

CABINET

12th July 2011 - At a meeting of the Cabinet held at the County Hall, Chichester

Present: Mrs Goldsmith (Chairman), Mr Barnard, Mr Bradbury, Mr Brown, Mr Catchpole, Mr Evans, Mr Griffiths and Mr Montyn.

Declarations of Interest

23. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

24. Resolved - that the minutes of the Cabinet held on 24th May 2011 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Corporate Parenting Panel

25. The Chairman asked Mr Simmons, Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel to introduce the report on the work of the Panel (copy appended to the signed minutes).

26. The Panel Chairman commented that the Panel was still gathering facts about what was being delivered for Looked after Children. Members had held meetings with staff and he would be visiting the North of the County to find out more about what happened to trafficked children.

27. Education was a key issue for the Panel and Members would be scrutinising the quality of support. For example, how was the pupil premium being used for the benefit of Looked after Children and how was the quality of personal education plans being improved? The Cabinet agreed that the Members' approach to educational attainment for Looked after Children should be "if this was my child, is this what I would want for them?"

28. The Panel Chairman also highlighted that the Panel would be looking at the involvement of Looked after Children in the criminal justice system, as they were disproportionately represented, and what action was being taken to reduce this.

29. The Cabinet supported the Panel's view that all councillors who were on school governing bodies should ensure that they were aware of the numbers of Looked after Children at their school. They should also ensure that each school had a policy on Looked after Children, irrespective of whether or not there were Looked after Children in the school at the moment.

30. The Chairman thanked the Panel for its work.

Improvement Plan Update

31. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report (copy appended to the signed minutes). The Cabinet noted progress since its meeting in May 2011 and that since the current report had been published, the RAG rating for the Auditing process had slipped back to Amber. This was due to the need for manual processing of data while the auditing tool was still being developed and tested. Elsewhere good progress was being made regarding the timeliness of assessments and staff were now focussing on improving the quality of those assessments.

32. Members questioned whether the budget of £850,000 for this project was adequate, in view of the current expenditure of £497,000. The Director of Children's Services commented that the initial estimate was based on the work needed and he didn't anticipate the need an increase in the budget at this time. There might though be future pressures such as whether the Department for Education might require additional work to be carried out that had not been previously identified. It was acknowledged that improving Children's Services was the highest priority and more money would be found if necessary. However that could imply that another Service would get less.

33. The Cabinet noted the report.

Total Performance Monitor

34. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced the report (copy appended to the signed minutes). He highlighted that financially, 2011/12 would be the toughest year the County Council had ever faced as had to find £38m savings, despite the Fundamental Service Review in previous years having taken up to £20m savings per annum out of the budget. The monitor was a promising start but there were some variances in the budget. He commented that, although the current monitor showed an overspend of £788,000, his portfolio would be brought back into balance by the year end.

35. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families reported that in May 2011 there was a backlog of initial assessments. Since then the backlog had reduced and it was expected that by June, 85% would be completed within the 10 day target. He had decided to retain two children's homes following a review of the service and was now looking at alternative options to achieve the £350,000 savings from his portfolio.

36. The Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Communities, Environment and Enterprise highlighted that Library Service income, particularly from DVDs was falling. He would be looking at what options there were to reverse the fall in income.
37. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport reported that the savings on the bus subsidies would not be as high in this year as had been expected. The Task and Finish Group would be making its recommendations to him on the reductions in bus subsidies next week. The Deputy Leader reminded the Cabinet that one reason for the reduced savings was because it had been his decision, when he had had responsibility for transport, to delay a decision on this issue to enable full account to be taken of the public's comments arising from the impact assessment. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport commented that a number of communities were now looking at alternative means of providing services if the subsidies for their local buses were reduced.
38. The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive and his officers for their work in embedding the monitoring process in to the County Council.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 11.25 a.m.