

Minutes of the Meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February 2008

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Jill Dill Russell “ Richard Grant (Chair) “ Katherine King “ Helen McCarthy “ Brian Moss (replacing Councillor Kam Singh for this meeting) “ Mike Perry “ John Ross “ Dave Shilton “ Mota Singh “ Heather Timms “ John Wells “ John Whitehouse (Vice Chair)
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Parent Governor Representatives	Ruth Davies-McCrorie Tim Sturges
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Invited Teacher Representative	Max Hyde
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Other County Councillors	Councillor John Burton (Schools) Councillor Izzi Seccombe (Children, Young People & Families)
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Invited Governor Representatives	Claire Sangster Chris Smart
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Officers	Ben Cahill, Community Development Officer Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnership & School Development Division Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need Division Bob Hooper, Head of School Performance Dave Marlow, Senior Information Officer Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator Gereint Stoneman, Corporate Planning Manager Paul Williams, Overview and Scrutiny Officer Shona Walton, Senior Officer (Access and Innovation)
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1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Lynda LeLong, Dr Rex Pogson and Councillor Kam Singh (replaced by Councillor Brian Moss for this meeting).

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest in Item 4 as a Governor at The Avon Valley School.

(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 January 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 January 2008 were agreed subject to the inclusion of Councillor Katherine King as present at that meeting.

Matters arising

Page 2 – 3. Scrutiny of Bullying

The Chair noted that the Scrutiny of Bullying Report, which had received a lot of publicity, would be considered by the Cabinet on 3 April 2008.

(4) Chair's Announcements

None.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Challenges for the next 12 months

Councillor Izzi Seccombe and Councillor John Burton gave a presentation on the challenges for their portfolios for the next 12 months within the context of how children, young people and families fit into the broader picture of Warwickshire County Council and how they are embedded into the priorities of the Council.

Councillor Seccombe highlighted the following points:

- i. The Children, Young People and Families Directorate had links with all directorates; in particular Adult Services to ensure the transition from Child to Adult Services was seamless.

- ii. Partner agencies provided vital services such as housing and leisure services and it was crucial that all partners understood their roles and responsibilities in ensuring that all life opportunities for children and young people were being met by key agencies.
- iii. There was a duty to consult with and involve children and young people in the development and designing of services.
- iv. The Directorate and Council were preparing for the Joint Area Review (JAR) at the end of June and it was important that every agency involved in the JAR understood they were valued and key to delivering services to children, particularly in the area of safeguarding children.
- v. The agreed priority areas gave the Council an opportunity to ensure that services provided by Health were what the Council would expect and need. She added that there was evidence of some joint working, and the Council were seeing strong support from the PCT.
- vi. Work was being undertaken to look at how services outside of schools could deliver the Healthy Schools programme.
- vii. Some target times for reviews of Looked After Children had been missed, and while this was a multi-agency responsibility, steps had been put in place to improve on this target, including an alert system highlighting problems at an early stage. The Virtual Head was now in place and would ensure education plans and opportunities for Looked After Children were delivering for them.
- viii. The use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in referrals would ensure early and consistent referrals.
- ix. Stronger measures would have to be put in place to reduce the number of young people involved with crime. Work was ongoing with the Youth Offending Team to reduce the level of minor crime and with a variety of agencies looking at early prevention.
- x. The work done by Connexions to reduce the number of NEETs (Young People not in Education, Employment or Training) was held up by Government as a beacon, but the Government campaign to get the long-term unemployed back to work and the influx of Eastern European workers had both had a knock-on affect on employment opportunities for young people. Various measures had been put in place with partners, to counteract this and these would continue to be monitored.

Councillor John Burton made the following points:

- a. A change to the rules for Healthy Schools had resulted in the Directorate having to review its programme. To date approximately 70% of Warwickshire primary schools were signed up, with more reluctance from secondary schools, but there was evidence that where schools had embraced the initiative, children achieved better. Work was ongoing to move forward the Healthy Schools agenda, including a presentation to the next Governors' Forum meeting.

- b. A major review of the PRU was taking place following the introduction of managed moves and a move towards greater input at school level and the prevention of permanent exclusions.
- c. The Inspectors Team needed to be congratulated for their work resulting in an improvement since September 2007 from 10 schools in Ofsted's category of concern to five. There were three schools in special measures.
- d. The Council is judged in terms of school absence, and while the Education Social Workers, Schools and Governors were working hard to address absence, this area remained a challenge.
- e. Financial support from Government would be reliant on the Council addressing the falling rolls of primary schools.
- f. There was a need to develop a blue print of services for the next 20 – 30 years, including the capital implications, taking forward a vision for schools of high quality education, offering excellent learning opportunities and forming the heart of the community.
- g. The Tribal Review in Nuneaton produced a bold vision which was needed to address local issues for all secondary schools across the County.
- h. The challenge for the Directorate was to continue to promote levels of attainment, early intervention, improving schools from a satisfactory to a good category or from a good to an outstanding category and to provide a good education at a good local schools for every child in Warwickshire.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders and invited questions. The following points were noted:

1. The issue of unauthorised absence is reported to and monitored by the Truancy Policy Panel and it was noted that the Authority took a careful view of this issue, understanding the situation many families were in and the legal obligations placed on them. The Chair added that Members of the Truancy Policy Panel would discuss the need to report information to other groups.
2. Members of the Committee requested that future reports include the priorities and challenges faced by the Portfolio Holders that fell outside the scope of the partnership, including:
 - Seeing the tight budget through and dealing with efficiency savings, cuts and the allocations of funding.
 - school organisation, with local Members being included in the process at an early stage and having a clear understanding of the issues
 - falling primary rolls
 - Children's Centres, in light of the funding issues
 - Transport
 - Actual data on areas such as attendance to allow for better monitoring
3. The delivery of services within the broader visions of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and County Council needed to achieve

equality of provision and ensure access of provision for all children and young people.

4. Warwickshire had more permanent exclusions than its neighbouring authorities, and the Directorate were seeking to ensure that managed moves were a part of the overall strategy to reduce exclusions, offering a more positive approach and striking a balance between good order, supporting schools and meeting the needs of all pupils. This was beginning to take effect, and would allow PRU to operate as a “revolving door” with pupils going in with a clear plan of how they would come out again.
5. Behaviour Panels, which had been rolled out to a third of Warwickshire’s secondary schools to date, were looking at the issue of how mainstream schools supported children and young people with SEN.
6. The Directorate would have to join with schools and partners to ensure the achievement of best value jointly.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders for their presentations and it was agreed that the exercise would be repeated in February 2009 to look at the challenges for the 12 months thereafter.

4. Key Stage 4 - Performance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the results of pupils in national tests in Key Stage 4 in Warwickshire’s schools and the planned actions proposed to further raise levels of attainment and achievement.

Bob Hooper and Shona Walton added the following points:

- i. The performance of Warwickshire pupils was generally above national and statistical neighbour figures except for Key Stage 4 which was more in line with national levels and slightly below for 5 A*-C grades. It was noted that the County performed well in English and Maths, and the gap was beginning to close.
- ii. Members’ attention was drawn to the added value (CVA) figures for schools, which gave a better indication of the progress a school had made, in some cases attaining lower results and achieving more for pupils.
- iii. The gap in performance between different parts of the County was not closing, with Nuneaton and Bedworth remaining below other areas.
- iv. The challenge for the Service was to help schools in the more deprived parts of the county to achieve greater value added. This was done through the most appropriate of three stages of intervention and required working with schools to highlight and improve on their weaknesses.
- v. The pairing of schools, with strong schools supporting weak schools, was part of the LAA.

- vi. Recruitment and retention was an important influence, and there was a greater impact on performance from issues such as a high turnover of staff or the national shortage of Heads of Maths and Science. This was an area the Directorate addressed on an ongoing basis.
- vii. The Directorate was confident that the plan and they had in place would have a positive impact on performance across Warwickshire.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. In response to a query about year-on-year changes in results for a school it was noted that while areas such as leadership and teaching had an impact, this was greatly influenced by different cohorts of children.
2. There were significant curriculum changes ahead, particularly in light of the development of the 14-19 agenda and the new diploma opportunities. This was expected to bring greater motivation and engagement for a wider variety of children and to provide more opportunities with courses appropriate to individual children and young people. It was noted that there were schools already taking a lead in these changes and transforming their own curricula.
3. The increase to 18 that a young person could leave education would be part of the drive to get the 14-19 agenda correct and Warwickshire already had a high percentage of young people within education and training up to 18.
4. A lot of work was being done to reduce the number of NEETs, which was higher in Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire. An example of this was the area scrutiny in North Warwickshire looking at educational achievement in local detail.
5. The Service was currently providing intensive support to approximately 10 schools in the County. Support was available to all schools and was provided at an appropriate level depending on their needs.
6. All secondary schools in Warwickshire had set floor targets for 2008/09 and the Team, Heads, teachers and children of those schools facing the greatest challenges were working hard to achieve the targets.
7. Members agreed that there needed to be a greater understanding of the CVA, which was more likely to reflect the situation of a school than the GCSE results.
8. Limited intervention funding was available to schools where there was a need identified, and there was base funding available within the schools formula for deprivation and low levels of achievement.
9. Good leadership in schools was crucial and Warwickshire had secured a grant from the National College of School Leadership, the strategy for which was being prepared.
10. Shona Walton agreed to send to Members an electronic copy of the Action Plan for schools.

The Committee agreed to endorse the results of pupils in national tests in Key Stage 4 in Warwickshire schools and support the planned actions proposed to further raise levels of attainment and achievement and to further scrutinise the progress against the Action Plan and leadership issues at a later date.

5. Joint Area Review (JAR) Preparation

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families and the presentation, which marked the beginning of the process of raising awareness on the lead up to the JAR and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from 30 June to 11 July 2008.

Dave Marlow added the following:

- i. There would be 20 inspectors taking part, inspecting all children's services in Warwickshire, particularly the County Council and Health, and looking specifically at the contribution and impact of different groups and the benefit to children and young people.
- ii. There had been an intensive communications and marketing exercise in preparation for the JAR and Members were informed that all information was available on the website www.warwickshirechildren.com/JAR.
- iii. An events calendar had been prepared for the duration of the inspection and work was ongoing to ensure that everyone involved would be in a position to demonstrate their performance against outcome measures, programmes of work and the five Children Act themes, as well as the contribution young people had made and their engagement in the process.
- iv. The JAR was taking place at the same time as the CPA and would follow a joint, co-ordinated approach.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Members were reminded that their June meeting had been changed from the 16 July to 8 July to fit into the JAR timetable.
2. The Warwickshire JAR Inspection was at the end of a three year general inspection regime and would not be repeated in its current form.
3. Members requested a copy of the list of 40 outcomes against which agencies would be inspected.
4. Members were reminded that there was a seminar taking place on Thursday 28 February on the CPA and JAR inspections.
5. Where case files were to be inspected, this would be done within the normal framework surrounding data protection in Warwickshire.

The Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the information contained within the report and presentation.

6. Information held about Children, Young People and Families – Information the Directorate collects and reports to Government

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families detailing the individual data items collected and sent to the Department for Children, Schools and Families by the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. It was noted that the report had been compiled following concerns raised by this Committee about the amount of data held about children, and set out the use of and transmission of information that was collected and what information was returned to Government

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. In response to a number of concerns raised about the amount of information taken by Government and the risks around access and holding of information, it was noted that the Council collects and holds data within the Knowledge Information Service. All staff within this Service were checked and the data was held under a careful gatekeeping system and only used in aggregated form. There were many hardened safeguards built into the corporate infrastructure and only named individuals had access to much of the information, with failure to take proper care of data being the possibility of criminal prosecution.
2. The Council did have a retention policy, and after a certain period of time data could be removed irrevocably from the system. This point of disposal in time terms had not yet been reached.
3. Members agreed that there was no need for Government to know any more information than the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) and it was noted that the Directorate had asked this question of Government with no response. It was agreed that Councillor Seccombe would pursue this matter with Government.
4. From 1 April 2008 there would be a requirement on Local Authorities to include within data, children who die. This would only be aggregate data and give no individual details.
5. The Data Protection Act ensured that data was shared properly and there were a number of protocols including the information sharing protocols agreed with partners around how the Council did share information. Members were reminded that Every Child Matters had started with the tragic death of Victoria Climbié, where agencies had not shared data. It was agreed that it was important that when the Council did share data, questions were asked about why the information was needed and to ensure any information would be protected. The Safeguarding Children

Board had also played a strong role in ensuring information was kept safe.

6. Members noted their concern about the culture of people's right to access information and the risk involved with sharing information with members of the public where there were no restrictions or protocols.

The Committee endorsed the information contained in the report and presentation and agreed to make the following recommendations to the Cabinet arising from their concerns:

- There was a need to review the reasons for and the management and disposal of data and the potential risks involved for all citizens of Warwickshire.
- The need for data collected by Central Government to remain anonymous.

7. 1st Draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2008-11

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development presenting the first draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2008-11 and the updated Corporate Risk Register, following their consideration by Cabinet and with the intention of a final version being agreed by full Council on 18 March 2008. Gereint Stoneman added that there was a number of targets within the "Raising levels of Educational Attainment" that were reflected as still to be confirmed (TBC). This was a result of the new LAA to be implemented in June which would identify actual target data.

The following points were noted:

1. Members agreed that there was a need for the Business Plan to set out the current actual level of performance as a base point to understand the progression targets set for the next three years.
2. In terms of any impact on the Plan a change to the school-leaving age might have, it was noted that Warwickshire already had a target for every young person to be moving in a positive direction in either education, training or employment. Members noted their concern at the implications for children under 18 who left home, who in the future would have to be in education or training and have no way to support themselves financially. Officers agreed to look into this matter.
3. In response to comments about the cost of producing such a lengthy document, it was noted that the Plan was more focussed than in previous years and was a key component of the work and direction of the Authority. It was added that a balance had to be achieved between careful planning and the best use of resources.
4. Members agreed that the words "Narrowing the gap of educational achievement and attainment across the County" should be included as a priority within the section on Raising levels of Educational Attainment.

The Committee agreed the 1st draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2008-11 taking into account their comments above and prior to its consideration by full Council on 18 March 2008 and accepted the key corporate risks facing the County Council in delivering its objectives and the actions put in place to manage them.

8. LAA Quarter 3 Performance Update and Suggested Priorities and Indicators for the new LAA

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Performance and Development containing the overall summary of performance at quarter 3 2008 and the suggested priorities and indicators for inclusion in the new LAA. Mark Gore added that there were still some areas needing improvement and the Council were aiming to reach the targets set by the end of Quarter 4 in order to be able to access the performance grants.

It was noted that a lot of work and resource had been put into Healthy Schools, where there was a large incentive to reach the targets. It was agreed that Members had a role to speak to and encourage their local schools on their progress in areas such as Healthy Schools plans and School Transport plans.

The Committee welcomed the comprehensive performance management information contained in the report.

9. 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.

10. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.15 p.m.