

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 7th September, 2010 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors A Barratt, D Beckford, D Flude, J Goddard, A Kolker, W Livesley,
G Merry, M Parsons, A Ranfield and J Wray

Apologies

Councillors T Jackson and M Simon

1 OFFICERS PRESENT

Mark Nedderman
Mark Grimshaw
Fintan Bradley
Rob Hyde

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Councillor D Flude declared a Personal interest on the grounds that she was a
Director of EIPC Ltd.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

Prior to moving to the first agenda item, the Chairman wished to draw attention to
the excellent education results recently achieved in Cheshire East and to
congratulate everyone involved, most of all the students. It was noted that the
results placed Cheshire East as the 2nd best local authority in the North West with
an average 6% improvement from last year.

4 REVIEW OF RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

The Committee considered the final report of the Task/Finish Group who
conducted a Scrutiny Review of Residential Provision.

As Chairman of the Task/Finish Group, Councillor Neilson was invited to
introduce the report and to go through certain items which might need further
explanation or clarification. The Committee was informed that the group had been
set up with some very clear guidelines. These were to scrutinise the residential
provision that Cheshire East provided, evaluate the efficacy of these services and

then subsequently come to some conclusions regarding a possible way forward in future practice. Councillor Neilson explained however, that as the review progressed it became clear that some elements of care that were perhaps outside of the group's remit, such as fostering, required some comment and as a result these were included in the report.

Councillor Neilson continued to go through the report and explained certain items which might need further clarification. For instance, it was noted that the phrase 'in house' used in the report refers to those services within the *geographical* area of Cheshire East, not just those provided by the Council. It was suggested and agreed that when referring to services provided in the area of Cheshire East but not those provided by the Council, then these should be described as being 'in borough'.

In concluding, Councillor Neilson made it clear to the Committee that residential care should always be the last resort. Whilst there was recognition that there would always be a need for residential care, the group had reached the agreement that early intervention was the best way forward. Not only would this reduce the need for residential care thereby reducing cost, most importantly it provided the best outcome for Cheshire East's cared for and vulnerable children and young people.

Prior to considering the recommendations, attention was drawn to the fact that the report had made some recommendations about certain elements of care which were the responsibility of the Corporate Parenting Board. It was suggested and agreed that this is made clear in the summary at the beginning of the report.

The Committee discussed each recommendation in turn and after detailed consideration they were approved.

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider some additional paragraphs that would be inserted into the report. These were discussed and agreed.

As portfolio holder, Councillor Gaddum was asked when Cabinet might be able to bring back a response to Committee. The Committee was informed that a response could be available in late October but there was a request for flexibility considering the fact that budgetary decisions would be given priority during the next couple of months.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the report of the Task/Finish group be welcomed and supported;
- b) That the recommendations of the Group be endorsed, and referred to the Cabinet for consideration and necessary action, and that the Cabinet be invited initially to comment on the details of the recommendations;
- c) That the response of Cabinet be considered by the Task/Finish Group in due course;
- d) That the Task/Finish Group be requested to keep progress under review, and to report further on the implementation of the Report's recommendations in 12 -18 months time.
- e) That the Committee offer their thanks to Councillor Neilson and the task/finish group membership for their hard work and excellent report.

- f) That a thank you is extended to Denise French for her scrutiny support and drafting skills.

5 MACCLESFIELD HIGH SCHOOL AND MACCLESFIELD SCHOOL REVIEW

Prior to receiving the presentation from the relevant officers, the Chairman outlined that this was an opportunity for the Committee to make comments on and give input into the design of the consultation process rather than a discussion on the actual options.

Fintan Bradley and Rob Hyde, Organisation and Capital Strategy Manager attended to provide a short presentation to outline the latest position at the mid point of the informal consultation process which ended on 8 October.

It was explained that the purpose of the presentation was to bring the committee up to speed on where the process was currently at, provide some preliminary conclusions and then go through the next steps.

Fintan Bradley reported on the consultation on the future of Macclesfield High School and referred to the report previously heard by the Committee on the 29 June 2010.

The Committee was made aware that there has been four consultation events already held and that these were very well attended. The Council had also set up a website with a number of FAQs to provide as much information to the public as possible. It was reported that the Council had constructed a list of 10 possible options for the future of Macclesfield High School and as a result of the consultation process to date, they had received a further 19 options. It was explained that many of these were variations on particular themes. These were as follows:

- Rationalisation
- Federation
- Closure
- Cap Entry
- College
- Super Head
- Super Primary School
- UTC – Universities that Count programme

It is likely that there would be further options raised at the consultation events on the 15th (Macclesfield Town Hall) and 16th (Macclesfield Football Club) September. Attempts have been made to engage with all relevant stakeholders but the Committee was informed that there have been some notable exceptions at this point. An external consultant was to be appointed to provide support and to act as a 'critical friend' during the process.

It was explained that the evaluation criteria had not been finalised and that the observations and advice of the Committee would form an essential part of the validation of the process.

Considering the large volume of options, it was made clear that an evaluation criteria was required that was able to reduce the number in a fair but effective

manner. As a result, it was reported that the criteria had a number of fundamental principles that the option must have met if it was to be considered viable. These were as follows:

- Addresses surplus places
- Improves Achievement (choice, added value and exam results)
- Affordability (capital and revenue)
- Sustainability (brand, transport, asset utilisation, micro costs)
- Deliverability (disruption, leadership, transport and time frame)

The Committee was also made aware that a review panel (approx. 8 members) had been established which included the Children and Families portfolio holder, key officers and representatives from the Diocese and Admissions Forum among its membership.

It was reported that a decision by the Children and Families portfolio holder would be made on 1 November as to whether or not to go forward with a formal consultation. If this were to go ahead there would be a 6 week formal consultation period leading up to 22 December 2010. Following this, a further 6 week period for representatives would take place, ending on 18 February 2010. Any implementation of possible options would continue from the beginning of March 2011.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their proposal and commended them for their work on a difficult issue.

RESOLVED – That the Committee endorse the robustness of the process and the proposed timescales.

6 ANNUAL UNANNOUNCED INSPECTION OF CONTRACT, REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Fintan Bradley reported on the annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Local Authority Children's Services.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Committee note the report and note the significant progress that has been made.
- b) That the improvement plan be brought to this Committee in the near future.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.00 pm

Councillor R Westwood (Chairman)