

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of an informal meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**

held on Monday, 11th May, 2009 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor R Westwood (Chairman)  
Councillor D Neilson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Rhoda Bailey, D Beckford, J Goddard, O Hunter, A Kolker,  
G Merry, M Parsons, L Smetham and T Jackson

### **Apologies**

Councillors D Flude, M Simon and D Thompson and C Blanchard.

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/ PARTY WHIP**

Councillor R Bailey declared a personal interest in the item relating to Transforming Learning Communities on the grounds that she had been involved in meetings relating to proposals for Church Lawton Primary School.

### **2 UPDATE ON TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES**

The Chairman updated Members on a Scrutiny Review proposed to be undertaken in relation to Transforming Learning Communities (TLC). Members were advised that the People Policy Panel that existed during the Council's Shadow year had agreed to set up a Task Group to look at TLC with a remit to consider the County Council's findings from its Scrutiny Review of TLC and also give consideration to school organisation in Cheshire East.

However, this Task Group had not been able to meet due to a lack of resources to support it. A consultant had since been engaged by the Head of Services for Children and Families who would be able to help support Members in undertaking a Scrutiny Review. A Scrutiny Task/Finish Panel had been established and Members had been given two briefings on the legal aspects of school organisation and the position in Cheshire East in relation to surplus places both at the present time and in the future. The Committee was now requested to formally agree the continuation of the Panel.

RESOLVED: That

(a) the proposed Scrutiny Review into Transforming Learning Communities to be undertaken by a Task/Finish Panel be agreed and the membership of the Panel be as follows:

- Councillor R Westwood (Chairman of the Panel);
- Councillor D Flude
- Councillor A Kolker;

- Councillor G Merry
- Councillor D Neilson;
- Councillor L Smetham
- Councillor D Thompson.

(b) the Terms of Reference and Scoping Report for the Scrutiny Review be agreed at a future meeting of the Panel.

### **3 REMIT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Members considered the remit of the Scrutiny Committee following consideration at the Scrutiny Training Day on 27 April.

RESOLVED: That the remit as set out in the report be approved.

### **4 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Work Programme that had been drafted at the Scrutiny Training Day on 27 April. Members were advised that the Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets was to attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Chairmen's Group to discuss how Scrutiny could contribute to the budget process. Members also requested information on children's social care and safeguarding at an early opportunity.

It was noted that additional items may be added to the Work Programme following discussions between the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Portfolio Holders and senior officers at a meeting that was to be held shortly.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme as submitted be approved.

### **5 SCRUTINY UNCOVERED**

The Committee watched a DVD on how Scrutiny operated at the Houses of Parliament and discussed the main points relating to the role of Scrutiny:

- Holding decision takers to account;
- Asking questions that the public wanted to know;
- Any recommendations must be evidence based;
- Mutual respect should exist between the Cabinet and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED: That the main points contained in the DVD "Scrutiny Uncovered" be noted.

### **6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

The Committee was advised that the Governance and Constitution Committee had asked the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to come to a view on Public Speaking Time/Open Session at meetings. This Committee was invited to express a view prior to Corporate Scrutiny Committee giving a response on behalf of all Scrutiny Committees.

Members of the Committee felt that it was important that the public should have a mechanism of bringing to Members' attention issues of importance that was not within the formal setting of full Council. Members felt it was important for any

public speaking to be controlled but that members of the public should be able to raise any issue within the Committee's remit.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Scrutiny Committee be advised that this Committee

- supports public participation in meetings;
- thinks that the public should be able to raise items that relate to any area of work within the Committee's remit; and
- length of time for individual speakers should be at the Chairman's discretion within an overall time limit.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.00 pm

Councillor R Westwood (Chairman)