

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 July 2006

Present:-

Members of the Committee

Councillors Jill Dill-Russell
Richard Grant
Katherine King
Joan Lea
Helen McCarthy
Mike Perry
John Ross
Kam Singh
Mota Singh (replacing Raj Randev for this meeting)
Heather Timms
John Wells

Parent Governor Representative Nick Lambert

Teacher Representative Max Hyde

Other County Councillors Councillor John Burton (Schools)
Councillor Alan Farnell (Policy & Governance)

Invited Guests Claire Sangster
Chris Smart

Officers Helen Cox, Professional Assistant (Commission, Planning and Partnerships)
Marion Davis, Strategic Director for Children, Young People & Families
Hugh Disley, Head of Service – Youth Services
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnerships and School Development
Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need
Geoff King, Head of Service – Commissioning, Planning and Partnerships
Steve Lewis, Education Officer – Best Value
Sue Littlewood, Corporate Planning Manager
Ann Mawdsley, Snr Committee Administrator
Nicole North, Assistant to the Conservative Group
Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Lisa Robertson, Senior Planning Officer (Performance)
Karen Smith, Customer Relations Manager

Guest Speakers

Mrs Pat Dorling, Shrubland Street Community
Primary School, Leamington Spa
Mrs Kate Kearney, The Coleshill School, Coleshill

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Councillor Joan Lea and Councillor Mota Singh who were new to the Committee.

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rev Terry Hum, Joy Sharpe, Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Howard Smith, Linda Wainscot and Councillor John Whitehouse.

The Chair expressed concern at the low attendance of the Church of England representative and requested that a letter be sent to the Church Authorities requesting a substitute be sent to the meetings when the co-opted members were not available.

(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 Joan Lea – North Warwickshire Borough Council
Councillor Mike Perry – Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Michael Doody – Warwick District Council
- (2) Councillor Jill Dill-Russell declared a personal interest in terms of Item 4 as a Warwickshire County Council representative on the Warwickshire Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee
- (3) Councillor Richard Grant (Chair) declared a personal interest in terms of Item 4 as the Chair of the Pupil Reintegration Unit Management Committee.
- (4) Councillor Helen McCarthy declared a personal interest in terms of Item 4 as a Warwickshire County Council representative on the Warwickshire Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee

(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

Page 4 – 6. Report of Task and Finish Group – Home to School Transport – Transport for non-entitled pupils

Claire Sangster noted that where grandparents had sole responsibility for children and young people they did not qualify for free transport. Mark Gore agreed to take advice on this issue and revert to the Committee.

Page 4 – 6. Report of Task and Finish Group – Home to School Transport – Transport for non-entitled pupils

The Chair noted that the recommendations made by the Committee had been agreed by the Cabinet on 15 June. Mark Gore added that while the Directorate were looking at termly payments, it had been made clear to parents/guardians that if they anticipated difficulty in paying termly they should contact the relevant officers.

Page 5 – 6. Report of Task and Finish Group – Home to School Transport – Transport to denominational schools

The Chair reported that the above report had been considered by the Cabinet on 15 June where they agreed 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 subject to the consideration of a further report to the Cabinet about the criteria for whether a pupil is practising a particular faith and about any human rights issues.

Page 5 – 7. Asset Management Plan relating to Schools and Non-School Buildings

It was noted that the Cabinet had approved the Asset Management Plan. Mark Gore agreed to arrange for Claire Sangster and Chris Smart to receive any information sent out to Members on underground assets.

(4) Chair's Announcements

The Chair made an announcement regarding Local Democracy Week taking place between the 16 and 20 October and urged Members to participate, particularly in light of the previous discussions by the Committee on greater involvement of children and young people. Information on the activities taking place was available through the Assistants to the Groups.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

3. Performance

(a) Performance Report Full Year 2005/06

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families summarising the full-year performance of the former Education Department and the children's part of the former Social Services Department.

Marion Davis noted the following points:

- a. Discussions would be held on ways to generate the interest of young people, the public and media for the next round of performance reports.
- b. The report was in several parts due to the joining of Children's Services into one new Directorate. Future reports would encompass all Children, Young People and Families services including the connections between services and would provide a more integrated picture from the single Directorate.
- c. It was important to consider performance against targets as well as trend data in order to understand the direction of travel of the Directorate.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. Members, through the Chair and Spokepersons would look at improvements for future performance reports, including:
 - the deliberations of Area Committees in comparing area for area to give a useful view of the situation across the county.
 - comparisons of like for like areas would be useful, for example a deprived area in the north and a deprived area in the south.
 - Comparative statistics with like counties.

2. Warwickshire were comparing well nationally in terms of attainment of looked after children from school and there had been a great deal of improvement in this area, but Members agreed that there should be ambitious targets set to improve at all levels for looked after children through the school years and beyond.
3. Work was ongoing with foster carers and others to support the attendance, attainment, stability and wellbeing of looked after children. There was also a working group in place, chaired by Cllr Izzi Seccombe to move the agenda forward for corporate parenting and this would be reported to full Council.
4. Warwickshire currently had no secondary schools and five primary schools in special measures. This needed to be seen in terms of increasing numbers nationally, but Warwickshire were working towards a target of no schools in special measures.
5. Feedback on this year's Annual Performance Assessment would be given at the September meeting and verbal feedback to date indicated that scores were not expected to be lower than last year.
6. The new Directorate needed to give new momentum and impetus to work in terms of equalities. An Equalities Assessment of schools had shown that the vast majority had policies in place, which had been commented on and validated by the Department, but it was important that these were translated into Action Plans.
7. There were recruitment problems and this had been worsened following a reduction in ICSS funding and the resultant re-evaluation and re-focus of work to cope with the changes.
8. It was noted that the Council failed to register compliments effectively and there were many instances where constructive comments were received and not picked up in the compliments procedure.
9. The increase in complaints was due to a range of reasons including the improvement in enabling people to access the procedure, particularly young people and ethnic minorities and the increase in litigation. It was agreed that the number of Stage 2 and 3 complaints were worrying and there was a need to shift back to local resolution early in the process. A report on the new Social Care Complaints Procedures would be brought to the Committee in September.
10. The policy of the Council was to place foster children as near as possible to the area they lived in, although there were sometimes problems finding foster carers in specific areas. The service tried to find the right place, right locality, right time and having the right services in place to support foster children and

carers to maintain stability for children and young people. Work was ongoing on the small group of children having multiple placements.

11. From next year statistics would include those children and young people who would legitimately be in other stable placements such as residential placements, adoptions and independent living (over 16 year-olds).
12. A lot of work was being done in individual schools to reduce bullying. An Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator was in place to support schools.
13. Information on bullying incidents was retained by individual schools and in some cases schools sought advice and guidance through the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator. Members could approach individual schools if they had concerns in this area.
14. There was a large amount of support by various people and organisations to provide opportunities for children and young people with sport and music.

Having considered the Performance Report submitted by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate for the full-year 2006/06, the Committee endorsed the proposed remedial actions.

(b) Using the EFQM Excellence Model to Assess Departments

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development setting out the background to the EFQM process and giving Members context for considering the reports from individual departments.

Sue Littlewood made the following points:

1. The EFQM Excellence Model was a national and European model used by the Council since 1998, which allowed the whole organisation to be evaluated and scored against.
2. The Model was about improvement and assessing change and was fairly robust and reliable to a reasonable extent.
3. The assessment was carried out every two years with the last assessment having been carried out in December 05/January 06.
4. The process was currently under review to look at the possibility of one assessment being carried out instead of one for each directorate.

The Committee noted the report and requested that in the future all reports be similar.

**3(c) European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)
& (d) Assessments of the Education Department 2005 and Social
Services EFQM Assessment Report 2005**

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the strengths and areas for consideration identified during the most recent EFQM assessment of the Social Services Department together with actions either already taken or planned. It was noted that the reports were looking at the old Departments last year and some of the information was therefore historic in nature.

During the discussion that followed the following issues were raised:

1. The new Directorate had a “can do” attitude looking forward by resolving issues and improving changes for children and young people.
2. Having all the finances brought together would allow for a better managed, more co-ordinated service.
3. Members noted their disappointment at the results and it was noted that these included particular issues in respect of performance in the Adult Services and had the assessment been done exclusively on Children’s Services there would have been an improved overall result.
4. Cross-cutting themes from both services picked up that while the services had good approaches, they were not good at evaluating and demonstrating the impact of outcomes and the new Directorate would need to be clearer on linkages between conducting business and recording results.
5. Reports needed to interpret what jargon and statements actually meant in order to scrutinise the evidence.
6. Social Services had carried out a partial review between the official assessments, which identified issues in respect to key performance results. While a great deal of work had gone into improving these areas, the assessment did not show the recovery the Department had hoped for.

The Chair summarised the following issues:

- a. the next report to the Committee should identify what actions had been taken and what the outcomes were.
- b. There needed to be a form of self-assessment undertaken in the interim year of EFQM assessments and lessons needed to be learnt from the past.
- c. The appendices for Education to be e-mailed to Members of the Committee.
- d. A report of the self-assessments needed to be e-mailed to Members of the Committee once completed.

- e. Full copies of the reports were available in the Group Rooms and would be put onto the Corporate Document Library. Councillor Wells requested a full copy of the EFQM Assessments.

The Committee endorsed the report and the way areas for improvement were being taken forwards in the new directorate structure.

4. Strategy for the inclusion of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties

The Chair welcomed Mrs Kearney and Mrs Dorling to the meeting. The Committee then considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families seeking comments and the way forward in relation to the draft Strategy for the inclusion of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties to help support schools, children and young people to manage challenging behaviour more effectively.

Geoff King made the following points:

- a. Warwickshire had embarked on the strategy to support schools to reduce the high exclusion rate in the county but it would be wrong to think this applied to all schools as the majority of schools were doing superb work often with very challenging individuals.
- b. Permanent exclusion rates in Warwickshire had been similar to like Authorities until last year when the rate had increased by over 60%. Work had begun with schools prior to the announcement of these statistics. The 60% focussed on a small number of secondary schools and arose from circumstances such as schools in difficulty trying to sort out problems, new heads in schools or schools being less tolerant or not having appropriate systems in place.

Mrs Kate Kearney, The Coleshill School, made the following points:

- i. As well as her role as Headteacher at Coleshill, Mrs Kearney has chaired the Northern Area Behaviour Panel for the past three years. In these roles she has tracked trends and processes working with a variety of partners. Mrs Kearney added that she believed that the current situation re addressing behaviour needed to be developed and changed.
- ii. The Strategy had been welcomed in North Warwickshire and the benefits were clear to all, but there was a need to see the detail of how the Strategy would be put into effect.
- iii. There were occasions when a statemented child had joined the school and at the review had been moved to a more appropriate school.

- iv. Where children were moved from a different Authority, funding levels in Warwickshire were noticeably lower.
- v. Connexions in North Warwickshire currently had six vacancies they were unable to fill and the latest partnership agreement signed with them acknowledged that they would not be able to deliver what the school needed due to their lack of resources.
- vi. Schools needed to have a variety of strategies they could use flexibly to deal with individuals and groups. It was noted however, that it was not possible to have communities encouraging rights and encouraging young people to speak their mind and then berating them for doing that.

Mrs Pat Dorling, Shrubland Street Community Primary School, Leamington Spa made the following points:

- I. Mrs Dorling agreed that a lot of the Strategy had been welcomed.
- II. The statistics showed the majority of exclusions in Key Stage 3 but there was a strong need for early intervention across provision, even before primary school.
- III. The introduction of nurturing groups had proved very valuable and helped children with problems such as learning difficulties to cope.
- IV. Mrs Dorling welcomed the review of Behaviour Panels, as they needed to be representative and helpful to Headteachers.
- V. Managed moves were a preventative measure and needed to be looked at in primary schools.
- VI. There was a need for better financing for inclusion.
- VII. There were many children with learning difficulties working hard to achieve the best they could and it was important to differentiate between achievement and attainment.
- VIII. Emotional difficulties could prevent learning and had to be dealt with before a child could learn.
- IX. The transition stage between primary and secondary school needed strengthening and made individual for schools and there was a need to track children to follow through on their progress.
- X. Children needed to learn to be individual and to learn positively and move forward and while it was acknowledged that their behaviour would not be perfect all of the time staff had to learn to listen to them and work with children as individuals.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- 1. An Anti-Bullying Strategy would be collated over the summer co-ordinating all the work being done in this area and would be considered by the Heads Policy Groups in September for implementation thereafter.
- 2. The strategy sought to keep as many pupils in school as possible and to provide support to schools, parents and children and young people.

3. It was feasible to expect schools to reintegrate pupils through managed moves from other schools. This did take commitment from staff and support and backup from the PRU as pupils needed to be carefully placed in the right social circle and carefully monitored to build trust and relationships with parents and pupils.
4. In order to further reduce the need for exclusion, there was a need to ensure all schools were performing so that the managed move tool could be used for those children still in this arena.
5. Exclusions came randomly across the county and how a child functioned and how a teacher responded in any situation was important.
6. There was some debate about early intervention and it was noted that there were some secondary headteachers who felt many of the problems arose in adolescence and that resources needed to be focussed in Key Stage 3. It was agreed that borderline behaviour needed to be addressed early.
7. The closure of MLD Schools was common to all Authorities and in Warwickshire resulted from the drop in demand in the SEN sector.
8. It was against DDA regulations for a child to be excluded due to autism. An Autistic Support Team was being developed in Warwickshire and would be rolled out in the autumn term.
9. River House was expected to increase its capacity through the increased capacity available around the Griff site.
10. Warwickshire spent more money on behaviour than like Authorities and were seeking to move from a reaction to a proactive service. Warwickshire had anticipated the outcomes of "The Cost of Inclusion" May 2006 report commissioned from Professors John Macbeath and Maurice Galton of Cambridge University and were reviewing their policy and practice. There remained a lot of tensions between standards and needs and funding had an impact on this.
10. It was essential that the Strategy for inclusion was a practical behaviour management strategy to tackle the problem, which would otherwise have dire consequences for the school, class and teacher.
11. The high levels of attainment in the county were evidence that in the vast majority of classes in Warwickshire were well ordered with children learning well. It was important to keep issues of behaviour in perspective.

The Chair summed the discussion up with the following points:

- It was important not to demonise all young people
- The Committee generally supported the strategy and wanted it to move forward by adding to the toolkit available to schools to deal with children and improving the quality of the experience of children and addressing their needs.
- As corporate parents, Members felt that when pupils were causing difficulties all their circumstances needed to be taken into account,

including being looked after and they supported the recommendation not to exclude these children.

The Committee endorsed the draft Strategy for the inclusion of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and requested a further report 12 months after the introduction of the Strategy to scrutinise what had worked, what hadn't and the best way to move forward.

5. Review of Scrutiny

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development advising Members of the arrangements for the review of the overview and scrutiny function and seeking views on the future role of overview and scrutiny and how its effectiveness could be improved. The Chair added that this was an opportunity for Members to develop ways of scrutinising topics and pushing out the boundaries and moving the scrutiny agenda forward through visits, having data available, developing tools and skills through training and looking at best practice elsewhere.

Jane Pollard made the following points:

1. The Scrutiny Review was expected to be completed and a set of proposals prepared by September with a final report to full Council on 31 October.
2. Members were urged to complete the questionnaires they had received as it was important that they gave their views on how scrutiny should be shaped in the future.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- a. Scrutiny was as important as Cabinet as identified in the report and was crucial to monitoring performance and delivery high quality services to Warwickshire residents.
- b. Members agreed that having smaller groups looking at particular issues was effective, as were select committees.
- c. The Committee would need to look at the partnerships working together on the Local Area Agreements and seeing what was being achieved, where there was duplication and what was being done for children and young people.
- d. There was a need to do more for hard to reach groups.
- e. Officer reports needed to be accurate, transparent and detailed and the Committee needed to receive feedback to ensure that the public were receiving the best services possible and the Council was providing value for money.
- f. Early participation in policy development was useful.
- g. Scrutiny provided an opportunity for members to look in-depth at issues.
- h. Performance information needed to be clearer and avoid jargon.

- i. Members needed to develop an evidence based approach.

The Committee noted the report.

6. 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.

7. Any Other Items

None.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.35 p.m.