

**Children and Young People's Services Select Committee**

13 June 2012 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mr Burgess	Mrs Mills	Mr Tyler
Mr Graysmark	Mrs Ross	Dr Wilsdon
Mr Lanzer	Mr Smytherman	Mr Wilson
Mr McDougall	Mr Strong	Mrs Waight

In attendance by invitation: Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children and Families) and Mr Griffiths (Cabinet Member for Education and Schools).

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Arculus, Mr T M E Dunn, Mrs Le Rossignol and Mr Watson; Mrs Reynolds was absent.

**Declaration of Interests**

26. In accordance with the Code of Conduct Mrs Ross declared a personal interest in relation to Item 5 (Improvement Board Update) as a member of the West Sussex Improvement Board.

**Minutes**

27. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**Cabinet Member Responses**

28. The Committee considered responses from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families to the recommendations made at its meeting of 7 March 2012 relating to the Children's Delivery Task Force and from the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools to the recommendations made at its meeting of 25 April 2012 relating to the Education and Schools Policy Task Force (copies appended to the signed minutes).

29. Resolved – That the Committee notes the responses from the Cabinet Members.

**Improvement Board Update**

30. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

31. Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, introduced the report and advised the Committee that :

- The meeting with the Children's Minister due to take place on 13 June had been postponed and would be re-scheduled.

## Agenda Item Number 2

- Shortlisting had taken place which had identified three strong candidates who would be interviewed for the newly-created post of Head of Children's Social Care in the next week.
32. The Committee made comments and asked questions, including those that follow. Members:
- Asked how many vacancies the County Council had for Social Worker posts. *Mr. Gallimore advised that there were 45 vacancies in total, however of these vacancies he was pleased to report that 25 were already allocated to identified individuals, a number of whom were County Council staff who were in the process of completing Social Worker training. He confirmed that the intention was to continue putting staff through training to become Social Workers to ensure a supply of qualified staff for the County Council.*
  - Queried what the caseload of a Social Worker should be. *Mr Gallimore explained that the Government had not defined what a maximum caseload should be, however for County Council staff it would usually be under 25 cases in longer term teams, but numbers could be higher in the Referral and Assessment Teams, where the nature of the work was somewhat different.*
  - Requested clarification on how the service would meet targets to reduce the number of Looked After Children and the quantity of Initial Assessments. *Mr Gallimore advised that by the Family Intervention Team focussing on supporting and working with families at risk of care proceedings their aim would be to reduce the number of children coming into the care system in the first place, this in turn would lead to a lower number of Initial Assessments. However where it was necessary for a child to become Looked After the County Council would focus on ensuring an appropriate care plan was in place, the child was in the correct placement and that improvements were being made in the quality and timeliness of adoptions.*
33. Mr Evans, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, referred to the six tests of sustainability of improvement that the Independent Chairman of the Improvement Board had indicated the authority should be meeting and explained that he felt confident the County Council was meeting these six tests on a daily basis.
34. Resolved that:
- (1) The Committee asks the Cabinet Member to explore revising the method for recording Social Worker vacancies to highlight the positive work the County Council is doing to train new Social Workers and fill these vacancies internally.
  - (2) The Independent Chairman of the Improvement Board be invited to the meeting of the Select Committee on 4 October 2012 to provide a detailed report on progress with meeting improvement targets.

### **Total Performance Monitor**

35. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Finance and Performance and Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). Clare Hodgson, Client Service Support Manager, introduced the report

and circulated a briefing note (copy appended to the signed minutes) that updated the Committee on the revenue and capital position at the end of March 2012.

36. The following points were raised in discussion. Members: -

- Welcomed the fact that the service had achieved an underspend at the end of the financial year whilst improving services but questioned whether some of this underspend could have been utilised for provision of basic services.
- Requested clarification regarding the £200,000 that had been set aside in relation to liability regarding a disputed case with another local authority. *Mr Gallimore explained that this related to a complex case involving the breakdown of a placement made by another local authority. The County Council was in dispute with the other authority about the costs of subsequent arrangements for the child.*
- Raised concern regarding the inability of some young people to access further education due to the reduction in post-16 transport provision which could increase the number of young people becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training). *Mr Sword advised that the Colleges had been proactive in both providing funding to retain transport provision and in identifying young people at risk of becoming NEET and directing them towards appropriate college placements. Mr Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Education and Schools, suggested that an impact analysis should be carried out to assess the effects of the post-16 transport policy.*
- Suggested that, in future, Total Performance Monitor Reports should additionally show the underspend figure as a percentage of both the overall revenue and capital budget figure to help quantify the value of the underspend.

37. Resolved that:

- (1) The Committee asks the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools to undertake an impact analysis on College attendance following the implementation of the post-16 transport policy.
- (2) Future Total Performance Monitor Reports prepared for the Select Committee should additionally portray the underspend figure as a percentage of both the overall revenue and capital budget figure.

### **Annual Report from the Corporate Parenting Panel**

38. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel (copy appended to the signed minutes).

39. Mr Simmons, Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel, introduced the report advising the Committee that he felt the Panel was now at a standard where it met the criteria set by the Local Government Association to be considered as an example of best practice.

40. The Committee made comments and asked questions, including those that follow. Members:

- Raised concern about the level of offending behaviour amongst LAC. *Mr Simmons advised that in part this was a result of a zero tolerance attitude*

*from some children's homes which could result in young people becoming involved in the Youth Justice system for very minor offences. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) were working to address this issue which included creation of a joint protocol on criminal charging of LAC between social care, the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service. It was a requirement that all children's homes where the County Council placed children signed this protocol.*

- *Raised concern regarding the number of Looked After Children (LAC) placed in West Sussex from outside of the area that were involved with the Youth Justice system. Mr Gallimore advised that the YOS had a duty to work with all children resident in West Sussex, regardless of whether or not they were placed within the County by another local authority. Mr Simmons advised that he hoped work would be undertaken to consider how this issue could be addressed.*
  - *Suggested that new elected Members should receive training on the role of the Member as a corporate parent at an early stage after their election to ensure they fully understand the importance of this role. Mr Simmons agreed that he would refer this to the Member Development Group for consideration.*
  - *Were pleased to see the increase in the proportion of children with up-to-date Personal Education Plans (PEP) but queried what monitoring arrangements were in place to ensure LAC were fully engaged in education and how school governors could assist. David Sword, Director of Learning, advised that each school had a designated teacher for LAC who would be responsible for ensuring each child had a PEP, in addition each Locality Group of schools had a senior designated teacher who could provide training to schools on the requirements relating to LAC. Mr Sword explained that quality assurance of PEPs had been provided through a joint moderation approach with East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Councils. Mr Simmons suggested that all governors should be asking the designated teacher about the number of LAC and the performance of LAC at their school and questioning how the £600 per LAC pupil premium was being spent. Mr Sword advised that he would ask the Headteacher of the Virtual School to provide some publications containing guidance for governors that could be circulated to members of the Committee.*
41. Resolved that:
- (1) The Committee supports the strategic priorities for the work of the Panel for 2012/13.
  - (2) The Committee asks that the Member Development Group gives consideration to placing a high priority on training on the role of the Corporate Parent to new elected Members.
  - (3) The Committee agrees that the topics suggested for scrutiny by the Select Committee during 2012/13 which the Business Planning Group identified as being within the remit of the Panel should be referred to the Corporate Parenting Panel for consideration.

### **Report from the Business Planning Group**

42. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes).

43. Mr Sword highlighted that there were a number of areas where changes were due to be implemented by government that would affect the Learning Service over the coming year, such as school funding arrangements. It was anticipated that when further information was known about the implications of these changes, items would need to be added to the Select Committee work programme to enable appropriate scrutiny.

44. Resolved that:

- (1) The Committee agrees the priority areas for scrutiny are those outlined in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the report.
- (2) The Committee agrees that the topics allocated for inclusion in the work programme represent the top priorities for scrutiny by the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee.
- (3) Services for Youth be considered a high priority for cross-cutting scrutiny and Gypsies and Travellers be considered a low priority for cross-cutting scrutiny.

### **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

45. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – June – September 2012 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

46. Members requested clarification on the following items in the Forward Plan:

- Review of Charges for Home to School Transport – *Mr Griffiths confirmed this was a standard annual review of charges; Members queried how Looked After Children would be affected by this decision - Mr Sword confirmed that priority was given to LAC to ensure they would only be schooled where transport was available for them.*
- Expansion of Springfield First School for September 2013 – Members queried on progress with moving to all-through primary schools in Worthing. *Mr Griffiths advised that by early September the County Council would be producing a strategic intent on the position for education in Worthing. Mr Burrett highlighted that the issue of age of transfer in Worthing is on the BPG list of issues for monitoring for potential inclusion on a future Committee agenda.*

47. Resolved: That the Forward Plan be noted.

### **Members' Items**

48. Mr Smytherman requested that the Committee consider the issue of post-18 housing provision for Looked After Children. The Committee agreed to refer this issue to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

49. Mr Graysmark raised concern regarding children's unguarded use of the internet and the increasing occurrence of cyber-bullying. *Mr Sword explained that an E-safety and E-safeguarding guide had been produced for use in schools and that he would arrange for a copy of this guide to be circulated to all members of the Committee.*

**Date of the Next Meeting**

50. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 4 October 2012 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester. Mr Burrett took the opportunity to thank Mr Wilson for his contribution to the Committee and wished him well for his retirement.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.

Chairman