

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 16th November, 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, D Flude, J Goddard, O Hunter,
A Kolker, G Merry, M Parsons, L Smetham and D Thompson

Apologies

Councillors M Simon and J P Findlow

43 ALSO PRESENT

J Kelly, Parent Governor Representative and G Roper, Church Representative.

44 OFFICERS PRESENT

L Butcher, Head of Services for Children and Families
M Bayley, Children and Families
P Davies, Children and Families
P Mossman, Children and Families
J Weeks, Strategic Director People
D J French, Legal and Democratic Services

45 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ged Roper, the new representative from the Diocese of Shrewsbury, to his first meeting of the Committee.

46 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 September be confirmed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of J Kelly in the list of names of those present.

47 DECLARATION OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations made.

48 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no Members of the Public present.

49 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES - IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN CHESHIRE EAST

The Committee received a presentation by Lorraine Butcher, Head of Service for Children and Families on Challenges and Opportunities. She outlined her Vision which was based on Cheshire East being a place where all children and young people were supported well to maximise their life choices; where services were relevant and appropriate and addressed needs at an early stage; and where organisations worked well together to ensure no child or young person got left behind.

There were a number of challenges including:

- Local Government reorganisation, the forthcoming general election and the economic climate;
- Organisational and professional cultures;
- Stopping things that did not make a difference;
- Tackling inequalities;
- Safeguarding – how well was the Council doing? The Unannounced Inspection was still awaited. The numbers of Cared for Children had increased by approximately 26% during 2007/08 and referrals were continuing to rise; this could be due to various factors including the Baby Peter case in Haringey, economic pressures on families, and professionals being better at identifying needs due to joined up working;
- Continuing to improve learning outcomes by ensuring overall standards were raised but the gap was narrowed especially for Cared for Children and those with Special Educational Needs;
- Maximising the use of resources from a declining resource base.

The redesign of Children's Social Care had a number of principles:

- Keeping children safe and well – delivering responsive services that identified needs at an early stage so as to reduce the need for statutory interventions and costly specialist services later in a child's life; refocusing services to provide a wide range of family support and prevention whilst maintaining a clear focus on children who were most at risk;
- Locally Based Services/Easy Access;
- Managing costs - to make the best use of available resources and to harness the collaborative support, engagement and pooling resources across the Children's Trust;
- A culture of high expectation and high performance – in December 2009, Ofsted would produce performance ratings for all Local Authorities and Cheshire East was aiming to be rated as "performing well" progressing to "performing excellently" in 3 years;
- Core Business –priority would be given to core business that was essential to secure improved outcomes for children and young people.

The work programme for the service included:

- Curriculum support to schools to enable them to be self financing by April 2011;
- Transport – to ensure improved efficiency against existing costs;
- Review of Direct Schools Grant;

- School organisation – remove surplus provision, review use of surplus school premises and review arrangements for commissioning Special Educational Needs;
- Redesign of Integrated Service Delivery – develop coordinated arrangements for early intervention and prevention;
- Children’s Centres and Family Support – integrated delivery within a framework of early intervention and prevention;
- Transformation of service delivery for children and families with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities;
- Review Residential Provision;
- Integrated and Targeted Youth Support – delivering joined up support incorporating universal services and targeted services;
- Post 16 Funding Transfer – the Learning and Skills Council was to cease to exist in April 2010 and it would be the responsibility of the Children’s Trust to commission post 16 learning.

The Redesign would provide opportunities for partners to work together differently, to collaborate and support, to co-locate services and jointly commission and jointly save. A Project Manager had been appointed to manage the Redesign.

Following the presentation Members raised the following questions/issues:

- Was there any indication as to where the increasing number of referral cases were originating?
- It was important that staff working in all types of Early Years provision liaised with Primary Schools to share information to ensure awareness of any issues and that this was developed as good practice;
- Some schools used Learning Mentors in a more wide ranging pastoral role and some schools had pooled extra funding received through Extended Schools budget to provide Family Support Workers.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received and noted.

50 **SCRUTINY REVIEW - MANAGING THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL PLACES - REPORT ON TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TLC) AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL BY THE TASK & FINISH GROUP**

The Committee considered the final report of the Scrutiny Review Task/Finish Panel on Managing the Provision of School Places: report on Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) and its implications for Cheshire East Council.

The remit of the Task/Finish Panel had been to review the TLC inheritance from Cheshire County Council and consider the needs of Cheshire East in relation to future changes to the schools system. The work of the Panel had been informed by a thorough Scrutiny Review of TLC undertaken by a Scrutiny Review Panel of the County Council, first hand information from Education Improvement Partnership members and Headteachers and consideration of evidence regarding supply and demand for school places.

The report outlined the Panel's consideration of the County Council's own Scrutiny Review of TLC and the implications for Cheshire East; described the current position in Cheshire East regarding surplus places and the challenges of managing the provision of school places. It outlined the attributes of a new system for managing school places taking into consideration key factors such as schools' cost-effectiveness, academic performance and local popularity. Finally the report listed a number of recommendations.

In considering the Report, Members noted that it did not contain current Published Admission Numbers (PAN) as at September 2009 but these would be made available to the Committee for information.

The Committee was advised that the Council was currently considering whether to indicate to the Department for Children, Schools and Families its "readiness to deliver" the Building Schools for the Future programme. The Committee noted that any consideration of school places must be seen in the context of an education vision and strategy based on a number of factors including location, facilities, extended schools provision and other wider uses.

The reference to working with Dioceses was welcomed.

It was also noted that any future work on school reorganisation must ensure business continuity so that learning and experience was not lost.

RESOLVED: That the report and recommendations be endorsed and submitted to Cabinet for consideration, subject to the addition of a final bullet point on page 60 of the report (section 7) to read:

"Attention needs to be given to Business Continuity, as the Council takes forward its work on the provision of school places, so that experience and learning are consolidated and not lost".

51 INSPECTION OF YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICES

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of an inspection of Cheshire Youth Offending Service (CYOS) by HMI Probation Inspector. The Committee was advised that the inspection of Youth Offending Programmes had started in April 2009 and all Youth Offending services were being inspected over a 3 year cycle. There were two tiers to the inspection – a Core Case Inspection and a thematic programme, both led by HMI Probation.

The inspection of CYOS had been completed in August 2009 and was a core inspection. The cases that had been inspected had been chosen by Inspectors as a representative sample of 80 cases across the whole of Cheshire.

The results were encouraging and it was found that the CYOS was good overall and the commitment of staff to making a difference to the lives of young people was a key strength. The report outlined a number of recommendations for change and an Action Plan was to be prepared to address these issues.

RESOLVED: That

(a) the Action Plan be submitted to a future meeting; and

(b) the Committee's congratulations to staff of the Youth Offending Service in achieving a good inspection outcome, be recorded.

52 CHILDREN & FAMILIES PERFORMANCE SCORE CARD & LOCAL AUTHORITY OFSTED PROFILE

The Committee considered a report on continuing developments around performance data across Cheshire East. Members were advised that a complete set of data would be submitted to full Cabinet shortly. It was important to have baseline data in order to set appropriate and challenging targets. A number of proxy measures had been identified for use in monitoring progress across these themes:

- Early Intervention;
- Narrowing the Gap;
- Family Support;
- Emotional Health and Well-being;
- Economic Development, Skills and Learning.

Key issues included:

- Under 18 conception rates;
- Increasing numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- Numbers of secondary schools who achieve 5+ A* - C including English and Maths, although the overall rate was improving there was a need to ensure that improvements were made in targeted schools;
- There was a need to increase the focus on Cared for Children and educational attainment to ensure they made appropriate progress;
- A review was underway looking at numbers and quality of the Common Assessment Framework.

The report also listed the Ofsted profile of Children's Services which highlighted a number of key issues:

- Only one of the ten indicators was judged as Red (at risk) and this related to an inspection of Children's homes based upon an inspection in a single Children's Home;
- Six of the ten indicators were judged as Green (positive outcomes);
- Two of the Amber indicators were identified as being priority areas and related to the number of Secondary schools and 6th forms judged as being Good or Outstanding where performance was below the national average and below performance in similar areas.

The Committee noted that one part of the National Indicator that related to narrowing the gap was based on performance of children who received free school meals. The Committee noted that not all children who were eligible for free school meals would take up this provision and there may be a stigma to receiving free school meals. Officers recognised that there were issues with this but it was difficult to identify alternative criteria.

Members asked about numbers of Serious Case Reviews and were advised that there were approximately 6 across the whole of Cheshire in the past 18 months.

Each agency would undertake its own review and then a case would be put to Ofsted. There was one case for which Ofsted had identified issues with how it was conducted and this was being discussed at the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

It was suggested that the quick reference Direction of Travel arrows should be geared to the improvement or worsening of actual performance, rather than whether the reported figures were growing or reducing. Currently reported figures which were rising were accompanied by an “up” arrow when in fact a rising figure was in some cases a worsening of performance. Equally some reported figures which were reducing could be an improvement in performance yet misleadingly currently these were shown with a “down” arrow. It was suggested that an alternative to arrows could be a graph.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and a more detailed report be submitted to a future meeting.

53 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered the current Work Programme which had been revised at Mid Point on 28 October. Members noted that there were a number of items currently scheduled for the meeting in January and agreed to discuss scheduling at the mid point meeting.

The Task/Finish Panel on a Review of Residential Provision had held its first meeting and the Chairman of the Panel provided a verbal update on the Panel’s work – the review had been scoped and Members had received some written information and asked for Ofsted reports of current and previous residential provision relating to Priors Hill, Macclesfield and Redsands, Crewe.

The Committee had also had the opportunity to visit two new residential homes in Crewe and would be invited to visit Children’s Centres later in the year.

Members discussed setting up a Task/Finish Panel to scrutinise Family Support Services now that the Scrutiny Panel on Managing School Places had completed its work.

RESOLVED: That

(a) the current Work Programme be noted; and

(b) a Task/Finish Panel on Family Support Services be set up comprising the following Councillors: Westwood, Beckford, Flude, Merry, Neilson and Thompson.

54 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee considered the current Forward Plan in relation to Children and Family Services. Members were advised that sites declared surplus would become corporate assets and future bids for use would be looked at on their individual merit and in terms of the Capital Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

55 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

56 START TIMES OF MEETINGS

The Committee discussed start times for meetings.

RESOLVED: That meeting start times remain at 10.30 am.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.30 pm

Councillor R Westwood (Chairman)