

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 June 2007

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Richard Grant (Chair) “ Jose Compton (replacing Councillor Heather Timms for this meeting) “ Jill Dill-Russell “ Katherine King “ Helen McCarthy “ Mike Perry “ John Ross “ Dave Shilton “ Mota Singh “ Heather Timms “ John Wells “ John Whitehouse
Church Representatives	Rev Terry Hum Dr Rex Pogson
Parent Governor Representative	Nick Lambert
Teacher Representative	Max Hyde
Other County Councillors	Councillor John Burton (Schools) Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young People & Families)
Invited Guests	Claire Sangster Chris Smart
Officers	Hugh Disley, Head of Service – Division for Young People. Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnerships and School Development Liz Holt, Assistant Head of Service – SEN and Inclusion Dahlia Harrison, Asset Management Plan Officer. Antony Hopker, Communications Officer – News & Public Affairs Nicole Jones, Strategic Finance Officer. Pete Keeley, Principal Committee Administrator Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer

1. General

(1) An Apology for Absence

was received from Councillor Kam Singh.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Personal interests relating to any item on the agenda arising by virtue of the member serving as a District/Borough councillor are declared below:

Councillor Mike Perry - Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Councillor John Ross – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

Councillor Dave Shilton – Warwick District Council

Councillor Heather Timms – Rugby Borough Council

(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 25 April 2007, 21 May 2007, 5 June 2007 and Combined Minutes of 29 May 2007 and 12 June 2007.

(i) Minutes

The minutes were agreed as a correct record subject to the attendance for the 12 June meeting being included in the combined minutes.

(ii) Matters arising

(a) In Year Fair Access Protocol

Mark Gore reported that the Protocol had been amended to reflect the Committee's views and that the Cabinet had subsequently agreed the document.

(b) Young People and Alcohol.

Cllr Grant advised the Committee that the final report for the Alcohol and Young Review had been drafted and sent to officers and key stakeholders for comments. The final report will be submitted to the September meeting of this Committee prior to being submitted to Cabinet.

(4) Chair's Announcements

None.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

There were no questions

3. School Reserves (balances)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families which explained the recent changes to the financial control framework for school reserves and provided an overall comparison with the national position and detail of individual schools, which was anonymised. .

The Chair, Councillor Richard Grant, introduced the report and suggested that the Committee should consider the information provided on school reserves and decide whether further review work was necessary following the

introduction of the mechanism to control surplus balances. If the Committee concluded that a further review was required, it was recommended to convene a working group in conjunction with the Schools Forum.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- The number of schools with large surplus balances had grown and there were plans to monitor the use of the balances. New limits for schools were 5% for special schools and 8% for primary, nursery and special schools.
- Local Authorities have extra control with regards to School balances. If schools exceed levels of reserves they will have to report to the Council as to how they propose to spend the reserves over the next 3yrs, with the Council having power to implement a 5% “clawback”. All monies accumulated via the clawback would be reinvested to schools within the remit of the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- There were comparators available currently to see if the increases in school reserves in the year 2006/07 followed a national trend.
- The reference in the last bullet point of sub paragraph 2.8 to “The minimum amount available....” Should be reference to “The Maximum amount available...”
- The schools referenced 76 to 92 in the appendix were special schools.
- A working group would be able to consider the issues in more detail. Such issues should include:
 - Current review into schools funding formula
 - Consideration would need to be given to the impact of falling pupil numbers and staffing numbers. Smaller schools with falling roles particularly vulnerable.
 - Schools should not be penalised for having higher than expected reserves following the unexpected loss of senior staff.
 - Need to see how statutory 5% claw back works before any definite action was agreed because claw back could result in some schools falling into deficit inadvertently
 - PTA fund raising input.
 - Problem of small schools running up large reserves.
 - Tax on surplus for the benefit of schools worse off.
 - Was there a relationship between the level of a schools reserves and the standards being achieved.
 - Contracts already entered into making a commitment to replacement of computers.

The Committee agreed that the working group should be established with representatives of the Schools Forum to undertake further review work.

With regard to the composition of the Group, although members agreed that the size of the working group should be limited to 5/6 representatives, there were several views about the need for political balance and the independence of the Schools Forum in selecting its representatives. Members agreed that the composition of the working party should be determined by the

Committee's spokespersons (Councillors Richard Grant, Heather Timms and John Whitehouse)

It was suggested that members of the Committee should brief their respective groups to enable input into the working group at a later date.

4. Warwickshire Youth Justice Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families which report introduces the objectives of the annual Youth Justice Plan. The Committee was asked to scrutinise the Youth Justice Plan and ensure it met the needs of young people, victims and communities in Warwickshire. It was also asked to support the recommendation for Cabinet to endorse the Plan.

During his introduction of the item the Chair suggested that the Committee should consider whether young people received justice from the plan.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- The Council's Youth Offending Service was one of the best services in the country.
- There were close working arrangements with other directorates
- A great deal of work was being undertaken outside the childrens service, including work in the Community Protection Directorate with young fire fighters and the firebreak project.
- Youth offending institutions could benefit from closer realignment with training arrangements such as the Fire Break project with built in education.
- Whereas Marion Davis, Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families, was a Member of the Youth Justice Partnership Board, there was no other representative on the Board specifically for education.
- The importance of education and parental guidance would not be overlooked
- Consideration should be given to increasing the opening hours of youth clubs to encourage greater use of the facilities and provide extended benefits for young people.
- Staff in Youth Clubs were not always able to handle difficult youths.
- There was a need to be proactive in halting the trend amongst some young people that ASBOs were a form of "trophy".
- The "Respect" agenda will be picked up in future Plans
- A report would be prepared relating to an action plan for targeted youth support proposals.
- There was a national requirement to improve arrangements for the closer tracking of young offenders.
- The Committee commended the success of the Youth Offending Service

In conclusion, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee fully endorsed the content of the Plan and recommend it for

approval by the Cabinet. Members were keen to ensure that all services working with young people were joined up and noted that a further report would be submitted at a later date relating to an action plan for targeted youth support work.

At a later date the committee's spokespersons would consider the possibility of a visit to youth justice centres.

5. Hear by Right / Warwickshire Award for Involvement

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families on progress.

The Committee endorsed the progress made to date.

The Committee nominated Councillors Jill Dill-Russell, Katherine King and Dave Shilton to work with the Forum to scrutinise the design and implementation of the Action Plan to ensure all services within the Directorate meet a minimum Hear by Rights standard..

6. Children, Young People and Families Directorate Performance Report Full Year 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families which summarised the full-year performance (1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007) of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate.

The Committee was asked to endorse any proposed remedial actions and request any additional information required.

Following introductory comments from Mark Gore, Head of Service, Education Partnerships and School Development Division, Members discussed several issues.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- Many performance figures were based on the public's perception of the services given both locally and nationally and the importance of good communication in altering perceptions was stressed.
- With regard to the below target performance under Satisfaction with Education, greater importance should be given to CH62 – relating to the satisfaction of citizens who actually use the service.
- There could be benefits in examining the style of question asked in performance surveys.
- Members were advised of the reasons for the current level of underspend and advised that there was only a relatively small element of the underspend over which the Council had any control. There was no impact on the Council's budget setting process.
- A review was to be undertaken into truancy which would involve consultations with schools about various matters including the use of resources.

- The Police targets to reduce the number of young offenders was based on national trends.
- The number of completed reviews of child protection cases were above average and this resulted in a “medium” impact on Corporate Priorities. Children were not at any additional risk.

The Committee endorsed the proposed remedial actions and requested that, In future performance reports, the information contained in the “Red Analysis” section should be accompanied by all relevant information in the report to enable Members to analyse the situation easier.

The Committee also requested that future performance reports include information about progress and impact of the remedial action being taken.

7. Asset Management Plan relating to Schools and Non-school Buildings

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families which dealt with the section of the County’s corporate Asset Management Plan relating to the Children, Young People and Families Directorate

The Committee was asked to consider and comment on the Children, Young People and Families Directorate’s strategy relating to school and non-school buildings in the Corporate Asset Management Plan with those comments being forwarded on to the Cabinet for consideration.

The Committee was also asked to identify any areas covered in the report for further scrutiny.

Following introductory comments from Dahlia Harrison, Asset Management Plan Officer, Members discussed several aspects of the report. The following points were noted:

- With regard to the need, specifications and costs of building work, Members were advised that the standards and figures used where agreed nationally. Information would be sought about the method of calculating the figures nationally.
- Consideration should be given to adjusting funding for building work which could free up school resources for other educational uses.
- There was a continual programme of reviewing forecast pupil numbers to see if efficiencies could be made.
- The Cabinet had discussed the Stratford High School proposal
- There were concerns about the action being taken to reduce the number of temporary classrooms. Figures would be prepared on the use of temporary classrooms for use by pupils for circulation to the Committee.
- With regard to priorities the major commitments such as North Leamington School and Stratford High School must be taken into account.
- Delays in obtaining funding from sources other than the Council could result in more cost to the Council.
- Members acknowledged the importance of developing a spatial strategy.

The Committee endorsed the Strategy for consideration by the Cabinet.

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

In addition to the provisional items for future meetings listed in the report, the Committee noted that there would be reports about temporary classrooms and the development of a spatial strategy.

9. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items to consider.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.00 p.m.