

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 September 2011

Present:

Councillor S Clarke (Chair)

Councillors	W Clements	C Povall
	J Crabtree	T Smith
	D Dodd	W Smith
	P Hayes	P Williams
	B Mooney	Smith

Co-opted:

Mrs N Smith

Apologies

Mrs J Kearney
Mr A Scott

Mrs J Owens

13 **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and in particular Mrs Nicola Smith, who was attending her first meeting as a new Parent Governor Co-opted member.

The Chair also referred to apologies received from Mrs Jacqui Kearney, whose term of office as Parent Governor Representative would finish in October and read out an email she had received from Jacqui in which she had expressed her appreciation for being involved in the Committee. The Chair had written to her to thank her for all her work with the Committee over the last four years.

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

14 **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 J Crabtree declared a personal interest in minute 21 (Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection Update) by virtue of him being a foster carer.

Councillor S Clarke declared a personal interest in minute 19 (Government's Green Paper on Special Educational Needs and Disability) and minute 22 (Adoption Service

Report on Inspection) by virtue of a personal family interest and her membership of the Adoption Panel respectively.

15 **MINUTES**

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 June, 2011.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of 1 June, 2011 be approved as a correct record.

16 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S BUDGET ISSUES 2012/13**

The Interim Director of Children's Services reported that as part of the 2012/13 Budget Consultation process Cabinet were asking Scrutiny Committees to consider the functions within their portfolio and offer suggestions as to how to close the estimated £25 million budget gap and limit any Council Tax increase in 2012/13. The responses would be considered along with the responses from the other engagement processes to inform the budget setting process. Further consultation would be undertaken regarding any specific service changes.

Appendices to the report were submitted which gave details of the key issues and challenges facing the Department which had an indicative departmental budget of £71.9m. Budget simulator information was also included for each service area giving a brief service description and the likely consequences of reducing the budget by 10%, 20% or 50% together with the consequences of an increase by 5%.

The Interim Director gave a presentation to the Committee on the current year budget pressures of £5.9m and the reductions identified so far which totalled £4.95m, a balance of £950,000. The Department's notional pro rata share of the £25m funding gap in 2012/13 was likely to be around £5m, with similar gaps in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

With the permission of the Chair the Leader of the Conservative Group addressed the Committee and commented that with the pressures on the residential care for looked after children budget would it not be better if this budget were held centrally because of the Council's corporate parenting role rather than being applied to the Department.

A Member suggested the need for a detailed report highlighting Cabinet proposals, including potential savings prior to the start of any consultation period. The Interim Director commented that he had not been required to produce any formal proposals for next year's budget as yet and he understood the Chief Executive would be looking at this.

It was then moved by Councillor Mrs P Williams, seconded by Councillor P Hayes and –

Resolved (6:5 on the Chair's casting vote) –

(1) That this Committee will consider setting a date for a special meeting to consider Cabinet led suggestions highlighting potential savings.

(2) That Committee requests that any such reports are produced with the in-depth detail required to make informed decisions and that reports are produced within timescales that allows Members to raise queries before the date of a special meeting.

17 RESTRICTURE OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT

The Interim Director of Children's Services reported upon the changes within his Department following the Early Voluntary Retirement and Voluntary Severance exercise (EVR/VS), and the restructure of the Department. The changes also took account of the transfer of the Transport Service that was previously provided by the Department for Adult Social Services and the Technical Services Department.

The restructure of the Department from four branch service areas to three had meant that services provided by the Participation and Inclusion Branch had been transferred into the three remaining branches of Children's Social Care, Learning and Achievement and Planning and Resources.

Responding to comments from Members, the Interim Director acknowledged that the loss of 312 staff through EVR / VS had had some impact but that all statutory expectations were being met. He was grateful to those staff in the department who had taken on additional duties and responsibilities. With regard to waiting times for children to see an Educational Psychologist, these were within the prescribed statutory limits, although waiting times did of course vary according to the needs of an individual's case. All staff would have a Key Issues Exchange in which a training plan would be discussed, although a reduction in resources across the Council had dampened expectations in respect of training courses. The Department was still involved in national courses and conferences but to a lesser degree than previously.

A Member suggested the need to look at the trends of staff absences within the Department following the reduction in staff numbers.

Resolved –

(1) That the report and the re-structuring of the department from four Branch Service Areas to three Branch Service areas be noted

(2) That the overarching Children's and Young People's Departmental restructure be noted.

(3) That the transfer of the various Transport related services across the Council, including Technical Services and the Department for Adult Social Services into the new Integrated Transport Unit structure within the Children's and Young People's Department be noted.

(4) That a report be brought back to the November meeting on staff absence trends within the Children's and Young People's Department.

18 PRESENTATION ON FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE 2011/12

Nancy Clarkson, Head of Planning and Performance, gave a presentation on the first quarter performance 2011/12 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 including the corporate plan indicators of:

- Reducing the under 18 conception rate
- Under age sales of alcohol

Departmentally 80% of the 20 performance indicators were achieving or exceeding the target, the four which weren't were:

- Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement.
- Timeliness of placements of looked after children for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption.
- Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 10 working days of referral.
- Number of Early Years settings judged as inadequate.

Details were given of the corrective action being taken in each case.

The department's £39m capital budget included slippage from 2010/11 with the biggest schemes in progress including work at Birkenhead Academy, Cathcart Primary and Pensby Primary/ Stanley Special School.

Future risks and challenges included, safeguarding arrangements for children which was always a significant risk and was therefore under constant review; and, in response to the Munro Review a national review of children's social care processes was being undertaken.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

19 THE GOVERNMENT'S GREEN PAPER ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND)

The Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the Government's Green Paper, 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'. The Green Paper, on the subject of all the children and young people who were disabled, or identified as having a special educational need, was about their families and ways of supporting them, and about the training and support required by professionals who worked with them in order to improve outcomes.

The consultation period, which had ended on 30 June 2011, had been an open consultation and views were welcomed from both individuals and organisations. Wirral Council had contributed to the consultation through the Merseyside Learn Together Partnership (LPT) which had submitted a joint response which was appended to the report. Following consideration of the consultation responses, the

Government intended to publish its response later this year. This might involve proposed legislative changes beginning in the following year.

The report outlined the major proposals contained within the Green Paper and also that local authorities had been invited to 'work' as pathfinders to pilot some of the new proposed arrangements. Merseyside LPT had submitted a joint pathfinder bid.

Resolved – That this Committee notes the Government's intention to radically change the current framework, and the work undertaken by officers preparing for possible changes.

20 **CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN / IMPLEMENTATION**

The Chair stated that this item would be deferred to a future meeting.

21 **SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN INSPECTION UPDATE**

Further to minute 6 (1/6/11) the Interim Director of Children's Services reported upon the progress made up to 31 August, 2011 in relation to implementing the areas for development identified in the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection which was undertaken by OFSTED between 24 January and 4 February 2011.

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

Resolved – That this Committee notes the progress made up to 31 August 2011 in addressing the area for development identified in the Safeguarding and Looked after Children inspection and thanks all the staff involved.

22 **ADOPTION SERVICE REPORT ON INSPECTION**

The Interim Director of Children's Services reported upon the outcome of the announced inspection of the Wirral Adoption Service by Ofsted and updated the Committee on the work of the Adoption Service since the last report in January 2011 (minute 40 refers). This was the first report and inspection since the publication of new Adoption National Minimum Standards and updated Adoption Statutory Guidance which came into force on 1 April 2011. In addition, the Adoption Service was governed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, the Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005, the Care Planning, Placement and Case review (England) Regulations 2010 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

The overall quality rating by Ofsted for the adoption service was 'good'; with 'outstanding' for protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe.

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

Resolved – That this Committee agrees that the adoption service is being managed effectively and that there are good outcomes for the children and young people being adopted and the adopters; and thanks all the staff involved in the service.

23 **SCHOOL ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Mark Parkinson, Head of Learning & Achievement, together with Stuart Bellerby, Strategic Service Manager (Secondary), Sue Talbot, Strategic Service Manager (Early Years and Primary) and Vivian Stafford, Strategic Service Manager (Post -16), gave a comprehensive presentation on the headline figures for the 2011 test results at Early Years, Key stages 1, 2, 3 and for Looked After Children. A shorter report would be made to the next meeting of the Committee on the post-16 results.

The Interim Director and officers elaborated on the information in the presentation in response to Members' questions and reported that the Council had no direct control over the use of the Pupil Premium (PP) by schools.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted and the officers be thanked for all their hard work in supporting young people.

24 **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:

- Capital contracts
- Out of Authority Placements
- Children's Residential Care Placements
- Contracts for Provision of Services for Children's Centres

Resolved – That the report be noted.

25 **CO-OPTED MEMBER REQUEST**

The Committee was invited to consider a request from the Co-Chair of the Wirral Family Forum, Louise Reece Jones, for a co-opted position on the Children and Young People O&S Committee for a member of their Forum to represent parent / carers of children with disabilities or additional needs.

As with co-optees on the Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including one for carers, the co-option, if agreed, would be one with non-voting rights and would need to be a recommendation to Council.

The Chair suggested that as there would be a vacancy for a Parent Governor Representative with the expiration of Mrs J Kearney's term in October, she would write to Ms L Reece Jones and suggest that she could put herself forward for this position.

26 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on its work programme including the reports to be scheduled for the November meeting.

The Chair commented that a report on Early Intervention Grants would be coming to the November meeting and also a report on Oaklands. The January meeting would include reports on academies and the Sanderling Unit.

Resolved – That the Work Programme be agreed with the above additions.

27 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.

28 0-19 STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 0-19 Standards Sub-Committee, held on 26 July, 2010, were submitted. The Sub-Committee had considered a number of issues, in particular the Ofsted reports relating to the following establishments:

Secondary School

Outstanding

Prenton High School for Girls

Primary Schools

Satisfactory

Bedford Drive Primary School

Good

Lingham Primary School
Rock Ferry Primary School
Leasowe Primary School
New Brighton Primary School
Well Lane Primary School
Mendell Primary School
Barnston Primary School
Heygarth Primary School
Thingwall Primary School

Outstanding

Liscard Primary School
St Georges Primary School

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.