

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 January 2013

Present: Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors D Dodd C Povall
P Doughty W Smith
P Hayes P Williams
B Mooney W Smith

Deputy: Councillor J Salter (in place of J Crabtree)

Co-opted: Mrs N Smith

48 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and to state the nature of such interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with the item to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

No such declarations were made.

49 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 and 12 November and 3 December, 2012.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings of 7 and 12 November and 3 December, 2012 be approved as a correct record.

50 CABINET EXTRACT 20 DECEMBER 2012 BUDGET 2013/16 - INITIAL PROPOSALS

The Committee were invited to consider the following savings options agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 December, 2012 (minute 144 refers) and which fell under the remit of this Committee.

Budget Option	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	Total £000	Requires formal staff
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					consultation
Connexions – reduce contract costs	700	300	0	1,000	No
Transfer of PFI affordability gap to Schools Budget	0	0	2,300	2,300	No
Transfer PPM to Schools Budget	250	200	0	450	No
Academies charges for services	60	0	0	60	No
School Improvements	100	0	0	100	No
Senior Management Re-structure					
- Directors/Heads of Service	1,000	0	0	1,000	Yes
- All managers above PO1	2,792	0	0	2,792	Yes
Closure of Acre Lane & Municipal Building	0	0	458	458	No
Deletion of vacant posts					
- Education Psychologists	80	0	0	80	No

In respect of school improvements the Acting Director referred to the recent Ofsted survey on 8 and 9 January and the exceptionally positive report. With regard to the closure of Acre Lane this saving was not in respect of the services provided but about the building, the department would be exploring how to deliver the services provided in different ways. The deletion of the currently vacant Education Psychologist post would not affect the Council in fulfilling its statutory function with this saving.

Resolved – That the Cabinet minute 144 be noted.

51 **LOCAL RESPONSE TO TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) AND CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING FROM HOME/CARE**

The Acting Director of Children’s Services submitted a report which advised Members of the local response to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), lead by Wirral Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). Following national concern about cases of child exploitation in Rochdale, which resulted in criminal convictions of nine men involved in a network of abuse in 2012, the Government asked LSCBs to scope ‘the nature and extent of the problem and assess how well they are responding’. WSCB action plan was attached as an appendix to the report as well as the Local Government Association (LGA) information entitled ‘Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE): Key Questions for Lead Members for Children’s Services’ which was referenced in the report.

Responding to comments from Members Caroline McKenna, Strategic Service Manager, Safeguarding Children, informed the meeting that there was now an improved response to interviews for children returning home with up to 45 per cent consenting to be interviewed by Barnardo’s. Various link agencies were involved in the media campaign and there was a multi-agency approach to the issue with all partners engaged. There was a need to make sure that schools and parents had a better awareness.

Resolved – That the LSCB action plan and the work already undertaken in this area be noted.

52 CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

The Acting Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated the Committee about the actions being taken by the Child and Family Poverty Working Group, the independent advisory forum established in 2010 for the purpose of informing the development and implementation of Wirral's strategy and action plan. The Working Group had agreed a number of actions to progress the development of its action plan.

Responding to comments from Members, Jane Morgan, informed the meeting that she and the Chief Executive, along with other officers had met with local church leaders who could offer help and support. A lot of work was being undertaken within the City Region which would be fed back as part of the national consultation on measuring child poverty. The Council did engage with the National Child Poverty Unit which fed back to the Government on child poverty.

The Acting Director stated that there were representatives from each political party on the Child Poverty Action Working Group and the work programme was linking in with the City Region. The Council did support the work of foodbanks but the issue of the need for foodbanks was one for individual political parties to have a view on.

Some Members expressed the view of the need to educate some people in the community to spend money wisely.

Resolved – That the Committee notes the report.

53 REVIEW OF ATTAINMENT & PROGRESS AT THE END OF KEY STAGE 4

The Acting Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided a summary of the standards attained at the end of Key Stage 4 for 2012.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

54 NARROWING THE GAP AT KEY STAGE 4

The Acting Director of Children's Services submitted a report which summarised the progress made in reducing the attainment gap at key stage 4 between pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) and pupils not eligible for free school meals (non-FSM).

The main indicator for the attainment gap had narrowed at KS4 by nearly 5 per cent from 2011 and continued a positive downward trend from previous years. On average pupils in receipt of FSM performed well against national averages, whilst their non-FSM peers performed exceptionally well against national comparisons, thus leading to a wider gap than nationally.

The report went on to explain why the attainment gap persists in that Schools reported that the targets they set for pupils were, to a very large extent, based on the pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 2. This practice was now believed to be almost universal across the country. Pupils in receipt of FSM attained less well at KS2 than

non-FSM pupils (as, indeed, they did at every stage of education). Therefore targets that used KS2 results as a starting point inevitably included a bias against pupils in receipt of FSM, resulting in them having lower GCSE targets.

This had the unavoidable consequence of setting targets to inadvertently generate an attainment gap (assuming that pupils achieve their targets). Pupils in receipt of FSM did not show up on schools' tracking and monitoring systems as often as they needed to if the gap was to be closed – because in general they were being tracked and monitored against lower targets and were found to be on track to meet these lower targets.

If the gap was to be finally eradicated it was an essential requirement that pupils in receipt of FSM, as a group, were set targets which equalled those of non-FSM pupils. To support this requirement the local authority had developed a target-setting system which automatically generated pupil-level targets that, on average, were equal for both groups.

In addition, the system indicated the stages pupils needed to be at in order to meet their targets. This in itself would address both findings simultaneously. When pupils in receipt of FSM had higher targets than they would otherwise have had, they were more likely, in the early stages of their secondary education, to be performing below the level needed to achieve the targets. This, through schools' tracking and monitoring systems, would flag up those pupils for extra support to get them back on track.

Three schools had volunteered to participate in the Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) project, which was a trial of the target-setting process with their current Year 7 and 8 cohorts. The first data indicating the progress of the FSM cohort would be available in late January and, by summer term, a clear picture should emerge as to whether the pilot was having the expected consequences.

While the final attainment gap for these pupils would not be known until 2016 and 2017, the live data provided by the schools over this academic year would enable the local authority to judge the likely success of the RADY project.

Responding to comments from Members Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager (Secondary), stated that schools did do a lot for FSM pupils including subsidising of trips and referred to the need for schools to act with sensitivity in not identifying FSM pupils.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the Committee looks forward to hearing more about the RADY project.

55 METRO CATERING INCOME PROCEDURES - AUDIT ACTIONS

Following an audit of Metro Catering's procedures for the management of meal income, it was requested by the Audit and Risk Management Committee at its meeting on 26 November, 2012 (minute 39 refers) that a progress report be presented to inform them of the actions taken to address the issues identified in the

report, it was also requested that this report be considered by the CYP Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The report of the Acting Director of Children's Services included proposed actions which would promote the Council's priorities to implement its Improvement Plan.

Resolved – That the actions following the audit recommendations, be noted.

56 **INTENSIVE FAMILY INTERVENTION PROGRAMME (IFIP)**

The Acting Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the progress achieved in establishing and implementing the Intensive Families Intervention Programme (IFIP), a targeted, multi-agency service for families with multiple and complex needs.

The report gave details of the criteria used to identify a troubled family. In Wirral it was expected that work would be undertaken with 900 families between now and 31 March 2015 to improve school attendance, reduce criminal/anti-social behaviour and raise aspirations regarding employment and training. The report also outlined the first phase of the project being undertaken with families in the Seacombe area and where the second phase would be extended to, partnership working and IFIP Board membership.

The Acting Director responding to comments from Members informed the Committee that the Council would want to build on this approach for family support in Wirral for the future.

It was suggested that a report be brought back to update the Committee on how the project was progressing at a suitable stage after July.

Resolved – That this Committee having considered the information in the report and satisfied themselves that this new initiative is being developed and implemented in a manner which is beneficial for the council and its partners, and that it will promote good outcomes for the children and parents in families with multiple and complex problems.

57 **RAISING PARTICIPATION AGE 2013 AND 2015**

The report of the Acting Director of Children's Services outlined the progress made in relation to the 14-19 Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) Plan 2012/13. Delivery of RPA was a statutory duty for Council's across England and the duty would impact on current year 11 pupils who would have to stay in education or training during the academic year in which they turned 17 (2013/14).

The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training to the end of the academic year in which young people turned 17 from 2013 and to at least their 18th birthday from 2015. This was in response to the need for the United Kingdom to develop a more highly skilled workforce to compete internationally in a fast changing global economy. In addition there was the desire to create a fairer and more equal society by dealing with the consequences of leaving education or training at the age of only 16, recognising the

strong correlation between being NEET (not in education, employment or training) and engaging in risky behaviour, having poor health and low income.

Resolved – That this Committee notes the report and the progress being made in preparation for 2013.

58 APPROVED SCHEME OF DELEGATION - CONTRACTS EXCEEDING £50,000

The Acting Director of Children's Services reported, in accordance with the Contracts Procedure Rules, on those instances where he had exercised his delegated authority to accept tenders and to appoint contractors. The contracts were in respect of a range of services, including:

Capital contracts
Out of Authority Placements
Children's Residential Care Placements
Contracts for Supply of Hired Vehicles

Resolved – That the report be noted.

59 'OUTCOMES OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN' SCRUTINY REVIEW PROGRESS REPORT

A report of the Looked After Children Scrutiny Panel Members provided an update on the progress of the scrutiny review including a draft scoping document and methods for evidence gathering.

Resolved –

(1) That the Committee agrees that an in-depth scrutiny review regarding the outcomes for Looked after Children should be undertaken.

(2) A Task and Finish Group will be formed to undertake the review. The membership of the Group will be:

**Councillor Wendy Clements (Chair)
Councillor Walter Smith
Councillor Pat Williams**

(3) The Scope for the Looked After Children Scrutiny Review, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and the progress to date be noted.

60 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its current work programme.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

61 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee had been invited to review the Forward Plan prior to the meeting in order for it to consider, having regard to the Committee's work programme, whether

scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

62 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR**

Responding to a Member's query the Acting Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that a report on commissioning proposals would be taken to the Cabinet meeting on 18 February, 2013. The timetable for the proposals would be linked to the officer budget options.

The Chair commented that the meeting was Mrs Nikki Smith's last as Parent Governor Representative as her current term of office was finishing on 8 February, 2013.

Resolved – That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to Mrs N Smith for her work on the Committee.