

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

Present:-

Members of the Committee Councillor Jill Dill Russell
“ Richard Grant (Chair)
“ Doug Hodgkinson (replacing
Councillor Katherine King for this
meeting)
“ Helen McCarthy
“ Mike Perry
“ John Ross
“ Kam Singh
“ Mota Singh
“ John Wells
“ John Whitehouse (Vice Chair)

Church Representative Dr Rex Pogson

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

**Invited Teacher
Representatives** Max Hyde
Lynda LeLong

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

**Invited Governor
Representatives** Claire Sangster
Chris Smart

Officers Phil Evans, Head of Facilities Management
Mark Gore, Head of Service – Education Partnership &
School Development Division
Chris Hallett, Head of Service – Children in Need Division
Liz Holt, Assistant Head of Service – SEN and Inclusion
Geoff King, Head of Service – Commissioning, Planning
and Partnerships
Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator
Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Viv Sales, Principal Education Social Worker
Brenda Vincent, Assistant Head of Service
John Wright, Principal Committee Administrator

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Katherine King (replaced by Councillor Doug Hodgkinson for this meeting), Councillor Dave Shilton and Councillor Heather Timms.

(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26 February 2008

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February 2008 were agreed as correct, and Members commended the minutes as being succinct and accurate.

Matters arising

Page 5 – 4. Key Stage 4 - Performance

The Chair reported that the Panel (Cllrs, Dill-Russell, Grant and McCarthy) set up to scrutinise educational attainment at Key Stage 4 had met and would be reporting their findings to the next meeting of the Committee.

Page 7 – 5.3 Joint Area Review (JAR) Preparation

Members noted that they had not yet received the list of 40 outcomes against which agencies would be inspected and Michelle McHugh agreed to chase this up.

It was agreed that a report should be sent to the Cabinet setting out the comments of the Committee in relation to the JAR inspection.

Page 8 – 6. Information held about Children, Young People and Families – Information the Directorate collects and reports to Government

Under 6.2, it was noted that data on children and young people was removed from the system at the age of 25.

Under 6.3, Mark Gore noted that there had still not been any response from Government. The Chair noted that Councillor Seccombe had agreed to pursue this matter and the request

was repeated. Michelle McHugh agreed to prepare a report to Cabinet setting out the comments of the Committee.

(4) Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed John Wright, a new Committee Administrator, responsible for Health O&S, Environment O&S, North Warwickshire Area Committee and Audit and Standards.

The Chair reported that the Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission had confirmed that Mr Joseph Cannon would be replacing Rev Terry Hum in September, following Mr Cannon's retirement as Headteacher at St Anthony's, Leamington Spa.

Agenda Item 6 would be considered first on the Agenda as Mark Gore had to leave early to attend another meeting.

Members' attention was drawn to the SACRE Annual Report they had received. Members were asked to raise any issues they may have with the Chair or their Spokespersons.

Chair reminded members that the Committee's Annual report would be presented to Council on 13th May.

The Chair noted that the Child Poverty report had been considered by the Cabinet on 3 April. It agreed that a report be brought back to the O&S in six months and it was Resolved: "That the Cabinet note the recommendations and ask the Public Service Board to consider the issues raised in the report". Following some discussion, it was agreed that Mark Gore and Councillor Seccombe would send an e-mail to Members outlining the role of the Public Service Board, including the routing for reports to and responses from the Board.

The Chair noted that the Scrutiny of Bullying report had been considered by the Cabinet on 3 April, where it was noted that the Committee looked forward to a report back on progress against the action plan and it was Resolved:

- "(1) That the Cabinet endorses the recommendations set out in the Scrutiny of Bullying Report.
- (2) That an Action Plan be put in place to progress the recommendations.

Members were reminded about the computer session on 9 June from 2.00 to 4.00 pm at Wedgnock House. The Chair encouraged Members to attend the training session, which would give them the tools to access data linked to performance reports on the agendas.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Looked After Children – Update of Progress - Councillor Izzi Seccombe

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder responsible for Children, Young People and Families and the lead Member responsible for Corporate Parenting, gave an update on progress and different initiatives within the County Council to improve the lives of Looked After Children. These were reported within the five themes of Every Child Matters.

Councillor Seccombe praised the role played by foster carers in Warwickshire and noted that there would be a Foster Carer Event on 19 May 2008, to which members of the Corporate Parenting Board had been invited.

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

1. There were a number of ways Councillors could engage in the Corporate Parenting agenda, including the Corporate Parenting Board and as Governors of schools.
2. Work was being undertaken with the Rainer Foundation (a national charity for under-supported young people) to develop a pledge to working together, which would set out in common language, the expectations of the County Council and of young people. This was expected to be launched at full Council in June/July.
3. The Corporate Parenting Board were now holding more regularised meetings and were rolling out a training programme to increase awareness of what corporate parenting was. This would facilitate the development of an Action Plan, which would allow young people to use to see where there had been actual differences made to their lives.
4. Corporate Parenting Toolkits were being compiled and it had been suggested that these be lodged with the Group Assistants for easy access by Members.
5. The 0.76 performance rating referred to in the report was a ratio Government used as a way of recording 16-18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Warwickshire's performance in this area was good compared to statistic neighbours, but the ambition for the Council was to improve, and a small group of young people in that cohort that were felt could do better were being targeted.
6. Percentages could change quickly due to the small numbers of looked after children involved, in Warwickshire approximately 460 young people in care, 400 of whom were in school. A high

portion of these had special needs and it was agreed that achievement was for many a better reflection than attainment.

7. Members requested report on the progress and impact of the RIGHT2BCARED4 three year pilot in 12 months
8. Warwickshire County Council worked with Barnardos in a number of areas including advice services and training programmes for young people moving on, who often had had little experience with responsibilities such as house keys or paying bills.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for her contribution. He added that Members were in a position to scrutinise services for children in care more locally through their contacts with their local schools and that Area Committees may wish to scrutinise services in their patch.

4. Review of Inclusion Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families summarising the developments within each of the workstreams of the Inclusion Strategy, now embedded in the Children and Young People's Plan. This progress report had been requested by the Committee when they considered the draft Strategy for the inclusion of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties (now the Inclusion Strategy) at their meeting on 20 July 2006, when they "endorsed the draft Strategy for the inclusion of pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and requested a further report 12 months after the introduction of the Strategy to scrutinise what had worked, what hadn't and the best way to move forward".

Liz Holt added the following points:

- i. Area Behaviour Panels looked to support and strengthen the local role of schools through school partnerships working together to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
- ii. The support services were looking at how, collectively, work could be further developed taking into account local issues and community services.
- iii. An Impact of the Fair Access Protocol report would be brought to the September meeting by Nick Williams, which would include the reintegration of pupils from the PRU to mainstream schools, and the number involved with managed transfers and numbers of repeat transfers
- iv. Positive responses had been received from all schools involved in Phase 1 of the Nurture Group provision, which sought to fill gaps in children's development. This provision was effective and ideally would be rolled out to as many schools as possible.
- v. It was agreed that the use of alternative curriculum arrangements for KS4 would allow the LA to decrease the number of out-of-County places currently made.

- vi. Training for Schools in the areas of SEN and inclusion was crucial and impacted heavily on both class teachers' practice and at a strategic level for schools.
- vii. The development of family support workers was a key piece of work and linked to the work being done by Nurture Groups.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. Members were pleased to note the earlier intervention of ESWs at 80% attendance rather than 70%.
2. Members agreed the need to include "less disruption in mainstream classes" within the Strategy.
3. Parenting classes were directed by Courts, but were also promoted through Children's Centres, outreach officers and word of mouth as most people who had attended found the classes worthwhile and useful. It was suggested that it would be useful for Magistrates working in Family Courts to be invited to visit a parenting course.
4. It was agreed that there was a need to monitor the impact of managed moves, particularly in areas such as KS4 attainment, to ensure that they had not resulted in a decrease in levels of behaviour overall.
5. The use of CAF (Common Assessment Framework) at an earlier stage would result in less reactive responses being required which should balance any resource implications of the Strategy.
6. Chris Smart reported on the success of, and the decrease in exclusions due to the improvements that had been brought about at Hartshill School, where the LA had financially supported the setting up of a Learning Support Unit on the school grounds. This had been brought about from the desire to keep pupils in the school and address their needs appropriately, outside of their normal class and minimising disruption.
7. School partnerships provided a powerful mechanism through peer support and challenge to ensure that delivery of service was meeting local needs. There was a need for the LA to ensure that all Governing Bodies and Headteachers were aware of the range of support available for schools.
8. The pattern of fixed term exclusions needed to be considered in conjunction with the decrease in the number of permanent exclusions. It was noted that at the point that any child received a second fixed term exclusion, a CAF would be offered in order to put in place sufficient measures to manage the situation and reduce persistent disruptive behaviour.
9. The Extended Services agenda and the Enhanced Support Network with the CAF would be fundamental in terms of preventing escalation of difficulties at infant level and had the capacity to change how schools saw their role in the wider community.
10. The significant increase in exclusions in Nuneaton and Bedworth was attributable to improved recording from two schools who had previously recorded exclusions incorrectly.

Other Nuneaton and Bedworth schools followed the county pattern of decreased numbers of exclusions.

The Committee endorsed the activity outlined in the report, providing up-to-date information about the developments within the Inclusion Strategy and requested an update report in 12 months.

5. IDeA Joint Area Review (JAR) Peer Review Report and Working Draft Implementation Plan

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families presenting Members with the IDeA Peer Review Report (JAR) for Warwickshire County Council, which showed good progress for the majority of findings, with some areas highlighted for improvement.

In response to concerns raised by the Chair about the difficulty in following recommendations through from the Health Check Report to the Implementation Plan, Geoff King reported that the Improvement Plan attached to the report would be changed to two separate Action Plans for JAR and CPA. The report to full Council would include more detail of successes and include the Health Check Report, an Action Plan and target dates.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. In response to a statement that there was “no effective scrutiny of the Executive” in Overview and Scrutiny, the Chair pointed out that the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee (C,YP&F O&S) had been experimenting with ways of achieving this and could clearly be demonstrated. He added that the points set out on page 45 of the Health Check Report would be taken into account when the Committee held their workshop in July to set the work programme for the next year.
2. A select committee carried out by the C,YP&F O&S during the year to scrutinise “Every Child Matters and Effective Partnership Working”, included presentations from Councillor Seccombe and Marion Davis, Strategic Director on the work of the Children’s Strategic Partnership Board. Members of the Committee continued to receive copies of agendas, reports and minutes of the Board.
3. In terms of the overall score and capacity of the Directorate and Council, plans had been put in place to address areas that had been identified for improvement.
4. Members recorded their concern that judgements did not always reflect the true picture, and it was noted that the JAR/CPA Inspection would be carried out in greater detail than the IDeA Health Check, and would cover a small number of theme areas.
5. Work was ongoing to engage partners, and while this process had been slow with the PCT, there had been progress and the

priorities set in the PCT's Local Development Plan were now aligned with those of the Local Area Agreements and Children, Young People Plan. The Committee agreed that part of their scrutiny role was to challenge all partners in their roles delivering services for children, young people and families in Warwickshire.

6. The need to raise Member profile and for the Committee to actively promote their work with the media had been an area identified at the work programme workshop held in July 2007 and it was agreed that this would be discussed further at the Chair/Spokespersons Briefing. The Action Plan for the Scrutiny Strategy contains an action relating to developing media plans for each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
7. It was agreed that the lack of services for bereaved children was an item that should be considered for inclusion in the work programme.
8. The need for resources to be focussed on diversionary activities for the 13+ age group and to monitor any impact on re-offending had been negotiated with the Police and an agreement had been reached to work in partnership in this area.

The Committee thanked Geoff King for his contribution and made reference to their comments outlined above for consideration in preparation of the revised Action Plan.

6. Update on Review of Demand for School Meals report (September 2007)

The Committee considered the joint report of the Strategic Directors for Children, Young People and Families and Resources following the review of demand for school meals carried out in 2006/07, and detailing progress made to date on the recommendations contained within the Review of Demand for School Meals report.

Mark Gore added that this was work in progress that would require ongoing monitoring, and that Members needed to be aware, that although there were a number of crossover areas, there was a distinction between the ongoing work to promote County Caterers and School Meals and the Transforming School Meals Project.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. While the final decision on providers of meals lay with individual schools and Governing Bodies, joint working allowed for the sharing of best practice and where possible, assistance was given to any school experiencing difficulties with outside contractors.
2. Members noted that it had been difficult to monitor progress against the recommendations without the inclusion of reasonable and realistic timescales as part of a workplan.

3. The progressing of the recommendations was directly associated to available resources, and there had been no successful budget bids for this area in the last budget round.
4. The reduction in pure trading loss, after allowing for the application of General Fund support, from £350,000 to £164,000 had been achieved through a combination of reductions in staffing costs, rationalisation of processes, increased cost recovery and an increase in sales. Phil Evans added that while there continued to be a number of risks and issues, a balanced budget had been set for 2008/09 and this would be monitored closely.
5. Across the piece there had been a 2% uptake in school meals at the primary sector level, there were however some schools that had seen an increase in demand of up to 15%.
6. County Caterers had the facility in terms of income recovery to increase costs at any time to cope with increasing food costs, but this was avoided where possible, with an early view taken on what the expected costs would be.
7. Members were assured that there had never been any compromise in terms of quality where County Caterers were providing services in schools. In terms of other schools, there were clear standards and this was an area inspected by Ofsted.
8. Members requested an update by e-mail on the "dual use" of school kitchens for catering and curriculum purposes.

The Committee acknowledged the progress made on some of the recommendations contained in the report on the Review of Demand for School Meals published in August 2007, and requested that future six-monthly update reports be presented in an appropriate format such as a traffic light system, to allow for easy readability and to include:

1. An action plan setting out:
 - recommendations
 - delivery objectives
 - progress to date including additional data on:
 - timescales
 - availability of resource
 - resource implications of delivery.
2. Data on costs and prices of meals across the county, number of free school meals claimed and the number of primary children taking their own lunches to school.

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.

The Committee agreed the following items for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Core Work Programme for 2008/09:

- Narrowing the Gap
- Educational Attainment
- Business Plan
- Holding the Executive to Account.

8. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 1.30 p.m.