

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 2 June 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Clarke (Chair)	
	Councillors	J George T Harney Karen Hayes Paul Hayes	Cherry Povall A Taylor T Smith W Smith
<u>Deputy:</u>	Councillors	A Bridson (in place of F Doyle)	
<u>Co-opted Members</u>	Councillors	Mr M Clarke Mrs J Kearney	Mrs M Liddy Mrs J Owens
<u>Apologies</u>		Mrs M Cain	

1 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and in particular those members new to the Committee.

The Chair referred to the impending retirement on Friday 5 June of Mike Archbold, Principal Committee Officer, and expressed on behalf of the Committee their very grateful thanks for all his work over the past number of years and that he be wished a long and happy retirement.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Committee 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 declarations were made.

3 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meetings of the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 March and 20 April, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 16 March and 20 April, be approved as a correct record.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

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

On a motion by Councillor Paul Hayes, seconded by Councillor Cherry Povall, it was –

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

5 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee was requested to note its revised terms of reference – those specific to this Committee, general terms of reference for overview and scrutiny committees and those of the Scrutiny Programme Board.

Resolved – That the revised terms of reference be noted.

6 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10**

The Chair submitted an update on the work programme for the year end 2008/09 and the Committee was requested to agree topics for the 2009/10 work programme.

The Chair referred to the suggestion at the last meeting for the topic of deprivation and the impact on learning outcomes. She suggested that the cross-cutting topic of the alcohol strategy could be included and a report be brought back to the September meeting after consideration by the Scrutiny Programme Board.

The Chair reported that the Scrutiny Programme Board, at its meeting of 27 May, had also suggested that brief finance and performance monitoring reports be presented to overview and scrutiny committees in addition to a presentation.

Councillor Harney suggested a regular item for the agenda on the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee to give a flavour of what was happening there. He would also bring a report to a future meeting on the fact finding visit made to Eddison Learning in Colchester who specialised in a design and build service for new schools. Councillor Harney also remarked upon the idea of planning a work programme for 2/3 years ahead and suggested the topic of special needs provision for scrutiny.

The Director welcomed these suggestions and also referred to the Children in Care Council and the need to get young people's voices heard.

The Chair suggested that a member of the Executive Youth Board could be invited to present a report to the Committee if they were comfortable to do so.

Resolved – That the comments of members be noted for inclusion on the future work programme.

7 **SCRUTINY REVIEW - LITERACY LEVELS AT KEY STAGE 2 - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Chair submitted a report which provided an update on the progress of the scrutiny review of Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2. The report outlined the variety of methods which were being used for evidence gathering and plans for the remainder of the review. The draft report from the review would be produced during the summer

and the final report would be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17 September 2009.

Resolved - That Committee notes the progress of the 'Literacy Level at Key Stage 2' Scrutiny Review.

8 EDUCATION SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE - DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which gave details of some of the work carried out by the Education Social Welfare Service in the Academic Year 2007/08.

The report identified that school attendance fell slightly in Wirral primary schools from 94.73% in 2006/07 to 94.68% in 2007/08 [-0.05%], in line with national trends, but improved markedly in Wirral secondary schools from 92.18% in 2006/07 to 93.23% in 2007/08 [+1.05%]. Special school attendance also improved considerably from 91.26% in 2006/07 to 92.39% in 2007/08 [+1.13%]. The report outlined some of the achievements of the Service over the year and also sought to analyse the effectiveness of the Service and gave details of Fixed Penalty Notices issued and parents prosecuted for failing to ensure their children attended school regularly.

Peter Edmondson, Head of Participation and Inclusion, introduced the report and together with Mike Clarke, Head of the Education Social Welfare Service, responded to comments from members. Permanent exclusions had reduced in the last year by almost half and they explained the way behavioural problems with children in care were addressed so that every means possible was used to avoid permanent exclusions. They outlined the plans in place to deal with truancy and unauthorised absences. The number of children educated at home was between 40 to 50 over the past 10 years.

The number of truancy sweeps had gone down although they were now more targeted to areas where there had been concerns over anti-social behaviour.

In terms of tracking children moving areas the system was not watertight as there were families capable of falling below the radar. It was acknowledged that a lot of referrals to the service were made concerning children who were out of school as they were looking after a parent.

The Director stated that one of the key priorities revolved around 'narrowing the gap' and that the biggest improvement had been seen in some of the most deprived areas. Although percentage wise a 1% improvement might not appear large, it represented an increase of 40,000 pupil day attendances.

Resolved – That the Committee notes the report and thanks the officers for all the work done in this area.

9 COMPLAINT MONITORING

The Director of Children's Services presented an analysis of complaints registered under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 during the period 1 January 2009 to 31 March 2009.

During this three month reporting period the following number of complaints had been registered:

20 Stage 1 complaints [compared to 17 complaints the previous quarter]

4 Stage 2 complaints [compared to 4 complaints in the previous quarter]

0 Stage 3 complaints

The Director outlined the time taken to investigate complaints and the current position and Julia Hassall, Head of Children's Social Care, gave a flavour of the types of complaints made by both children and adults.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

10 SCHOOL STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the School Standards Sub-Committee, held on 1 April 2009, were submitted. The Sub-Committee had considered a number of issues, in particular the Ofsted reports relating to the following schools:

Primary

Satisfactory schools

Christ Church C of E Primary, Moreton

Poulton Lancelyn Primary

Cole Street Primary, Birkenhead

Good schools

Woodchurch Road Primary, Birkenhead

Outstanding schools

Oxton St Saviour's C of E Primary

Secondary

Good schools

Hilbre High

Kilgarth [Special]

Outstanding schools

West Kirby Grammar School for Girls

The Director informed the Committee that with regard to schools in Ofsted categories, Riverside Primary School had in the last two weeks been removed and there were currently no schools in Ofsted categories.

The Committee were requested to appoint the Schools Standard Sub-Committee for 2009/10.

Resolved –

(1) That the minutes be noted.

(2) That the Schools Standard Sub-Committee for 2009/10 comprise the following members, Councillors Sheila Clarke (Chair), Frank Doyle and Tony Smith, with the remaining Committee members serving as deputies, plus the diocesan and parent governor representatives.

11 CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP

All of the new overview and scrutiny committees were being asked to consider if they wished to extend or initiate co-opted membership.

Resolved – That Committee notes its current co-opted membership of 5 co-optees.

12 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.

13 CHILDREN'S HOMES - REPORT ON VISITS BY OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

The Director of Children's Services reported on visits carried out by officers under Regulation 33 of the Care Standards Regulations over the period October 2008 to March 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.

Elected Members' visits had been taking place monthly until September 2008 but had since been suspended pending a revision to the corporate parenting role of Elected Members in this area. It was intended that a report would be submitted to the September meeting on all possible options for Members' visits.

In addition there were monthly visits from the Children's Complaints Officer and a representative from an independently commissioned advocacy service (WIRED). Those visits were specifically to the homes for children with disabilities, Rosclare and Willow Tree. A similar service was provided to Brookfield via another independently commissioned advocacy service, Safeguarding Children's Services.

The Committee discussed the role of elected member visits and there was a general consensus that these were needed because of the unique role which members played as a corporate parent. The Director remarked upon the need to build in to members' visits the fact that although these were Children's Homes they were the homes of children who should be accorded the same rights as any other child living at home.

Resolved – That Committee notes the report and the proposal for the lead officer to present a full range of options for members' visits to children's homes at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2009.