

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 1 June 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Clarke (Chair)	
	Councillors	W Clements J Crabtree D Dodd P Hayes	B Mooney C Povall T Smith W Smith
<u>Deputy:</u>	Councillor	A Brighthouse (in place of Mrs P M Williams)	
<u>Co-opted:</u>		Mr A Scott	Mrs J Kearney
<u>Apologies</u>		Mrs J Owens	

## 1 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 C Povall declared a personal interest in minute 7 (Secondary School Places – Demographic Update) by virtue of her daughter's employment.

Councillor S Clarke declared a personal interest in minute 7 (Secondary School Places – Demographic Update) by virtue of her daughter's employment.

Councillor A Brighthouse declared a personal interest in minute 7 (Secondary School Places – Demographic Update) by virtue of his wife's employment.

Councillor J Crabtree declared a personal interest in minute 6 (Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection Report) by virtue of him being a foster carer.

## 2 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 March, 2011.

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of 15 March, 2011 be approved as a correct record.**

**3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Committee was asked to consider if it wanted to appoint a Vice-Chair.

On a motion by Councillor Povall, seconded by Councillor Clements, it was –

**Resolved - That Councillor P Hayes be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee.**

**4 EQUALITY FRAMEWORK - REFERRAL FROM SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD**

Further to minute 56 (Scrutiny Programme Board – 2/3/2011) Jacqui Cross, Corporate Equality and Cohesion Manager, gave a presentation on the Equality Duty 2010 to ensure that Members were fully equipped to provide effective scrutiny in the areas identified as being necessary for Excellent accreditation by the summer of 2012.

Jacqui Cross outlined the requirements of the new Equality Duty and highlighted the general and specific duties contained within it together with the timetable for the publication of workforce and service information and specific and measurable equality objectives.

With regard to the Government's Equality Strategy for a Fairer Britain she highlighted some specific areas relevant to the work of this Committee such as:

- Safeguarding / protection
- Poverty / disadvantage
- Education attainment levels
- Special education needs / disabilities
- Hate crime / incidents
- 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training
- Access to alcohol by young people
- Early intervention services
- Health and well-being
- Children in care / care leavers
- Anti-social behaviour

Jacqui Cross then referred in particular to the role of scrutiny to demonstrate that the Council had met its general and specific duties and was able to demonstrate improvements and outcomes as a result of its equality objectives.

Responding to questions from Members she informed the Committee that the Equality and Human Rights Commission were responsible for monitoring and every organisation would be expected to have information available on their websites.

**Resolved – That Jacqui Cross be thanked for her presentation on progress made to date with regard to the Equality Framework for Local Government and Equality Duty 2010.**

## 5 PRESENTATION ON FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2010/11

Nancy Clarkson, Head of Planning and Performance, gave a presentation on the fourth quarter performance 2010/11 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 impact of Council budget savings, the early voluntary retirement and severance schemes required careful management to minimise volatile service delivery, maintain reputational issues and to ensure continued focus on critical issues.
- The need to review and re-state the relevant Private Finance Initiative (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 Merseyside Connexions contract did not result in disruptions to continuity in service provision.
- The transition of schools to academies was being managed to ensure that officers, elected members, governors and public bodies understood the implications of schools becoming independent and were aware of the implications for individual schools and for the Local Authority in the provision of some central services.

In respect of the financial position the year end accounts were currently being prepared and would be subject to audit, it was anticipated that departmental variations would result in a budget overspend of £1.4m. Budget pressures previously reported throughout the year included residential and foster care, where the number and cost of placements had not reduced as anticipated. Despite stringent expenditure controls and significant reductions in other parts of the department's budget, it had not been possible to offset these costs in full. The revenue out-turn and variations would be reported in more detail to Cabinet in June.

Responding to comments from Members, Nancy Clarkson commented on the change in performance indicators which had not met their targets, although there were also some which had remained below target from 12 months previously. She also outlined some variations in targets which could make them more challenging year on year.

**Resolved – That the presentation be noted.**

## 6 SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN INSPECTION REPORT

Further to minute 60 (15/3/11) the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which summarised the outcome of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection which was undertaken by OFSTED between 24 January and 4 February 2011.

The inspection was led by a Lead Inspector with 3 Inspectors, a shadow Inspector and an Inspector from the Care Quality Commission who inspected health services. The inspection took evidence from a number of sources. These included discussions with children and young people and their families who received services, social workers and their front-line managers and senior officers including the Interim Head of Safeguarding, the Head of Branch for Children's Social Care, the Interim Director for Children's Services, and the then Interim Chief Executive. Elected Members and a range of community representatives were also seen by the inspection team.

The inspectors undertook a structured review of 20 case files and also evidence from a further 29 randomly selected cases. They also reviewed a number of documents, reports and procedures. This enabled the inspection team to form a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken.

The report gave a summary of the OFSTED report and the grades received in each area, 13 being 'good', 6 'outstanding' and 3 'adequate'. The inspection report gave a number of areas for development including three within the Safeguarding part and four within the Looked After Children part of the inspection.

A detailed action plan had been drawn up by the department encompassing the areas for development and also additional actions extracted from the body of the OFSTED report, which would support the continuous improvement journey to make the transition to outstanding, in all areas. This action plan would be developed in team and Branch plans and would be monitored on a monthly basis by the department. Progress on the action plan would also be reported to the Council's Safeguarding Reference Group.

Responding to comments from Members, both Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care and Tracey Coffey, Strategic Services Manager, outlined the existing audit framework and the processes involved in auditing cases including themed audits. In respect of the IT requirements, there were a number of providers of Integrated Children's systems with each having their own strengths / weaknesses. It would be dependent on the Government's response to the Munro Review of Child Protection as to what system they would recommend on a national level. The Interim Director commented that the department was somewhat off from bringing forward proposals for a new system.

Members expressed their congratulations to everybody involved for such an excellent inspection report and the Chair expressed her personal thanks particularly in respect of partnership working.

On a motion by the Chair, duly seconded, it was –

**Resolved –**

**(1) That this Committee notes the positive and successful outcome of the inspection by OFSTED and the action plan which has been produced to meet the areas for development and thanks all the staff involved.**

**(2) That the Action Plan be accepted and a further report be brought to the November meeting.**

## 7 **SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES - DEMOGRAPHIC UPDATE**

Further to minute 60 (15/3/11) the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided updated information on current and projected changes in the roll of Wirral's secondary schools. The report also discussed the potential implications of the falling roll, with particular reference to budgetary and staffing implications in the current year.

The Interim Director referred to the growth of Academies among Wirral's school provision which had a potentially significant impact on the Authority's ability to produce full and accurate demographic projections for Wirral pupils. Academies were independent maintained schools who submitted census and other pupil information directly to the Academies and Specialist Schools division of the DfE, rather than via the Local Authority. Officers were in the process of drawing up a data sharing agreement for use with schools converting to Academy status which would allow the Authority access to pupil data in line with all other school types.

There were now 3 academy schools on Wirral, the University Academy of Birkenhead, Birkenhead High School Academy for Girls and St Anselm's Academy. More secondary schools were likely to convert later this year which could mean that over half of secondary schools could be of Academy status.

Responding to comments from Members, Mark Parkinson, Head of Learning and Achievement, reported that some schools looking to convert to Academy status also wanted to provide sixth forms and it was unclear at the moment how this would happen. He acknowledged that with falling rolls there would still be too many secondary schools in Wirral and that it would be largely down to parental choice and market forces which schools may eventually close.

The Chair remarked that in respect of the financial implications for the authority of redundancies in schools some local authorities had said that with a lack of funds the schools would have to pay these costs themselves.

**Resolved – That the new demographic information in relation to Wirral secondary schools be noted and a further update report be brought to the Committee later in the year.**

## 8 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2011-12**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a copy of the Children and Young People's Department Departmental Plan which underpinned the delivery of the Council's priorities as defined in the Corporate Plan. The Plan included:

- A departmental overview
- Activities to be delivered in 2011-12
- A financial plan
- A workforce plan
- A section on equality and diversity
- Central Government reporting requirements
- A departmental risk register

**Resolved – That the Children and Young People’s Department Departmental Plan for 2011-12 be noted.**

**9 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

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

**10 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair made a number of suggestions for the Committee’s work programme for the forthcoming municipal year, including:

- A report on Oaklands to the September meeting.
- Following consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 June, 2011 of the report, ‘Early Intervention Grants – Outcome of Commissioning’ a report looking at the lessons learnt, what worked well and what didn’t be brought to the September meeting.

She suggested that the “Narrowing the gap” – Impact of deprivation funding’ scrutiny review had now lapsed so much that this be deleted from the work programme.

The Chair also referred to the need to plan ahead for the Youth Parliament which met each October and suggested that the Executive Youth Board could be asked, through the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee, to do a report on how they could be involved in planning for the 2012 Youth Parliament, and a report be brought to the November or January meeting.

A Member referred to the Government Green Paper on Special Educational Needs and suggested that a report be brought to the September meeting on the Authority’s response. He also suggested that it would be worthwhile for the Committee to revisit the Literacy Review and a report be brought to a meeting in the Autumn on progress with the recommendations.

**Resolved – That the suggestions of the Committee be noted.**

**11 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.**

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

The Chair agreed to consideration of the following item of urgent business, in view of the need for appointments to be made prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee were requested to appoint the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee for 2011/12.

**Resolved – That the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee for 2011/12 comprise the following members, Councillors Sheila Clarke (Chair), Tony Smith and Pat Williams, together with the diocesan and parent governor representatives and the remaining Committee members serving as deputies.**