faiths was appropriate, and that point 2.12 of the report clearly outlined the criteria for Catholic schools.
4. There were currently only Catholic and Church of England faith schools in Warwickshire but this may change in the future and the new policy would cover all faiths.
5. The County Council would no longer be obligated to provide transport for children to attend schools that were not their own faith.

6. While the terms of reference for the Group included looking at costs, they were also tasked to consider fairness and equity and it was noted that the current system favoured faith schools.
7. Children already receiving assistance would be safeguarded.

Following discussion around the meaning of “practising the faith”, and noting that Paragraph 2.12 of the report provided clarity on this issue, the Committee voted 12 for and 1 against, to recommend to the Cabinet that they agree the recommendation of the Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group to introduce a charge for transport to denominational schools for future pupils who do not practice the faith of the school attended unless the school is the nearest appropriate school to the parental home, the new policy to be phased in from September 2007.

## **7. Asset Management Plan relating to Schools and Non-School Buildings**

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families dealing with the section of the County’s corporate Asset Management Plan relating to the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

The Chair noted that this was a rolling plan which had been approved and had now been updated. John Harmon and Dahlia Harrison added that the report followed an annual exercise to update the non-school element of the Asset Management Plan following surveys carried out by Property Services and suitability surveys carried out with the building users.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. Officers agreed to discuss the issue of underground assets such as gas works with Property Services and revert by e-mail to Members of the Committee.
2. Paragraphs 5 and 6 of D4 of 22 were repeated.
3. The word “ownership of” in the last bullet point at the top of page D5 off 22 needed to be changed to “responsibility for”.
4. Members noted that the details about school specialisms needed to be updated in the report and the word “specialist” be included between the words “additional” and “places” in the first paragraph on page D15 of 22.
5. Members noted their support for the continued ownership and maintenance of Marle Hall which helped to deliver all five outcomes of Every Child Matters.
6. Part of the strategy for the Children, Young People and Families Directorate was to look at accommodation of staff and to move, where possible, from rented to owned property.

7. Members supported the exploration of the possibility of a new building for the Rugby Parents Centre in conjunction with the current improvements in Rugby.
8. Members noted the need for extra resources to address needs and noted the position regarding resources to address repair and maintenance and the potential impact on longer term costs.
9. Transport plans for schools needed updating following agreement of Cabinet on recommendation made with regard to earlier reports.
10. The Schools Devolved Capital Fund had not been included in the totals of expenditure in the report.

The Chair thanked John Harmon and Dahlia Harrison for the report.

Having considered and commented on the report, the Committee agreed that their comments be forwarded to the Cabinet for their consideration.

**8. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee**

The Committee noted the Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items relevant to the work of this Committee.

**9. Any Other Items**

None.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 11.40 a.m.