

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2006**

### **Present:-**

<b>Members of the Committee</b>	Councillor Jose Compton “ Jill Dill-Russell “ Anne Forwood (replacing Cllr Kam Singh for this meeting) “ Richard Grant “ Katherine King “ Helen McCarthy “ Mike Perry “ John Ross “ Mota Singh “ Heather Timms “ John Wells “ John Whitehouse
<b>Church Representative</b>	Rev Terry Hum Dr Rex Pogson
<b>Parent Governor Representative</b>	Nick Lambert
<b>Teacher Representative</b>	Max Hyde
<b>Other County Councillors</b>	Councillor John Burton (Schools) Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young People & Families)
<b>Invited Guests</b>	Claire Sangster Chris Smart
<b>Officers</b>	Rebecca Davidson, Communications Officer 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 Division Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer Nick Williams, Education Officer

### **1. General**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Councillor Anne Forwood who was replacing Councillor Kam Singh for this meeting and Dr Rex Pogson who was replacing Linda Wainscot for this meeting.

**(1) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kam Singh (replaced by Councillor Anne Forwood for this meeting) and Linda Wainscot (replaced by Dr Rex Pogson for this meeting).

**(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 John Ross – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council  
Councillor Heather Timms – Rugby Borough Council

- (2) Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest in Item 7 as a Governor Bishop Wulstan School and The Avon Valley School.

**(3) Minutes of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 September 2006**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 September 2006 were agreed as a correct record with the following correction:

**Page 7 – 6. Progress Report on the Action Plan arising from Ofsted Inspection of Youth Service, May 2005**

The words “for £135,000” deleted from paragraph a.

**Matters arising**

**Page 6 – 5. Warwickshire’s Social Care Complaints and Representations Policy and Procedure for Children, Families and Young People – Recommendation 2**

Michelle McHugh, supported by Members of the Working Group, reported that the Working Group had met and a draft report had been prepared which would be circulated to Members for comments before being considered by the Committee at the meeting in December. The Chair reminded the Committee that the Working Group had been asked to scrutinise this issue and their work should not be redone when the full Committee considered their report in December.

**Page 7 – 6. Progress Report on the Action Plan arising from Ofsted Inspection of Youth Service, May 2005 – Para. a.**

It was noted that Members had not yet received an e-mail from Hugh Disley regarding the Leonardo bid. Mark Gore agreed to follow this up.

**Page 7 – 6. Progress Report on the Action Plan arising from Ofsted Inspection of Youth Service, May 2005 – Paragraph f.**

It was noted that the progress report on the Action Plan was scheduled on the work programme for the 14 December 2006 meeting.

**(4) Chair's Announcements**

The Chair stated that the White Paper : Strong and Prosperous Communities strengthened the role of scrutiny and Members of the Committee should be looking at the opportunities within the White Paper in terms of their scrutiny role.

John Burton reported that a letter of complaint had been received by Councillor Alan Farnell from Mrs Valerie Ingram regarding Home to School Transport and a response had been sent to Mrs Ingram. The Chair noted that this was not a question that had been put to the Committee but that copies of the letters should be circulated to Members for information.

**2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**3. Children, Young People and Families Directorate Annual Performance Assessment**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families summarising the performance of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate as assessed by Ofsted/CSCI.

Geoff King made the following points:

- i. the assessment had been multi-agency covering all services for children and young people in Warwickshire, and resulted in a "good" judgement overall with the capacity to improve services being awarded an "excellent/outstanding" rating.
- ii. Areas of further work set out in the Assessment had already been set as targets in the Action Plan and were consistent with those of the Children and Young People Action Plan.

- iii. The only exception area was “Healthy Schools – To promote a whole school approach to health schools” (207-A) and an action plan was in place to address this and the Council was on track to meet the Government target for 2011.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. Members agreed that there was a need for one system of reporting performance management to ensure consistency.
2. Following a further round of consultation with Heads and Stakeholders, the Behaviour Strategy, covering both pupils and staff, was being compiled in the final form and implementation would be phased in from January 2007. Members noted their frustration that the Strategy was still not finalised and while they acknowledged the need for schools to be full partners in the process, felt that all players should be making an effort to move this agenda forward. Geoff King added that a new Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator was now in place and work was being done to put in place a performance monitoring electronic system, which would be operational by April 2007 and would show the progress of the Strategy, which would be reported to the Committee.
3. Members noted the challenging target for Healthy Schools and agreed that as School Governors, they had a role to play in determining the take up of their schools and how they were moving this issue forward.
4. Schools across the County were doing well in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 but were not meeting the DfES target in Key Stage 4. The Directorate were working in partnership with all stakeholders to improve attainment and achievement at this stage.
5. The Directorate were keen for Chairs and Governing Bodies to exercise a scrutiny role in terms of standards within schools, including levels of achievement and attainment and were working to facilitate this.
6. Members agreed that the progress of the Action Plan needed to be monitored and this matter would be discussed at the briefing of the Chair and Spokespersons.
7. Talks were being held with the Rowan Organisation in respect of the support that could be given to young people on managing direct payments. There was also a need to improve on the options available to young people, making the information more available to young people and highlighting their responsibilities in terms of direct payments.
8. Nuneaton and Bedworth and the most deprived areas were being targeted to close the gap between attendance in schools and attainment.
9. There were no Secondary Schools falling with the category of serious weaknesses or special measures but there was a need to be more challenging and robust with Primary Schools, emphasising the need to improve standards, achieve targets and improve educational attainment.

The Committee agreed to

- (1) accept the report produced by Ofsted/CSCI following an assessment of the Directorate's performance
- (2) support the action plan
- (3) receive exception reports
- (4) consider whether the two actions, which are currently not on target, should be included in the work programme of the Committee.

#### **4. 2006/07 Efficiency Savings – Children, Young People and Families Directorate – Progress Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the progress made by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate in delivering the 2006/07 efficiency savings target.

John Betts noted the following:

- i. the report covered two areas of savings:
  - cash back savings
  - forward looking annual efficiency savings, and the Directorate were on track for both areas.
- ii. In an effort to minimise bureaucracy on schools, their efficiencies were dealt with directly by the DfES in terms of value for money and financial management standards.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. There was a need to introduce some systems in order to capture information on non-cash savings accurately and provide an auditable trail as evidence. These were still being put in place in the new Directorate.
2. While there was nothing fundamentally undermining the performance within the Directorate, it was difficult to improve performance within constrained resources.
3. Members noted their concern at the additional costs being incurred though delays to new school builds through limited capacity. Mark Gore noted that these concerns had been raised by schools and there was a need to be in discussion with the Resources – Property Division to look at the best way to move this forward, taking into account the cost implications for the Council.
4. The targets described as measuring loss of service from efficiency savings are set by the DfES, the Council had to work with these targets, as evidence that standards were being maintained.
5. Members acknowledged that the report covered a period of massive change within the Directorate and congratulated staff

on the progress made and anticipated the full year report showing that all targets had been met.

Having considered the report, the Committee noted the progress made by the Children, Families and Young People Directorate in delivering the 2006/07 efficiency savings target.

**5. 2007/08 to 2009/10 spending proposals of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate**

Members considered the Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Families and Young People detailing the 2007/08 to 2009/10 revenue and capital spending proposals and the funding options proposed.

John Betts noted the following:

- i. This was the first proper budget for the new Directorate, which was the largest in the Authority in spending terms.
- ii. The spending pressures (Appendices to the report) were split between County Council funded pressures and the Dedicated Schools Grant, which was received direct from the DfES and needed approval by the Schools Forum.
- iii. Full copies of the Budget Pressures were available in the Group Rooms and any Member wanting their own copy was asked to contact John Betts or Brian Smith.
- iv. An annual report was presented to the Schools Forum categorising expenditure in schools and it was agreed that this would be e-mailed to Members in the form of a briefing note.
- v. Using the Audit Commission benchmarking tool, Warwickshire was below other counties on average in terms of School Balances and the current policy on School Balances was due to be reviewed.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. Members felt that resources allocated for children and young people should be spent on children and young people and were concerned about the increasing School Balances.
2. The Warwickshire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board had taken the view that teenage pregnancy was an issue for young men as well and workers were being employed to work with young men to address responsibilities and attitudes towards young women.
3. The Sporting Excellence Bursaries was a new scheme being proposed to support athletes across the County and the details would need to be determined.
4. Max Hyde reported that teachers agreed that money allocated for children and young people should be spent but the picture was not always clear. Where there were worrying or persistent high levels of School Balances, the Teacher Unions would be available to assist in any investigation. She added that there would be a crisis in 2007 in Primary School intakes and the

Teacher Unions would follow up with the Directorate if schools were storing funds to deal with demographic changes. Members agreed this was an area that should link with the Consultation on School Funding.

5. The DfES issued strict instructions on what counted as eligible expenditure and the Council had been cautious to date in this area, taking into account the difficulty in defining proportionate impact on pupils within auditing rules. This situation would be reviewed through the Schools Forum.
6. The Directorate were still exploring the rules around Single Status and in negotiation with the DfES to clarify the legal position. The issue was expected to be clarified during the timescale of the budget process.

The Committee supported the 2007/08 to 2009/10 spending and consequential funding proposals identified by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

## **6. Medium-term Priorities and Mid-year Performance 2006/07**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining progress made to meet the Directorate's targets as contained in the Corporate Business Plan 2006/09.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Councillor Izzi Seccombe reported that the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership Board had held a meeting on 15 November to discuss and agree targets, lead partners on targets and pooled budgets. There had been good representation at the meeting and all partners were working hard to stretch the level of achievement in Warwickshire and to drive forward standards.
2. It was agreed that the targets for GCSEs should be aspirational for the same level for all children and that looked after children should be targeted for earlier intervention and helped to achieve in Key Stages 2 and 3.
3. There was a need to work harder, together with schools, to improve achievement of all children to enable them to meet challenges.
4. Members requested data on value added measures in terms of education to be included in future performance reports. Mark Gore noted that the DfES required LAs to demonstrate value added and this together with other information comparing Warwickshire with statistical neighbours would be given to Members. The Directorate were focussing on looked after children, setting individual targets for each at the end of Key Stage 4 to ensure value was added.

5. Members agreed that qualitative information would be useful together with the statistical information to highlight good practice.
6. There was not a model policy for schools on bullying as it was felt there was a need for any policy to fit the philosophy that underpinned a school and would be developed by staff, pupils and community involved.

The Committee agreed to:

- (1) endorse the targets contained in the Corporate Business Plan 2006/09 and relays its views on their appropriateness and any suggested improvement to Cabinet.
- (2) support the performance and progress for the half-year 2005/06, agrees any proposed remedial actions and request additional information on the following.

## **7. Admissions and Appeals Codes of Practice**

Members considered the Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Families and Young People summarising the potential changes contained in the Admission Code of Practice and Admission Appeals Code of Practice and inviting comments from Members prior to the Authority's response to the DfES.

Nick Williams added that the new draft Code of Practice for School Admissions and School Admission Appeals was welcomed as it had a harder edge and was clearer on what was acceptable and made it easier for the LA to challenge poor practice. He noted the following:

- i. a separate consultation would be carried out on Home to School transport.
- ii. Schools were no longer able to use a first preference first system for admissions.
- iii. The DfES had announced a Supplementary Schools Admission Consultation in respect of Faith School Admissions and Hard to Place Protocols on 7 November.
- iv. In order to comply with the proposal that parents be notified of the outcome of the 11+ tests before having to submit their selections, tests would have to be carried out in Year 5. It was noted that the 11+ process would be reviewed but Members recorded that they were not in favour of tests being carried out in Year 5.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. The Choice Advisers would be funded by the DfES through a grant of £33,000 per year for the next two years.
2. The current admission arrangements of the County Council did not allow for random allocation but information would be sought from neighbouring authorities to see what they were doing.



3. The Committee agreed that they would want to see the School Admissions and School Admissions Appeals processes to be clear and transparent, including the Appeal Panels, and there was broad agreement that random allocation was not acceptable,
4. It was noted that Appeal Panels for Voluntary and Aided Schools were independent and it was suggested that in order to ensure impartiality the Performance and Development Directorate, who currently managed appeals for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, could manage Voluntary and Aided Schools as well.

The Committee asked that their comments on the Admissions Code of Practice and the Admission Appeals Code of Practice be included in the Authority's response to the DfES.

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

Alcohol and Young People

The Committee agreed the outline and programme of work for the above review. It was noted that this item would be included on the agenda for the next series of meetings as well as three single-issue meetings that had been agreed. Members agreed that the review should be limited to alcohol and not be widened to include drugs.

Members were directed to the item scheduled for 14 December – Hear by Right, where Hugh Disley would initiate the process of involving young people in scrutiny.

Members were reminded that any ideas for scrutiny should be forwarded to their Party Spokespersons for discussion at the Chair/Spokespersons Briefing.

**9. Any Other Items**

None.

.....  
Chair

The Committee rose at 12.35 p.m.