

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

8 June 2016 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Cloake (Chairman)

Mrs Bennett	Mrs Mullins
Mr High	Mr Oppler
Dr Holt	Mr Parsons
Mrs Jupp	

In attendance by invitation: Mr Hillier (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Mrs Field (Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing) who is currently overseeing elements of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

Apologies for absence were received from: - Mr Blunden, Mrs Evans, Mrs Le Rossignol, Mr R Oakley, Mrs Ryan, Mr Smith, Mr Wickremaratchi and Mr Burrett (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills). Mrs Jones was absent.

Declaration of Interests

31. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared:-
- Dr Holt – Item 5 (West Sussex Strategy for School Improvement) as the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester
 - Amanda Jupp – Item 4 (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy) as a Governor of Muntham House School
 - See also minutes 35 and 50

Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

32. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Minutes of the joint meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee and Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee

33. Resolved – That the minutes of the joint meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee and Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee be confirmed as a correct record.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy

34. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education and the Interim Director of Education and Skills (copy appended to the signed minutes).

35. Mr High declared a personal interest as the parent of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and Mr Oppler declared a personal interest as the foster carer for a child at a special school.

36. Jon Philpot, Principal Manager SEN and Inclusion, and Joanna Earl, Education and Skills Strategy, introduced the report and provided a Powerpoint presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes) that set out the rationale for and processes behind development of the strategy. The following points were highlighted: -

- The County Council had a higher proportion of children with an Education Health and Care Plan educated in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) when compared with statistical neighbours. These schools were often located a long way from the child's home resulting in some children having to live away from their family.
- Placing children at these schools was costly and put pressure on the high needs block of funding that came from the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- The aim of the Strategy was to ensure children were educated in a school that best met their needs and was as close to their home as possible.
- The feedback obtained from the consultation on the draft strategy had been analysed and the Strategy Action Plan updated accordingly to reflect issues identified from the feedback.

37. Lara Roberts, member of the management team of the West Sussex Parent Carer Forum, who had been consulted in development of the strategy, addressed the Committee and provided a presentation highlighting the following points: -

- The Parent Carer Forum welcomed the production of the Strategy and echoed the need for a reduction in the number of children placed in INMSS.
- The impression parents had gained from speaking with some mainstream schools was that they felt unable or ill-equipped to cope with children with SEND. It therefore seemed important to ensure that more support was provided to schools as a whole, including all staff and governors, so they had the required resources to feel more confident in having children with SEND on their roll
- It was accepted that there would be hurdles to overcome in delivery of the strategy but by establishing trust and communicating regularly with parents and schools this should help keep all informed of developments.

38. Stephen Hillier, Cabinet Member for Children - Start of Life, indicated that the strategy was a positive step and he was pleased at the success of and the high numbers that attended the event to launch the consultation process for the strategy. However he was disappointed that the response rate from schools to the consultation was only 19% as it was essential to get schools engaged with the strategy for positive change to occur.

39. Avril Wilson, Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education, stressed that change was needed as, despite the high level of expenditure on children with SEND compared to other authorities, this was still not delivering good educational outcomes for these children. In this respect the strategy was centred on a change of approach and providing more support to mainstream schools to enable a greater number of children with SEND to be included in mainstream education.

40. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -

- Stressed that finance should not be a barrier to providing the most suitable educational placement for each child with SEND whether this be a mainstream school, maintained special school or INMSS.

Agenda Item Number 2

- Highlighted that it would take time for a cultural change amongst some maintained schools as they were less experienced in educating children with SEND at their site, and may feel that, for example, they do not have an appropriate environment for autistic children. *Jon Philpot explained that, where it was considered appropriate, autistic children could be placed in schools that had Special Support Centres (SSCs) which could offer the opportunity for individual work to take place if the child needed to be away from a noisy classroom environment.*
- Welcomed the development of the offer provided by the educational psychology service to enable schools to buy additional hours of support for students that needed additional assistance.
- Requested clarification regarding the additional support that could be provided to children with EHCPs. *Mr Philpot explained that every school had a budget for children with SEND which varied from school to school. However if the child had an EHCP an additional £3232 would be allocated if extra support was needed.*
- Welcomed the fact that there would be a review of County Council educational provision for children with SEND including SSCs and special schools and asked that the Committee be kept informed of the outcome of the review.
- Raised concern that there were gaps in provision for young people with SEND post 16 which was resulting in increased numbers of those with SEND classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET). *Lara Roberts indicated that this topic was being highlighted by the Parent Carer Forum as an issue that needed addressing to try and increase the support provided to schools and Further Education (FE) Colleges. Jon Philpot explained that post-16 provision for young people with SEND was a national issue of concern as there had been no additional funding from government to address it. The County Council were working with FE Colleges to encourage and guide them in how to support those with SEND who were interested in taking a course at their establishment. In addition if a young person with an EHCP stayed in education post-16 this would trigger additional financial support to provide the appropriate assistance for them in their studies.*
- Expressed disappointment that Academies had, on occasion, refused to take a child with SEND after a parent had applied for a place there. Although the County Council had been successful in appealing to the Department for Education against the decision, by this point the parent felt demoralised and no longer wished their child to go to the school
- Raised concern that the response rate to the consultation was so low and welcomed the fact that the service would be actively identifying those schools who had not come to the launch event or completed the consultation to ensure they were aware of the strategy.
- Highlighted the need to improve the communication between early years providers and the County Council to ensure they were identifying children that may have SEND so that, when they reached school age, a smooth transition to an appropriate primary school could be made.
- Welcomed the proposal to hold a Task and Finish Group to consider the educational outcomes for young people with SEND and how they could transition to independent living.
- Raised concern about the potential for children with SEND to struggle with integration with other pupils and be subject to bullying in mainstream schools. *Mr Philpot explained that whilst some bullying could occur, there were often positive outcomes resulting from children with SEND attending*

- mainstream schools, as children without SEND became more used to and tolerant of engaging with other children that were different to them.*
- Were concerned that appropriate travel arrangements were in place for children who accessed provision at maintained special schools due to the length of journey for some pupils as a result of the majority of special schools being at capacity. *Mr Philpot explained that if more children with SEND could be educated in mainstream schools this could free up spaces in Special Schools meaning the possibility of going to a school closer to home. In addition each child with an EHCP had their travel plan assessed as part of the annual review process to ensure it was appropriate.*
 - Welcomed the drive to improve peer to peer support amongst mainstream schools in sharing experience of how to best to support and assist with the integration of children with SEND.
41. Resolved that the Committee: -
- (1) Endorse the proposed decision to adopt the SEND Strategy.
 - (2) Ask the Cabinet Member to share the outcome of the review of provision for children with SEND with the Committee.
 - (3) Support the development of a focus and terms of reference for a Task and Finish Group (TFG) in consultation with the service and explore the option of co-opting a member of the Parent Carer Forum onto the TFG.

West Sussex Strategy for School Improvement

42. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Care, Wellbeing and Education and the Director of Education and Skills (copy appended to the signed minutes).
43. Stuart Powell, Head of School Improvement, introduced the report and highlighted the following :-
- There had previously been an assumption that those schools rated Good or Outstanding needed little support from the County Council but due to standards slipping in some of these schools it was proposed that, as a standard all schools should receive ½ day visit each term.
 - The strategy set out what support all schools and academies could expect to receive from the County Council.
 - School to school co-operation was beneficial and it was proposed that there was an emphasis on peer support to share good practice, particularly from the 11 teaching schools across the County.
44. Ken Lloyd, Chair of Governors of both Felpham Community College and Ormiston Six Villages Academy and Chair of the Standards and Performance sub-group of the Education and Skills Forum explained to the Committee that the draft strategy had been well received by school representatives. They felt it was a positive step in clarifying the role of the authority and were keen for it to be adopted and the proposals moved forward.
45. The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing highlighted that the strategy was critical for ensuring equal education for all pupils. The recent publication of the

Government White Paper on Education indicated that there would be a change in responsibility for school improvement in future years but this strategy would provide a good foundation that could be adjusted to reflect the Government proposals as they became clearer.

46. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -

- Welcomed the strategy and its aim of improving educational outcomes for all children.
- Noted the concern that there were limited specific references to engaging with the Catholic or Church of England Diocesan Education Boards in ensuring there was an agreed joint approach to implementing improvement in Church schools. *Stuart Powell explained that it was very important to work with both Education Boards to avoid duplication of effort and agree an appropriate approach to improvement.*
- Requested assurance that the school advisers would have the necessary skills to challenge when schools or governing bodies appeared resistant to accepting the need for improvement. *Stuart Powell indicated that he had recently appointed 5 new advisers to the service who had a range of experience including ex-Ofsted inspectors and ex-headteachers. This had changed the perspective of the service and there was an understanding that there was a need for a robust but supportive approach to dealing with schools. In addition a new head of the governance support team had been employed who was currently undertaking an audit of governing bodies across the County to assess their impact as a component of leadership and management within each school.* The Committee welcomed this and requested that they receive details of this audit to assist their understanding of the impact of the governing body on the effectiveness of individual schools.
- Requested clarification regarding whether there were sufficient teaching schools to meet demand and how effective they were. *Stuart Powell indicated that there weren't enough and that the government had recently altered the criteria so that schools with a Good Ofsted rating could apply to become a teaching school to try and meet demand. Better engagement with the existing 11 teaching schools was proposed via input from the School Improvement Boards. This should ensure the teaching schools had the correct skill set to provide consistent support to others and were actively taking opportunities to visit the school they were supporting to tailor the advice they provided to fit that particular school.*
- Queried whether schools had access to on-line training resources so staff and governors could improve their skills without having to take time out to attend external courses. *Mr Lloyd indicated that he made extensive use of on-line training and made recommendations to colleagues about those he found particularly useful.*
- Welcomed the fact that all evidence indicated schools actively valued and engaged with school to school support and had good networks to share advice and experience including the locality groups and Headteacher Executives.
- Highlighted the benefits of mentoring for young people from representatives within the community and requested that consideration be given to this issue being promoted via the advisers at their termly visit.

47. The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing explained that feedback on the outcomes achieved following implementation of the Improvement Strategy would be shared with Committee to ensure they were kept informed on progress.
48. Resolved that the Committee: -
- (1) Endorse the West Sussex Strategy for School Improvement
 - (2) Ask that an update on progress in implementing the Strategy is provided to the Business Planning Group in a years' time.
 - (3) Request that a strategic analysis of the governance audit be circulated to the Committee
 - (4) Request that a briefing be provided to the Committee on the potential impact on the White Paper and resulting changes for the Education Service when greater clarity on the proposals in the Paper is obtained.

Outturn Total Performance Monitor 2015-16

49. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Corporate Resources and Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).
50. The Chairman declared a personal interest as a West Sussex Foster Carer and the spouse of someone recruited to the County Council Social Work academy,
51. Annie MacIver, Director of Family Operations and Mark Astbury, Principal Manager - Service Finance introduced the report and provided a Powerpoint presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes) and highlighted the following: -
- A number of in-year budget changes had occurred as the result of one-off funding allocations to the Children – Start of Life portfolio to manage cost pressures on the service. Therefore in reality the overspend on the original budget allocated for the 2015-16 period was £6.5 million greater than the outturn position showed.
 - The service was still facing rising costs due to the increasing number of Children Looked After, the need for specialist placements to accommodate those children with complex needs and the high number of agency staff.
 - Steps were being taken to mitigate these cost pressures by: -
 - Recruiting additional foster carers with the skills to manage children with complex needs
 - Encouraging agency staff to transfer to permanent employment with the County Council
 - Recruiting newly qualified social workers into the social work academy
 - Exploring a return to social work initiative
 - A number of bids had been made to the DfE for additional funding to address specific issues including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Signs of Safety Planning.
52. The Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life highlighted the importance of the Committee in scrutinising the effectiveness of the measures being taken to drive down costs.

53. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -
- Queried whether access to affordable accommodation was being offered as part of the incentive to attract social workers to apply for posts at the County Council. *Annie MacIver advised that affordable housing was an issue that affected all social workers, both working with children and adults. Therefore this had been identified as part of the workforce priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board to explore whether it would be possible to improve access to affordable accommodation for social workers.*
 - Requested clarification regarding placing children that had been the subject of CSE in Beechfield as opposed to another secure unit in another County where they may be less liable to re-connect with the perpetrator. *Annie MacIver explained that there was a preference to place the child as close as possible to their social worker which would generally mean being placed in Beechfield where possible. The decision to place a child in a secure unit was only made in exceptional circumstances when there was a risk to the child's life.*
 - Acknowledged that the £500k DfE grant would not fund the re-building of Beechfield.
 - Recognised the challenges faced by the service in managing the budget due to the pressures that existed and agreed that the Business Planning Group should receive updates on progress made in reducing the number of agency social workers.
54. Resolved - That the Committee requests that the Business Planning Group receives updates from the service on progress made in reducing the number of agency social workers.

Report from the Business Planning Group

55. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes).
56. Resolved - That the Committee supports the proposed approach to the agenda items for forthcoming meetings and updates to the work programme.

Requests for Call-in

57. The Chairman explained that the Business Planning Group had decided to refuse two call-in requests relating to decisions by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills (copy of call-in requests and reasons for rejection appended to the signed minutes) due to the fact that pre-decision scrutiny had taken place and there was insufficient new evidence to warrant additional scrutiny.
58. Resolved – That the reasons for rejection of the two Call-in requests be noted.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

59. The Committee considered a tabled paper which was a new version of the Forward Plan, July – October 2016 (copy appended to the signed minutes). This

version of the Forward Plan was not included in the Committee papers as it had been published following the statutory despatch of the agenda.

60. The Committee noted the new entry in the Forward Plan in relation to future arrangements for Children and Family Centre services in the Findon Valley area. Members agreed that, due to the localised impact of the proposal, it would be more appropriate for consideration of this issue to be an agenda item at a Worthing County Local Committee meeting, should the local Members in the Findon Valley area feel they wanted the opportunity for further detail about the proposal.

61. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

62. Mr Parsons highlighted the concerns raised at the recent Adur County Local Committee meeting in relation to the lack of consultation about the introduction of a 'bulge' class at Swiss Gardens Primary School to manage the additional need for pupil places in this part of Shoreham. *The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing advised that she would be meeting with the Local MP in the coming weeks to discuss this matter further. It was suggested that a briefing note on this issue could be circulated to the Committee*

Date of next meeting

63. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 15 July 2016 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester. The Chairman advised that Jay Mercer, Interim Director of Education and Skills, was leaving the authority to take up a post in Dorset in early July. The Committee requested that their thanks for the advice and guidance he had provided to them should be minuted.

The meeting ended at 1.20pm.

Chairman