

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 September 2007

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Jill Dill-Russell “ Richard Grant “ Marion Haywood (replacing Councillor Helen McCarthy for this meeting) “ Katherine King “ Mike Perry “ John Ross “ Dave Shilton “ Kam Singh “ Mota Singh “ Heather Timms “ Mick Stanley (replacing Councillor John Wells for this meeting) “ Nina Knapman (replacing Councillor John Whitehouse for this meeting)
Church Representative	Dr Rex Pogson
Parent Governor Representatives	Ruth Davies-McCrorie Tim Sturges
Teacher Representatives	Max Hyde Lynda LeLong
Other County Councillors	Councillor John Burton (Schools) Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young People & Families)
Invited Guests	Claire Sangster Chris Smart
Officers	John Betts, Head of Service – Resources Division Emma Curtis, Assistant to the Labour Group Hugh Disley, Head of Service – Division for Young People Phil Evans, Head of Facilities Management Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnerships and School Development Nicole Jones, Strategic Finance Manager Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer

(4) Chair's Announcements

1. The Chair welcomed Ruth Davies-McCrorie (St. Paul's C of E Primary School Leamington) and Tim Sturges (Henley-in-Arden High School), the two newly elected Parent Governor Representatives, as well as Lynda LeLong, the new Teacher Representative, on the Committee. He added that their input would be valued and he hoped they would enjoy their time on the Committee.
2. The Chair welcomed Councillors Burton and Seccombe to the front table, reminding the Committee of the decision made at the away day to develop the relationship with the Portfolio Holders and to hold them to account.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Young People and Alcohol Misuse

The Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining the Committee's views and recommendations for improvement as a result of the Young People and Alcohol Misuse Review. The Chair noted that the comments of the contributors from Hybrid:Arts had been included in the report.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. It was agreed that the reference to scope for cross border working with Coventry City in relation to alcohol test purchasing and training traders (Recommendation O) would be expanded to include other neighbouring authorities.
2. There was no one agency responsible for or able to tackle the issue alone, and to make a difference all agencies needed to accept social responsibility and work together.
3. Members commended the excellent report and the Chair thanked Members for their input into the scrutiny exercise. Michelle McHugh and Ann Mawdsley were also thanked for their contributions.

The Committee agreed the contents of the Young People and Alcohol Misuse final report ("Wasted") and to ask Cabinet to endorse the recommendations outlined in the report.

4. Targeted Youth Support

Members considered the Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Families and Young People setting out the consultation document to check out the proposed model, build an action plan and design services to respond to that action plan as part of the requirement to facilitate targeted youth support across the county.

Hugh Disley added the following:

- a. A copy of the questionnaire set for young people as part of the exercise would be forwarded to Members by e-mail.
- b. The consultation was a paper indicator of how forward looking Warwickshire had been in setting up support services.
- c. The action plan would respond to young people and the communities they were living in through the best use of available resources.
- d. The action plan would change the feel of the service and there would need to be change in culture, including the way staff were recruited.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

1. There was a need to recognise young people as young people, but to remember they were now having to live in a dynamic and changing world.
2. Resources played a significant part in the success of any work and needed to be adequate, reliable and on going.
3. Communities needed to show respect for young people.
4. In order to understand the issues, it would be useful for Members to be given an idea of the size of the problems and numbers involved.
5. Young people needed to be given the room to grow and be independent and not to always be organised.
6. Members welcomed and supported the integration of work of the Youth Service and the Voluntary Sector.
7. The Committee recognised the importance of targeted work.
8. Members requested a further opportunity to scrutinise the finalised Action Plan to ensure it was fit for purpose for young people in Warwickshire and to monitor its effectiveness.
9. The Service needed to work with young people, parents and communities and not to direct at them.
10. There was a need for coherence with other agencies and organisations, which would also result in positive inter-generational work.
11. The main issues to be tackled were staff, training and the necessary culture change.

The Committee agreed:

- (1) That their responses set out above be taken into consideration.

- (2) That once finalised, this Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the Action Plan and its implementation.

5. Schools' Funding Formula

Members considered the Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Families and Young People explaining the research which has been undertaken to inform the proposed changes to the Mainstream Schools' Funding Formula.

John Betts noted that the Schools' Funding Formula Review involved consultation with all partners including Head Teachers, Bursars and Governors and was still a work in progress. He noted that there was a fixed amount of money to distribute to schools and it was essential this was done properly and funds were distributed correctly.

Nicole Jones gave Members a PowerPoint presentation giving more detail on the Review. She made the following points:

- a. The Council was only given the opportunity to review the Funding Formula once every three years.
- b. The consultation addressed mainstream primary and secondary schools. A Special schools review was also currently underway, and Nursery funding (including private and voluntary) would be considered in 2008-09.
- c. The base allocation, which reflected proportion of overheads a school incurred, was not linked to pupil related funding and had particular significance for small schools, had been reduced overall. The Small Schools Factor had been introduced to ensure that small schools were not disproportionately affected by the proposals.
- d. The review of premises had shown that buildings built between the 1950s and the 1970s were the most expensive to run and therefore these schools would receive more funding for premises dating from that time, while schools with older buildings would receive less funding. These changes were expected to better reflect the costs incurred by schools.
- e. Infant classes could not have more than 30 pupils. Schools with numbers that did not make up full classes of 30 would receive a contribution towards the additional teacher required.
- f. Deprivation was currently based on free school meals and would in future be measured with a more targeted approach using Index of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) with funding targeted to the 40% most deprived pupils. The distribution of funding based on prior attainment would be maintained.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

1. Members noted the need to separate individual deprivation and children coming from a deprived area.

2. It was noted that the Directorate were trying to get the existing condition of buildings in existing schools right through the current priority list.
3. Infant class sizes would depend on actual numbers and would not necessarily help schools with falling roles.
4. There had not been a formal decision for children to be required to stay in education until they were 18 and discussions had not been held with the Learning and Skills Council, who were currently responsible for post-16 funding.
5. Nicole Jones agreed to e-mail to Members a copy of the Deprivation document being presented to the Schools Forum.
6. Schools with pupils who did not have English as a first language were currently supported within the Directorate and not through the Funding Formula. This would need to be reviewed in the future in terms of the varied needs of the large number of children in Warwickshire requiring specialised support.
7. There was a need to ensure that all County Councillors received as much information as possible to support the proposals once finalised. John Betts agreed to e-mail copies of the consultation document sent to schools and Councillors, including information on the impact on schools, as well as a summary/briefing of the consultation exercise.

The Committee agreed to:

- Endorse the progress of the Schools' Formula review to date, as outlined in this report, and recommends to Cabinet the proposed consultation process taking into account the comments of the Committee as outlined above.
- Note the outline findings that will feed the consultation with schools and the Schools Forum.

6. Review of Demand for School Meals

Members considered the Report of the Chair of the School Meals Panel outlining a review of school meal provision in Warwickshire with a view to increasing demand. It was noted that this report had been considered by the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had recommended its endorsement by the Cabinet. A Briefing Note was circulated setting out additional comments from the Director of Children, Young People and Families on the report.

Councillor Heather Timms (Chair of the Panel) made the following points:

- a. The significant operating deficit being faced by the County Caterers was not sustainable and the Panel had looked at how best to work towards reducing that deficit, while at the same time considering the wider "healthy eating" implications.

- b. There appeared to be no one solution and the recommendations encouraged better partnership arrangements between the two Directorates and Schools, whilst ensuring the involvement of young people and parents.
- c. Councillor Timms thanked Michelle McHugh and Paul Williams for ably supporting the Panel and to Members for their contributions and exemplary attendance.

Phil Evans added:

- i. The 2007/08 deficit for County Caterers was currently forecast to be in the region of £250,000. Approximately 90% of the service related to school meals provision.
- ii. At the end of the last school year there were some signs of recovery in the primary sector but the secondary sector remained in a difficult trading position.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- 1. The Panel visited schools that used the service as well as schools who had opted out. It was clear that where school meals had been integrated into the whole school experience, there was a significant increase in uptake.
- 2. The financial arrangements that were in place between schools and County Caterers included some element of service not directly related to the provision of meals. These elements were the subject of directly agreed charges. Cost recovery for the remainder of the service was through income generation. Where demand fell the gap between income and cost fell directly on County Caterers.
- 3. It was the decision of the Governing Body of each school to decide whether to enter into a contract with County Caterers. County Caterers as a business unit was required to run on a commercial basis. When remedial action had to be taken, this was usually only done following a long period of dialogue with the school concerned.
- 4. Members noted their concern at the possible impact on schools and young people, particularly in deprived areas, if services were withdrawn and the need for these judgements to be made taking into account the bigger picture.
- 5. Members commended the excellent report, and were pleased to note that the views of children and young people had been considered.
- 6. There was some discussion around the impact of locking school gates during the school day. Mark Gore noted that this was a decision that was made by Head Teachers and Governors, but that there was a need to look at the advice given to schools in terms of their duty of care.

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

- support the recommendations contained in the Review of Demand for Schools Meals Panel's report and to pass the report to Cabinet for approval.
- note the comments of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families and to forward these to the Cabinet.

7. 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.

8. Any Other Items

None.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.00 p.m.