

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Clarke (Chair)	
	Councillors	F Doyle T Harney K Hayes P Hayes	C Povall W Smith A Taylor
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	J Salter (for J George) A Jones (for PA Smith)	
<u>In attendance:</u>		Mr R Neale	Mrs J Owens
<u>Apologies</u>		Mr M Clarke	Mrs J Kearney

58 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.

Councillors Taylor and Jones declared personal interests in minute 69 (Committee Referral – Draft Protocol – Scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) by virtue of their membership of the CDRP.

59 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January, 2010.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January, 2010, be approved as a correct record.

60 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Richard Neale, who was attending his first meeting as the new co-opted Church of England Diocesan representative.

The Chair expressed her thanks on behalf of the Committee for all the work of the previous C of E Diocesan representative, Mrs Margaret Liddy, and stated that a letter of thanks had been sent to Mrs Liddy on behalf of the Committee.

61 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL UPDATE

The Director of Children's Services provided an update on the progress made in the development of the Wirral Children in Care Council, and also submitted the first Children in Care Council Annual Report which set out achievements over the first year of the Council and the future work plan.

The cost of running the Children in Care Council for 2010/11 had been estimated at £5,000 for which the appropriate budget had been identified. This cost included making payment to the Children in Care Council members, training, and team building activities for the young people.

Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, introduced 4 of the young people who were members of the Children in Care Council, Amanda, Kim, Philip and Martin and they gave a brief update on the report, other activities, future actions and the pledge, copies of which were circulated to the Committee.

Fiona O'Shaughnessy, Children's Involvement Officer, and Julia Hassall responded to Members' comments and informed the Committee that membership of the Council would be 12 – 15 members. Younger people in the 8-12 years of age bracket were consulted with but they were also conscious of the need for more involvement and this was being progressed.

Resolved – That this Committee notes and formally accepts the pledge and as corporate parents of young people in care the Committee promises to do its best in making their experience the best.

62 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT 0-19 COMMISSIONING

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which responded to the recommendations made at the meeting of the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2009, convened to consider the call-in of the 0-19 Parenting and Prevention Commissioning process. Members had identified a number of areas for development to be learnt and specifically requested a report in due course on the outcome of the LINK Forums review of the procurement process.

Regular meetings with the LINK Forum took place to ensure continuous joint learning, and a joint conference was scheduled for July. The Director highlighted the fact that improvements had been made as evidenced by the Aiming High for Disabled Children commissioning process. Clear documentation, adequate timescales, and full parental engagement in the panel process, along with partner agencies, including the VCF sector, had resulted in a range of new services being delivered which had received universally positive feedback from children and carers. A presentation had been made to the Committee about Aiming High and this was positively received. It was intended that a further report would be presented in June, 2010.

Members commented upon the report and welcomed the improvements to the commissioning and procurement process, in particular the new electronic system for tendering and quotations (known as The Chest). This system would allow existing and potential suppliers to view forthcoming contract opportunities for Wirral and other Councils in the North West. The CYPD Contracts Team had been briefed about this new process.

Resolved – That the officers be thanked for the report and that the report be noted.

63 **YOUTH OUTREACH SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services submitted an update on the positive progress that had been made with the suggested recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel into Youth Outreach following submission of the review to the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2008.

The majority of the recommendations had been responded to through improved partnership working and through changes to service delivery. This included the commissioning of four Hubs in Birkenhead, Wallasey, South Wirral and West Wirral, which were due to be launched this month with opening nights to include Fridays and Saturdays. There would also be nine smaller satellite clubs open for three nights a week.

The Director also gave details of a number of structural changes which had been made to the Children and Young People's Department and the Department for Regeneration including the transfer of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Youth Offending Service to the Participation and Inclusion Branch. Other recommendations had been considered as part of team plans and would be responded to over longer time periods.

Responding to Members' comments Peter Edmondson, Head of Participation and Inclusion, stated that there would always be some gaps in coverage across the whole of the Borough but work was being undertaken with transport colleagues to increase the opportunities for young people to access this provision at both hubs and satellites. The soon to be launched new website would also help in engagement and giving young people information on all the opportunities available.

Restorative justice had had an impact in helping to reduce re-offending levels. There was also real opportunity to increase outreach work and to map out the services provided by the voluntary and faith sectors.

Resolved – That the progress with coordinating and partnership working be noted alongside structural changes which include the development of Youth Hubs and the transfer of the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Youth Offending Service to the Participation and Inclusion Branch.

64 **PRESENTATION ON THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2009/10**

Nancy Clarkson, Head of Planning and Performance, gave a presentation on the third quarter performance report and upon key projects which were relevant to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

She gave details of what was working well, including:

- This year's GCSE and A-level results had shown that Wirral students had, once again, performed better than ever – achieving results way above the national average.
- The performance of pupils for who English was an additional language had improved consistently over the last 4 years.
- 100% of schools were engaged in the one to one tuition programme, a pool of tutors had been recruited to deliver this.
- Aimed at 14-19 year olds, a brand new way of learning was underway in Wirral with the introduction of eight new diploma lines in September 2009.
- Due to the success of the 117 new apprentice positions created in local companies, 22% were taken up by previously NEET (Not in education, employment or training) young people, funding for 50 additional places had been agreed.
- 86.7% of children adopted had been placed within 12 months of the decision being made.
- Targets exceeded at quarter three for the stability of placements of looked after children.
- Partnership funding had been secured for the Local Safeguarding Children Board. A new business manager was in post and a new independent chair had been recruited.
- Teenage conception rates for Wirral were showing a steady decline. This was against the national and regional trend. Wirral being one of two areas included in a Government Office national press statement as an area demonstrating significant improvement.

In her presentation Nancy Clarkson also referred to key performance issues and key risks including the progress being made with the transfer of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) duties to the Local Authority. Also, phase two of the academies project was at risk due to sponsorship and school selection issues. This had since been mitigated with a refreshed report to Cabinet on 14 January and progress was being made with a revised replacement Academy for Park High and Rock Ferry.

In respect of the financial position, it was forecast that there would be an overall balanced position at the year-end.

The Director elaborated upon the success of the apprenticeship scheme and the numbers of young NEETs in employment compared with other authority areas.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

65 **MUSIC SERVICE**

Further to minute 55b (21/1/10) the Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the current Instrumental Music Service provision, together with an overview of funding and the latest financial position.

There were three key ways in which the Music Service acted as provider:

- (i) Traditional provision: Direct individual or group tuition funded by parents/carers.

- (ii) Pupils who attended ensembles and paid separately but who did not have Music Service tuition in their schools.
- (iii) Wider Opportunities tuition: There were 1,500+ pupils undertaking tuition either under this national initiative or where the school paid the Music Service directly for regular instrumental tuition or the delivery of curriculum music in the school.

As of February 2010, the total number of pupils benefiting from the Music Service was approximately 3,900. This was an increase of 350 pupils on the previous year.

The music service had an expenditure budget of £1.3m. This was funded from a combination of Standards Fund Grant, parental charges and other income. In 2009-10 there was a projected budget overspend of £100,000. Although parental income would meet the budget target, there was a shortfall in income from schools. In addition, staff costs would exceed the agreed budget, a result of current tuition requirements and sickness supply cover. The department continued to work to identify budget solutions that were sustainable in the longer term.

Marie Lawrence, Strategic Service Manager, and Andrew Roberts, Principal Officer - Finance, responded to Members' comments and explained the budget for the service including the method of invoicing and also the operation of the fourth music centre, BeMu, at Wirral Grammar for Girls, which was not run by the music service.

Members expressed their appreciation of the service and the value for money it provided.

Resolved – That the report be noted and a further report be brought back to a future meeting.

66 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on its work programme, which included the proposed outline meeting schedule for the next meeting scheduled for June, and progress on the “Narrowing the gap” – Impact of deprivation funding’ scrutiny review.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

67 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

68 **OFFICERS' VISITS TO WIRRAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT CHILDREN'S HOMES**

The Director of Children's Services reported on visits carried out by officers under Regulation 33 of the Care Standards Regulations over the period 1 April 2009 to 31 December 2009.

Russ Tattersall, Service Manager, introduced the report which informed members that Independent Reviewing Officers from the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit had visited each home on a monthly basis and all officers' visits had taken place on time during this period.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

69 **COMMITTEE REFERRAL - DRAFT PROTOCOL - SCRUTINY OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, submitted a referral from the Scrutiny Programme Board (minute 50 – 4/3/2010) of the draft scrutiny protocol for the scrutiny of Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

Resolved – That the draft scrutiny protocol for the scrutiny of Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership be endorsed.

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

The Chair referred to the Consultative Committee for the Visually Impaired Service, which Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met with some of its members prior to the meeting commencing.

The group, which was aimed at supporting the Visually Impaired Service throughout the Wirral, supported and monitored visually impaired children in mainstream schools, in three vision bases and also in the special schools. The group, which had amalgamated with the Paediatric Eyecare Group (PEG) in October 2006, met three times a year. There were three representatives of the Council on the group and Councillor Harney attended regularly.

The group felt that it was very important that specialist multi-agency and service user groups for children with hearing and visual impairment met on a regular basis to improve and monitor services across the Wirral.

It was also suggested that the representation on the group be examined and this be addressed in a further report to the Committee.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the matter of representation be brought to a future meeting and an annual report from the Paediatric Eyecare Group (PEG) be submitted to the Committee.

(3) That the Committee expresses its thanks to the PEG for all its work and they be assured that their views will be taken into account in future.

71 **VOTE OF THANKS**

As it was the last meeting of the municipal year, the Committee expressed its thanks to the Chair for her chairing of the Committee over the past 12 months and also thanked the officers for all their work.