

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 January 2008**

### **Present:-**

**Members of the Committee** Councillor Jill Dill Russell  
“ Richard Grant (Chair)  
“ John Ross  
“ Dave Shilton  
“ Mota Singh  
“ Heather Timms  
“ John Wells  
“ John Whitehouse (Vice Chair)

**Parent Governor  
Representatives** Ruth Davies-McCrorie  
Tim Sturges

**Invited Teacher  
Representative** Lynda LeLong

**Other County Councillors** Councillor John Burton (Schools)  
Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young  
People & Families)

**Invited Governor  
Representatives** Claire Sangster  
Chris Smart

**Officers** Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need  
Division  
Peter Hatcher, Principal Youth Officer  
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator  
Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer  
David MacNiven, Assistant Head of Service –  
Knowledge and Information Management Service

**Invited Attendees** Elizabeth Bush, County Youth Panel  
Andrew Williams, County Youth Panel

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly those members of the County Youth Panel in attendance and Lucy Lynch, Education Reporter for the Telegraph.

### **1. General**

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

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Helen McCarthy, Councillor Mike Perry, Councillor Kam Singh, Mark Gore, Max Hyde, Dr Rex Pogson and Karen Smith.

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

None.

**(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 12 November 2007 and 5 December 2008**

The minutes of the meetings of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2007 and 5 December 2008 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

**Matters arising**

None.

**(4) Chair's Announcements**

None.

**2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

**3. Scrutiny of Bullying**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development outlining the work carried out by the County Youth Panel on behalf of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to scrutinise bullying.

The Chair highlighted the importance of this significant report and stressed the groundbreaking work done with the County Youth Panel on this issue.

Elizabeth Bush and Andrew Williams added the following points on behalf of the County Youth Panel (CYP):

- i. Bullying had been on the CYP agenda since November 2006 and remained high on their priority list.
- ii. Work in carrying out the review included designing a questionnaire, which was sent to schools, working with the County Council and the Ban Da Bully programme involving Connexions, Polesworth International Language College and the Youth and Community Service. The CYP believed that this was an example of good practice in dealing with bullying and hoped that it would be extended to other areas of the County.
- iii. The Committee and Michelle McHugh were thanked for the opportunity given to the CYP to work with the Committee and for their support and it was noted that the CYP would like the

contact between the Panel and Committee to remain open to deal with issues that arose.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Problems with accessing some schools had arisen as a result of various issues, including the busy exam period.  
Recommendation A to utilise the Every Child Matters (ECM) Survey would give the CYP access to all schools, who were required to complete this survey. Many schools built the Every Child Matters Survey into their curriculum and was included in lesson plans relating to consultation. It was agreed that the ECM Survey would provide a clearer route for obtaining information from a wider spread of schools, and result in reliable data collected at regular intervals. This would enable the effectiveness of the county-wide Bullying Strategy to be measured.
2. The review had looked at different schools across the county as well as best practice across the country, in both primary and secondary schools.
3. Both primary and secondary schools were represented on Warwickshire's Anti-Bullying Partnership and information was then disseminated down to Headteacher Groups. It was agreed that there was more work to be done on this issue, particularly in terms of sharing good practice across all schools so that a position could be reached where the expectations of children and young people was the same as that of teachers and relevant groups.
4. Members acknowledged the importance of plans being implemented on the ground and "real people" being available for children and young people to talk to. The engagement of young people on the Anti-Bullying Partnership, the continued monitoring of surveys and continued involvement of young people with Members would monitor whether policies were making a difference to young people.
5. It was important to recognise that bullying arose around all sorts of issues and bullies were not always aware of the impact of their behaviour and often had problems of their own that needed to be addressed. All forms of bullying needed to be taken seriously with teachers receiving the appropriate training and parents of both bullies and recipients needed to be engaged in addressing the issue.
6. Bullying often occurred outside of schools, particularly on buses, and consideration should be given to how this could be addressed.
7. Councillor John Burton, Portfolio Holder for Schools agreed to arrange for an item on bullying to be included on the agenda of the Governors' Forum to remind Governors of their responsibilities and to encourage their involvement.
8. There was some discussion about the role and responsibilities of bystanders and the need to encourage better citizenship to

- break the cycle of fear and to focus on victims and coping mechanisms to deal with being bullied.
9. Youth Centres had to deal with the same issues in terms of bullying and it was agreed that schools and youth centres needed to be honest about what was happening, through partnership working, both bullies and recipients needed to be given the self esteem and confidence to break the cycle.
  10. Members agreed the need to for all parties to be honest about bullying and to understand what was happening from a child's point of view.
  11. Members requested that, once agreed by the Cabinet, that a copy of the report be sent to the School Council and Governing Body of every school in Warwickshire for easy access by pupils and School Governors.
  12. The Chair thanked Elizabeth Bush and Andrew Williams and their colleagues for the work they had done on the review and looked forward to working together in the future.

The Committee agreed to ask the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny of Bullying Report and to request an Action Plan be put in place to progress the recommendations.

#### **4. Final report on outstanding items from the Action Plan arising from Ofsted Inspection of Youth Service, May 2005**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families updating Members on progress against the outstanding items of the Action Plan presented to this Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006 and identifying progress against the Widening Participation and Rural Youth Work Developments.

Peter Hatcher added that there had been many changes within the Council since the Action Plan had been agreed in 2005, which had resulted in a number of major pressures on services and that in future the Youth Service would no longer be inspected separately by Ofsted, as it would now form part of Joint Area Review (JAR).

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Youth Work was historically run by voluntary and part-time workers with provision overseen by full-time youth workers. From 2010 Youth Work would become a degree profession in the UK, which would raise a number of issues for Local Authorities to address. Members requested that future reports include figures of staff retention.
2. Members expressed concern at the length of time it had taken for the rural vehicle project to be implemented and following some discussion it was agreed that the matter, including procurement and length of time between delivery and use of the

vehicle be referred to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate and revert to this Committee with any findings.

The Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the final report from the 2005 Youth Service Ofsted Inspection Action Plan and agreed that the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the processes and procedures in place that led to the long delays in implementing the rural vehicle project and to revert to this Committee with any findings.

## **5. Child Poverty**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families containing the Committee's views and recommendations from the single-issue meeting on Child Poverty held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007. A copy of the latest draft of the Child Poverty Report and the comments received from Legal Services were tabled at the meeting.

Having considered the advice of Legal Services and following some discussion, Members of the Committee agreed the following revisions to Recommendations B, C, E and G:

### **Recommendation B**

The Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families use the information obtained from recommendation A to undertake a mapping exercise of the services available within the areas identified as having significant proportions of child poverty. Services relating to youth homelessness should also be included in this exercise. This exercise will enable priority areas to be identified and support the Council and partners in taking decisions and choices regarding service provision to address child poverty. A report outlining the findings from this exercise should be presented to the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Recommendation C**

Departments in conjunction with Corporate Human Resources consider how employees who have joined the County Council from being long term unemployed can be fully supported to remain in sustainable employment.

### **Recommendation E**

Cabinet explore with Corporate Human Resources and Legal Services whether there is a possibility of offering a guaranteed interview scheme to lone parents.

### Recommendation G

The Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families submits a report to the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlining the hidden costs of education in Warwickshire – including a picture of uniform costs and school trips and also outlining the support options available to families to assist with these costs. This report should include details of the changes in school uniform rules and guidance introduced by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

In response to a query regarding the funding of Children's Centres, Councillor Izzi Seccombe, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families reported that although Warwickshire had achieved the targets set for them in terms of Children's Centres, funding allocations were out of kilter in terms of the allocations received by other authorities and Government guidance and this was being explored with Government.

The Committee endorsed the revised report and agreed to recommend to the Cabinet that they agree the Child Poverty Report and move forward the recommendations contained in that report.

## **6. LAA Six Monthly Performance**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development reporting on the performance of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) over the first six months since its adoption in April 2007.

Nick Gower-Johnson added the following:

- i. 70% of the 27 measures relating to children and young people had been met or exceeded. Remedial action was set out in the report for the eight measures that had not been met.
- ii. Work on the local public service agreement (LPSA) elements ("Improve Educational Attainment & Positive destinations" and "Healthy Schools") against stretch targets was progressing and it was anticipated that, on current performance within all six blocks, approximately £9.6m of the £13.6 m available, would be received for distribution by the partnership.
- iii. Government had published a National Indicator Set of 198 measures for the new LAA, of which the LAA parties had to select up to 35 with an additional 16 mandatory indicators set by the Department for Children, Schools and Families around educational attainment and children and young people issues.
- iv. It was important that Members were given the opportunity to engage with the process of the current and the new LAA, which would have a different set of ground rules.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. In response to a query about the cost of the LAA, it was noted that investment in the LAA included a non-refundable grant from Government of £1m and a loan of £500,000 from the County Council “virtual bank” which would be repaid on receipt of the reward money. Nick Gower-Johnson added that the growing number of success stories were evidence of the successful partnership work that had taken place which had resulted in service improvement and better opportunities for citizens, and the positive impact this work was expected to have on other areas such as the CPA.
2. The areas agreed for the first LAA had been chosen for their potential to make a difference for children and young people and to address areas of specific concern rather than solely for monetary reward and also formed part of the Children and Young People Plan.
3. It was agreed that while the County Council had ownership of most targets in this block, quality of life and living environment also impacted on children’s ability to achieve and so the work of partners in areas such as health and leisure impacted on these targets.
4. Partners, including the PCT, had a statutory responsibility to co-operate with the County Council in the LAA and it was agreed that in all areas, there were initiatives that needed to be addressed by all partners, opportunities to deliver better in their own services and to invest better together on the preventative side.
5. In response to a query about the attainment of looked-after children, David MacNiven noted that three of the 16 mandatory targets of the new LAA were related to looked-after children and work was ongoing in this area. The Virtual School Project was also looking at qualitative numbers as well as quantitative measures to demonstrate quality of life for looked-after children as well as educational attainment.
6. It was agreed that there was an issue around the involvement of opposition groups and a report was being prepared on wider councillor involvement for the Leaders Liaison Group looking at the best way forward.
7. The work and commitment of the Healthy Schools Team was acknowledged, but it was noted that the targets in this area were very demanding and while there had been a lot of actions taken to move forward, there was still a lot of work to do towards achieving or partially achieving the targets.
8. It was noted that the concern around mental health and young people was national and covered issues at both ends of the spectrum, from emotional wellbeing and early intervention to more serious conditions.

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Welcome the comprehensive performance management information contained in the report.
- b) Support the progress made to date in relation to the Children and Young People's block of the LAA and remedial actions suggested by the Block Leader in respect of those measures currently forecast to miss target.
- c) Endorse the initial comments on the indicators for the revised LAA.
- d) Receive a further report outlining the targets for the new LAA at the February meeting and to receive the Third Quarter Report by e-mail, for information.

**7. Report of the Complaints Task and Finish Group**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development containing the views and recommendations of the Complaints Task and Finish Group.

Councillor John Ross outlined the background and remit of the Task and Finish Group, and the work done by the Group resulting in the recommendations set out in the report.

The Chair thanked the Members of the Task and Finish Group and the officers involved, for the work they had done.

The Committee agreed the recommendations of the Complaints Task and Finish Group contained in the report.

**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**

In response to a query about the Schools Funding Formula it was noted that the Cabinet had not yet considered this report.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.10 p.m.