

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 March 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	C Meaden (Chair)	
	Councillors	W Clements K Hayes P Hayes T Harney A McArdle	C Povall T Smith W Smith P Williams
<u>Co-opted Member:</u>		J Owens	
<u>Apologies</u>		A Scott	

52 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.

Councillor P Hayes declared a prejudicial interest in minute 55 (Scrutiny Review of Access to Alcohol by Young People) by virtue of him deputising at the forthcoming Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee on Monday 21 March which would be considering a report, 'Consultation – Minimum Price for Alcohol'.

Councillor C Meaden declared a personal general interest because of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department.

53 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that she had received the resignation of Richard Neale, Church of England Diocesan representative, and that she had written to him to thank him for his work on the Committee. The diocese would notify the Authority as soon as a replacement was found.

54 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meetings of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January and 16 and 24 February, 2011.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 26 January and 16 and 24 February, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

55 **PRESENTATION ON THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2010/11**

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

She gave details of what was working well and also of key performance issues which had not met their targets and key risks including:

- The implementation of Council budget savings, management of the early voluntary retirement and severance schemes and changes in human resources procedures would have the potential to impact on the levels of service delivery across the Department's responsibilities. This would require careful management to minimise volatile service delivery, reduced Service Level Agreement take up and income from schools, reputation issues and to ensure continued focus on critical issues.
- The need to review and re-state the relevant PFI contractual documentation in respect of the Birkenhead University Academy occupying the current Park High School was a risk in respect of the turnaround required. This problematic situation also applied to other PFI schools moving to Academy status.
- Every effort was being taken to ensure negotiations regarding the Greater Merseyside Connexions contract did not result in disruptions to continuity in service provision.

In respect of the financial position, the latest projected budget variation was £1.3m (a reduction from £1.8m previously reported). There had been further increases in residential care, adoption and projected court and legal costs. Residential care placements (48 at 31st December 2010) had exceeded the target of 39, as did the numbers of agency foster placements.

Responding to comments from Members, the Interim Director stated that staffing was regarded as a risk as the Department needed to ensure that any changes made would have minimal impact. Out of the 327 taking EVR or voluntary severance only 27 of these were in the Children's Social Care Branch. He also elaborated on the negotiations which were ongoing in respect of the Connexions contract.

The Interim Director reported that the National Strategy Programme for schools and a number of other initiatives were coming to an end in March, but with falling rolls in secondary schools it was the intention to continue providing the same level of service to schools even with a reduction in staffing levels. Packages of support would be designed in partnership with schools, the Department's role being as a co-ordinator with advisory teachers and other staff being seconded as much as had happened in the past.

The Interim Director stated that he would bring a report to the September meeting of the Committee on the restructure of the Department which included a reduction in the number of branches from 4 to 3.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

56 **COMMITTEE REFERRAL - SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ACCESS TO ALCOHOL BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN WIRRAL**

(Councillor P Hayes, having declared a prejudicial interest (see minute 52 ante) left the meeting whilst this item was considered.)

The Chair introduced and commended the report on the Alcohol Scrutiny Review which had been referred by the Scrutiny Programme Board on 5 January, 2011 (minute 44 refers) to a number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The review had been managed by the Scrutiny Programme Board due to the cross-cutting nature of the topic and the impact on a number of areas such as health, young people, anti-social behaviour / community safety, trading standards and licensing.

The Panel of 4 Members, chaired by Councillor Dave Mitchell together with Councillors Sue Taylor, Chris Meaden and Ann Bridson had focussed its review on “access to alcohol by young people in Wirral” due to the high profile and significance of excessive drinking among young people.

The report gave details of the main issues for review which had been identified in the scope document. The Panel had used a number of methods to gather evidence for the review, including meetings with key officers, visits to local communities accompanied by Youth Outreach Workers and written evidence. The final report contained eleven recommendations, which would be presented to Cabinet on 17 March.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report giving their own personal insight into some of the issues raised. The need for multi-agency partnership working involving young people was acknowledged and the need to change the attitudes of some adults. The Interim Director welcomed the reference in the report to the outreach work being undertaken by his department.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

57 **APPROVED SCHEME OF DELEGATION - CONTRACTS EXCEEDING £50,000**

The Interim 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:

- Out-of-authority placements
- Children’s residential care placements
- Safeguarding for children and young people

Resolved – That the report be noted.

58 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on its work programme.

The Chair referred to the “Narrowing the gap” – Impact of deprivation funding’ scrutiny review, and suggested that this be carried forward to the work programme for the Committee in the new municipal year together with the proposed scrutiny review of work at Oaklands (minute 47 (26/1/11) refers).

Resolved – That the report and suggestions of the Chair be noted.

59 **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.

60 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR**

The Chair informed the Committee of a number of items of urgent business which needed consideration prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

1. Ofsted Inspection

The Interim Director of Children’s Services gave a brief summary of the Ofsted inspection into safeguarding of children and its services for children in care (looked after children) which had been published on Friday, 11 March, following an inspection undertaken in January and February. The Ofsted report stated that the leadership, management and partnership working were ‘outstanding’ and that services for children and young people in both areas were ‘good’ with a ‘good’ capacity to improve further.

He reported that he would bring the report to the next meeting and would arrange for its circulation to Committee members. The Committee asked that its congratulations be conveyed to all the staff in the Department.

2. Falling Rolls

In respect of this item, the Chair declared a personal interest on behalf of all Committee members who were governors of secondary schools.

The Interim Director gave a breakdown of the falling rolls for secondary schools over the next 4 years as follows:

- 2011 – 418
- 2012 – 397
- 2013 – 362
- 2014 – 327

In September 2011, out of the 4210 places available in Year 7 in secondary schools the intake would be 3451 pupils a gap of 759 places. Of the 22 secondary schools, 11 were within 10 or less of their admission number, 4 were 15 or more outside their admission number and 7 had 50 or more places available.

The Interim Director alerted the Committee to the possibility of potential redundancies within schools and outlined the budgetary implications, although with schools having only just received their budgets a more detailed picture would emerge in the next few weeks. He stated that he would be happy to bring a report to the next meeting.

3. Pay harmonisation

At the request of the Chair, the Interim Director reported upon the latest situation in respect of pay harmonisation and gave details of the funding available and the ongoing work to broker a solution and address the issue of back pay which included seeking a majority view from the Schools Forum. A report on the issue would be considered by the Cabinet on 17 March.

4. Commissioning

The Interim Director gave an update in respect of commissioning. With tender documents going out shortly, due back in early May, new contracts were due to be in place in June.

The Committee also expressed its thanks to Simon Garner, Caroline McKenna and Tracey Coffey, Strategic Services Managers within the Children and Young People's Department, for their very informative training session on child protection and children in residential care which they had given to Committee members on 7 March.