

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Community Safety Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 31st March, 2014 at The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)

Councillors M Grant, K Hickson, G Merry, G Baxendale, P Hayes and
F Keegan

In Attendance

F Bradley - Corporate Manager, Education Strategy

Apologies

Councillors Miss C Andrew, A Barratt, M Parsons and J Saunders

69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

71 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no whipping declarations.

72 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Mrs Acton attended the meeting to speak in relation to an alleged drugs problem at Poynton High School and the death of her son. Mrs Acton stated that the inclusion of item 6 on the agenda – Management and Prevention of Drug Misuse in Cheshire East Secondary Schools, was ill timed and inappropriate due to the commencement of the inquest into the death of her son.

Mrs Acton suggested that her son died due to inaction, as prior to his death, she had raised concerns regarding a drug problem in Poynton High School. However nothing was done and she contended that the relevant authorities had failed to keep her family safe. She made reference to ongoing complaints and questioned the appropriateness of the role taken by the Chairman.

In light of the above, the Chairman requested a vote on whether or not he should remain in the chair for the meeting. The Committee unanimously agreed that he should remain Chairman.

73 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2014

Consideration was given to the minutes of the last meeting.

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

74 MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION OF DRUG MISUSE IN CHESHIRE EAST SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report setting out how secondary schools in Cheshire East manage and prevent drug misuse, detailing the current context, the policy framework and support available to schools.

F Bradley, Corporate Manager for Education Strategy highlighted the statistics for drug misuse and reported that 3 youngsters within Cheshire East had been excluded from school, which were partly drug related.

With regard to OFSTED inspections, it was noted that schools were graded on the following 5 categories:

- Overall effectiveness
- Achievement
- Quality of teaching
- Leadership and management
- Behaviour and safety

If a school is judged to require improvement; serious of weakness; special measures in any of the areas then the overall judgement will be one of the aforementioned OFSTED category.

It was noted that Poynton High School had been moved from an 'outstanding' school due to the Leadership and Management element of the inspection to require improvement, however all the other elements were judged as good but because of the required improvements this became the overall judgement.

F Bradley reported that all schools had a drugs policy which followed the guidance set out by the Department of Education, however it was difficult to fully understand the drug problems within Cheshire East Schools as there was no requirement for schools to report this information to the Authority.

It was highlighted that, as academies report directly to the Secretary of State for Education and not the Local Authority, Cheshire East could only try to influence academies and not direct them. Members therefore questioned their ability to safeguard children. Academies appeared to be withdrawing from the community with regard to community involvement and facilities. As they were not accountable to the Local Authority it was suggested that the current policy may need reviewing.

Members agreed that school governors had a huge responsibility and played an ever increasing role in holding the head or principal to account, therefore they needed to have suitable skills, character and training in order to fulfil this role.

With regard to paragraph 3.9 of the report, it was agreed that the procedure and relationship between schools and Police currently in place was not prescriptive or robust enough and therefore needed to be strengthened. Members suggested that the Neighbourhood Inspectors should be requested to attend a future meeting of the Committee, to provide evidence on the drug problems from their perspective and discuss how to strengthen relationships and procedures.

RESOLVED

1. That the Corporate Manager for Education Strategy be thanked for attending the Committee meeting.
2. That clear and consistent policy advice issued by Cheshire East Council, on the Autonomy of schools and the primacy of governors responsibilities in relation to drug and alcohol related matters be acknowledged and that Academy autonomy also be acknowledged.
3. That a briefing note be circulated to all Members of the Council, outlining the Local Authorities' role and responsibilities.
4. That it be recommended that when appointing school governors, consideration be given to their skills, qualifications and character.
5. That the Neighbourhood Inspectors and representatives from the Secondary Headteachers Organisation be requested to attend a future meeting of the Committee to give further evidence on drug misuse within schools.
6. That the Children and Families Policy Development Group be requested to give consideration to revising the current policy as it may no longer be fit for purpose.

75 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work programme

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved subject to the Neighbourhood Inspectors and representatives from the Secondary Head Teachers Organisation being invited to a future meeting to further discuss the problem of drugs in schools.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.00 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)

