

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 23rd April, 2012 at Ash Grove Primary School, Macclesfield

PRESENT

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)
Councillor K Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Brown, D Neilson, W Livesley, M Sherratt, B Silvester and
J Saunders and John McCann

Apologies

Councillors H Gaddum, D Mahon, G Merry, P Hoyland and G Wait and Jill
Kelly

In attendance

Councillor R Bailey

Officers

Tony Crane – Deputy Director of Children's Services
Mark Bayley – Quality Assurance Manager
Pam Davies – Acting Principal Manager for SEN & Inclusion
Mark Grimshaw – Scrutiny Officer

157 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2012 be
approved as a correct record.

158 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

None noted.

159 **PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Committee.

160 **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: ADDRESSING THE CHANGING NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

Mark Bayley, Quality Assurance Manager, attended to provide a presentation on
school improvement, addressing issues around the changing national landscape.

Mark firstly touched upon the changing status of schools, noting that there was
not only a shift in terms of maintained schools towards Academies but that there
were also other alternative models such as Free Schools, University Technical

Colleges (UTC) and Studio Schools available. Explaining the principle of the UTC further, Mark described how these would be a 14-19 school that worked closely with industry and/or business. He reported that Reaseheath College had recently attempted to bid for this status but had been unsuccessful.

A number of comments were made about UTCs. Firstly, it was suggested that they could potentially create an issue as there were only a small number of middle schools in Cheshire East. Therefore, in any admission arrangement the UTC would be accepting pupils who already had a secondary school place – potentially causing disruption in year and class sizes. It was also queried whether the Council would have a responsibility to transport young people to the UTC and whether any extra funding would be made available for this. Tony Crane, Deputy Director of Children's Services, explained that the detail on UTCs had yet to fully emerge but that he would explore the issues raised and get back to the Committee with a response.

Mark Bayley continued to explain the ramifications on the accountability of school performance following the changing status of schools. He explained that as schools became increasingly autonomous from the Council they would be expected to take more responsibility for their own school performance. Aligned to this, the role of the Department for Education (DfE) in school performance had also changed. Mark reported that the DfE had recently established a 'School Underperformance and Brokerage Division' in which a number of national advisors had been appointed to work with local authorities and schools around Academy conversions, warning notices and Interim Executive Boards. The DfE had also revised national floor standards and had identified approximately 500 schools which had performed at or below the new thresholds over the last three years. Mark noted that there was one Cheshire East school on this list but that the Council were confident that the school had made the necessary improvements to come off the list.

It was queried that if an Academy returns a poor performance who or what body would be accountable for improving this. Mark confirmed that there was not currently a division in the DfE who would address this issue. A comment was also made that this issue was further complicated by the fact the Council had a statutory responsibility to intervene for those children and young people with a special educational need, even if they were in an Academy school. Tony Crane acknowledged that this was an issue and suggested that the Committee work with the department to draft some ideas about what the Council response would be to a failing Academy.

Moving on to discuss what further options were available to aid school performance, Mark Bayley drew attention to the emergence of teaching schools. These had initially been appointed nationally and Cheshire East had two – Fallibroome and Holmes Chapel Academies. Phase 2 of the process had seen a Crewe partnership of schools emerge as a teaching school. Mark reported that a strategic partnership between the Council and teaching schools had been formed in order to utilise a range of resources to bring about further school improvement through effective school to school support. The Council also had the option to use National Leaders in Education – nationally identified exceptional school leaders who offered direct support to underperforming schools.

As a final point, Mark noted that there was a new Ofsted Inspection framework. Further changes to the framework were currently being consulted on and it was

suggested that the Committee Members could contribute to this by email prior to the 3 May 2012 deadline.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the presentation be received
- b) That the Deputy Director of Children's Services be requested to explore the issues raised around admission and transport arrangements with regard to University Technical Colleges and report the findings to the Committee.
- c) That the Ofsted Inspection Framework consultation document be emailed to Committee Members so that any possible responses can be collated prior to 3 May 2012.

161 **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY POLICY**

Members were invited to provide their final comments on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) policy, building on the initial comments provided on 13 December 2012.

It was commented that the focus of the photographs in the document should be on the children and young people. With this in mind, it was suggested that the photograph on page 2 be changed.

It was suggested that as the SEND policy referred to children and young people between the ages of 0-25, the demographic data provided on page 11 of the policy should reflect this by not only referring to children aged 0-15.

A general point was made with regard to a perceived gap in support for those young people aged 19-25 who, it was argued, could be seen as too old for children's services and too young for adults services. Pam Davies, Acting Principal Manager for SEN & Inclusion, reassured the Committee that the Council was aware of potential transition issues and had established a transition board as a result. Having heard this, it was still asserted that there seemed to be a disconnect between policy intent and practical application. Pam Davies suggested that she explore the issues around transition policies further and as a result, circulate a response to the Committee.

RESOLVED

- a) That the SEND Policy be noted and endorsed with the following suggested comments:
 - a. That the pictures in the document be child focused and that the picture on page 2 be changed.
 - b. That demographic data for children and young people aged 0-25 be included in the 'context' part of the report – not only data for children aged 0-15.
- b) That the Acting Principal Manager for SEN & Inclusion be requested to investigate issues around the effective practical application of children services to adult services transition policy and report the findings to the Committee.

CHESHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

Tony Crane, Deputy Director of Children's Services, attended to present a report with regard to the Cheshire Youth Offending Service. He explained that the Council currently managed a shared service with Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) for the delivery of youth justice services. The report identified recent discussions in regard to developing services across a wider Cheshire footprint.

It was noted that in January 2011 the Youth Justice Board was commissioned to appraise the potential of widening the footprint into a pan Cheshire Youth offending service, including Halton and Warrington. It was felt at the time that there was no compelling argument, either politically or financially, to amalgamate services and therefore no action was taken. Having said this, Tony explained that the situation had moved on in that CWAC was considering different partnership options. Consequently, it was necessary for the Council to be cognisant of the situation and be aware of the various options, including a Pan Cheshire model.

It was commented that it would have been useful to receive further information on performance data, outcomes and the budget in order to aid the Committee's understanding of the service.

It was stated that the Council should ensure it makes looking after its own Youth Offending Service and young offenders a priority.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report be noted
- b) That a further report be requested for a future meeting and that this include:
 - a. Operational detail on the Youth Offending Service including performance data, outcomes and financial information
 - b. The possible implications of the Council having to organise its own Youth Offending Service.

YOUTH POLICY STRATEGY GROUP

The Chairman explained that Councillor Thwaite and Councillor Baxendale were unable to attend the meeting and therefore it was suggested that the item be deferred.

RESOLVED – That the item be deferred to a future meeting.

WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members considered the work programme. It was suggested that the next scheduled meeting (8 May 2012) could be used a 'workshop' session for putting together the 2012/13 yearly work programme. With this agreed, it was suggested that the following items could be considered in addition to those already listed in the work programme:

- The Council's response to failing Academies

- Transition between children's and adult's services
- Operational detail on the Youth Offending Service

It was also suggested that a Task and Finish Review on very early years education be added to the work programme. This was rooted from the concern that children were arriving at school with below expected standards of behaviour and cognition, leading to a need for them to 'catch up'.

Reference was made to a Cabinet report on Home to School Transport by John McCann from the Diocese of Shrewsbury. He stated the following concerns regarding this paper:

- That the Cabinet Paper was dismissive towards the 'minority report' of the Home to School Transport Task and Finish Review and did not give it due regard.
- That the Cabinet Paper was dismissive of the sibling issue when this was a concern for a number of families
- That the decision requested would remove denominational transport support for the 2012/13 academic year even though parents had made their school choice for that year based on the proviso that the subsidy would be in place.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the following items be added to the work programme to be considered at the workshop session on 8 May 2012
 - a. The Council's response to failing Academies
 - b. Transition between children's and adult's services
 - c. Operational detail on the Youth Offending Service
- b) That a task and finish review on very early years education be added to the work programme to be undertaken when resources became available.

The meeting commenced at 1.35 pm and concluded at 3.40 pm

Councillor A Kolker (Chairman)