

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

18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mr T M E Dunn	Mr Oxlade	Mr Smytherman
Mr Graysmark	Mrs Reynolds	Mr Strong
Mr Lanzer	Mrs Ross	Dr Wilsdon
Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Simmons	Mr Wilson

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

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Burgess, Mrs Mills and Mrs Waight.

**Declaration of Interests**

117. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared: - (See also minute 138)

- Mr Dunn – Item 6 (Future Options for Sustaining the West Sussex County Youth Theatre) as a friend of Chichester Festival Theatre.

**Minutes**

118. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**Cabinet Member Responses**

119. The Committee noted the responses by the Cabinet Member for Children and Families on Housing Support for Vulnerable Young People and Budget Update and Business Planning (copy appended to the signed minutes).

**Future Options for the West Sussex Enrichment Programme for Gifted and Talented Children**

120. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Learning (copy appended to the signed minutes) that set out the options for the future of the Enrichment Programme for Gifted and Talented Children.

121. David Sword, Director of Learning, introduced the report, explaining that West Sussex County Council was no longer able to fund the Enrichment Programme in its current format. The report set out the options for the future of the programme. The subsidy to the Gifted and Talented Programme was currently £80,000 per annum with the remaining costs met by fees charged to schools. The fees were increased from £15 to £20 per session in September 2011. The West Sussex Gifted and Talented Programme was highly regarded both in the County and nationally and was valued by parents and children. There were two options for sustaining the programme set out in the report. The

Learning Service had identified short-term funding to ensure the continuation of the programme between April 2012 and April 2013 whilst the options were explored.

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

- Voiced strong support for the continuation of the Gifted and Talented Programme which gave opportunities to children that they would not get in school and enhanced their social skills.
- Raised concerns that if schools were to work in locality groups then there would be a lack of strategic co-ordination which could mean the programme varied greatly from area to area and would mean that children would not get the opportunity to socialise across the County.
- Encouraged the Cabinet Member to seek support and/or sponsorship from local businesses and universities for the programme.
- Felt that it should be emphasised to schools that they now had a responsibility to work together to provide for gifted and talented pupils.

123. Resolved that:

- (1) The Committee notes the progress that has been made in seeking alternative models of provision.
- (2) The Committee endorses Option 1 as the preferred option and the proposal to extend the period of transition to allow time to explore the viability of new models of service delivery and report back to the Select Committee or Business Planning Group, ahead of the Cabinet Member making his decision.
- (3) The Cabinet Member be requested to explore the potential for additional support by businesses and universities for the Gifted and Talented Programme.

### **Future Options for Sustaining the West Sussex County Youth Theatre Functions**

124. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Learning (copy appended to the signed minutes) that set out the options for the future of the West Sussex County Youth Theatre.

125. Peter Griffiths, Cabinet Member for Education and Schools, told the Committee that the current programme with Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) was working very well and was providing huge benefits to young people and that he was excited to extend it across the County. He advised that there were still ongoing discussions with other bodies about what support they could provide to sustain aspects of the service not offered by CFT.

126. David Sword, Director of Learning, outlined the report and explained that the West Sussex County Youth Theatre (WSCYT) provided considerable benefits to

the young people attending as well as the wider community. The actions taken by the County Council to remove the subsidy to the WSCYT did not imply any criticisms of the programme but it was necessary to find a way of sustaining the service without subsidy. The Learning Service had had its funding reduced from over £10m to £3.9m from April 2012 and had to prioritise statutory duties and responsibilities. Regrettably, the WSCYT was a discretionary activity, which was being subsidised with £116,000 per annum from County Council funding. Other funding was raised from ticket sales and OnO Theatre Company fundraising.

127. The preferred option was to integrate WSCYT into the Chichester Festival Youth Theatre (CFYT). It was acknowledged that this would not replicate the existing WSCYT which currently worked with 14 – 25 year olds from around the County and was production-focused. The CFYT programme was a complementary programme for 10 – 19 year olds that was very inclusive and had good provision for disabled children. This option did not include any subsidy from the County Council.

128. The second option was to look at sustaining the programme by efficiency savings and working with other partners but there were currently no viable options for a 'bridging' arrangement that would not involve some subsidy from the County Council. The third option was to end the programme.

129. Anne Fenton, General Advisor – Drama & Foundation Team, advised the Committee that she had spoken to young people currently engaged in a production by the WSCYT about the proposals and the general consensus was that the work of CFYT was respected but that its situation in Chichester was too far away compared to WSCYT which was based in Crawley. The young people felt that working towards a production was a brilliant experience and they were challenged by working with different directors. They felt that this opportunity would be lost in the weekly workshop-style sessions run by CFYT.

130. Rupert Rowbotham, Learning & Participation Director – Chichester Festival Theatre, outlined for the Committee the way the integration of WSCYT into CFYT could work. CFYT currently had 620 members across 24 groups. Anybody could join the CFYT and selection for inclusion was based on names picked out of a hat rather than on ability. The members attended weekly sessions to develop their skills. There were four satellites to the CFYT at Littlehampton, Bognor Regis, Midhurst and Leigh Park in Hampshire. Any member of the CFYT could audition to be part of the productions. It was felt that the satellite model could be developed and work via partnerships with schools and The Hawth Theatre, Crawley.

131. The Committee received a short presentation from James Turnbull, Producer, OnO Theatre Company (which currently worked in partnership with the WSCYT), who had started a petition asking the County Council to dismiss the current proposals and to work towards alternative ones. The WSCYT had worked in partnership with OnO on 25 projects in two years. The model being proposed by CFYT would not replace the work of the WSCYT. He informed the Committee that OnO would welcome an opportunity to work in partnership with the WSCYT but could not do it in isolation and it would require some funding.

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

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- Queried the financial information provided by the CFYT. *Rupert Rowbotham advised that the figures given were headlines and part of the wider costings. The fees would be £60 per term based on four groups of 200. Bursaries would be available for those who could not afford the fees. This did not include any subsidy from the County Council.*
- Were very concerned about the geographical coverage of the CFYT proposal, as it would not replicate that of the WSCYT. *Rupert Rowbotham advised that the four satellites currently operated by CFYT had been hugely successful and they had identified five areas that needed to be reached: Burgess Hill, Billingshurst, Crawley, Storrington/Steyping and East Grinstead.*
- Were concerned about the long-term financial viability and the sustainability of the CFYT given that the £80,000 per annum subsidy to CFT from the County Council was being discontinued. *Rupert Rowbotham advised that the CFYT had grown from 280 to 620 members and the four satellites had been sustained without County Council subsidy. The CFYT could move quickly to set up pilot schemes by the Summer.*
- Felt that Option two - working in partnership with other organisations - should be explored further given the offer from OnO. *David Sword explained that the partnership option had been explored in depth, including links with the Andrew Bernardi Academy and Charterhouse School, but no offers had been forthcoming. Officers would like to continue to explore further options.*
- Were concerned that the CFYT approach was not focused on production and young people would miss out on the opportunities to take part in a high quality professional performance.
- Felt that it was important to retain the WSCYT brand rather than it being subsumed into the CFYT brand.
- Stated that whilst they appreciated the value of the service, it was the role of Members to advise and support efforts to find alternative funding, and that it was not the role of the Council to fund the service directly, in the face of current funding pressures.
- Were keen to see the provision for 19-25 year olds restored eventually.

### 133. Resolved that the Committee:

- (1) Notes the progress made in agreeing with the Chichester Festival Theatre a way of sustaining many of the WSCYT outcomes through partnership with CFT.
- (2) Endorses this as its preferred option for ensuring continued access to a youth theatre for West Sussex young people in the future.
- (3) Asks the Cabinet Member to continue to explore alternative sources of funding and partnerships which would result in subsequent expansion of the service to at least the current level

provided by WSCYT (to include touring productions and provision for 19-25 year olds).

**The County Council Draft Budget 2012/13 and Performance Targets 2012-15**

134. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Finance and Performance and Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

135. Stuart Gallimore introduced the report and highlighted to the Committee that there was a strong focus on adoption in the Performance Framework to reflect the central government lead.

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

- Highlighted the need for a more meaningful consultation with the public but acknowledged that this could be expensive.
- Requested clarification regarding the future of the Connexions contract. *Stuart Gallimore explained that bringing the Connexions contract in-house would mean bringing personal advisers in to do the work that is statutory – working with SEN and disadvantaged young people. The management of these advisers would be absorbed into current structures. Schools would take on the responsibility for generic careers advice.*
- Were concerned about the pressure on the school transport budget due to pressure on school places in Mid Sussex and Worthing where the County Council has to transport the pupil to the next nearest or parental preference school. *Jeanmarie Long (Principal Manager Policy and Practice) advised that there would be an increase in places in approximately a dozen schools around the County.*
- Enquired about the Beechfield Secure Unit, which was currently running at a surplus, with only one West Sussex child in residence. To break even the unit needed at least four residents on £5,000-a-week placements.

137. Resolved that the Committee provide the following comments to the Policy and Resources Select Committee for its consideration when scrutinising the wider County Council budget and performance targets:

- (1) Budget Pressures - concerns were expressed about the level of financial pressure arising from increasing pupil numbers and the impact this will have across a range of budgets within the portfolio, including transport.
- (2) Consultation process - some concerns were expressed about the scope of the public consultation process and the limited number of responses. Some Members considered that greater efforts should be made to engage the public in debate about the budget, and outlined different approaches adopted by other local authorities, which can provide valuable insight into how local residents would prioritise expenditure even when budgets are constrained.

- (3) Performance targets – The Committee supported the focus on a reduced number of more challenging targets.
- (4) Early Intervention and Prevention - Some concern was expressed about the level of challenge presented by this target in the face of forthcoming changes to the Connexions service and the challenging economic position.

### **Improvement Board Update**

138. Mrs Ross declared a personal interest as a member of the Improvement Board.

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

140. Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, updated the Committee on the following key issues:

- The service was in a position of readiness and preparedness for the next OFSTED inspection, which would take place between now and the end of July.
- The Department for Education (DfE) had recommended that the frequency of Improvement Board and Performance Challenge Board meetings could be scaled back and now they met every other month.
- Social Worker vacancies were down from 30% to 5%, which meant there were 67 more social workers than three years ago.
- Of the 16 American social workers employed on a temporary basis, one had returned to America in the first year and another would leave two months before the end of their contract. There were 13 remaining and of those, 5 had indicated that they definitely wanted to stay, 4 definitely wanted to return and 4 were undecided.

141. The Committee thanked Peter Evans and Stuart Gallimore for all their hard work and that of the staff within the service.

142. Resolved: - That the Business Planning Group (BPG) considers how findings from the Peer Review will inform priorities for scrutiny in 2012/13.

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

143. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – February – May 2012 (copy appended to the signed minutes) and asked for a written briefing on block contracts for older Looked After Children.

**Members' Items**

144. Mr Smytherman requested that the Committee look at the number of schools in the County which are still unable to provide hot meals. The Committee agreed to add this to the list of items for the BPG to consider for 2012/13.

**Date of the Next Meeting**

145. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 7 March 2012 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm.

Chairman