

Agenda Item No. 2

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee 19th January, 2011 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.00 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present:

Miss Hendon (Chairman)

Mr. Burgess	Mrs. Mills	Mr. Smytherman
Mr. Coleman	Mr. Oxlade	Mr. Strong
Mr. Graysmark	Mrs. Reynolds	Mrs. Waight
Mr. Lanzer	Mrs. Ross	Mr. Wilson
Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr. Simmons	

An apology for absence was received from Dr Wilsdon.

In attendance by invitation: the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools;
Mr Griffiths (from 10.00 am).

Also in attendance: The Leader; Ms Goldsmith and Mr Evans. Mr T.M.E Dunn,
Mrs Bennett, Mrs Whitehead, Mr Burrett, Mr Hodgson, Mrs Arculus, and Mrs Field
(observing).

Declarations of Interest

117. The following personal interests were declared:-

- Mr Simmons, as Children's Champion and Cabinet Member, Adur District Council, (item4), Advisor to the Cabinet Member on Special Educational Needs (item 5), and as a Governor at Herons Dale, Special School (item 10).
- Mr Oxlade, as a member of Bewbush and Oriel Youth Wing Advisory Committee (item 7), and
- Mrs Ross as a member of West Sussex Children's Service Improvement Board (item 5).

Minutes

118. Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

Children's Service Performance

119. The Committee received a report by the Children's Delivery Programme Task Force (copy appended to the signed minutes).

120. Mike Coleman, Chairman of the Children's Delivery Programme Task Force, introduced the report.

121. A debate on the Task Force proposals ensued and members:-

- Considered the timing and introduction of the new information technology (IT) system Frameworki and the logistics of ensuring staff training was provided and that paper systems would be fully integrated. *Mr Gallimore said that historical data on social worker caseloads will not have been integrated when the Frameworki system goes live and that integrating paper records was part of wider corporate issues. A staged process would be followed with Frameworki in order to ensure that there was consistency and quality of data.*
 - Asked about the volume of some social worker caseloads. *Mr Gallimore said that as a consequence of training new social workers who had joined the Council there was a disproportionate impact on other more experienced staff and that more work was being undertaken on early intervention.*
 - Asked about the IT contract with Capita and the lessons learned from the ERIC system.
 - Considered how possible serious case reviews would be monitored whilst the organisation was undergoing significant change.
 - Asked about staff morale. *Mr Gallimore said that there was a need to keep monitoring this in conjunction with Unison through regular "health checks".*
 - Agreed that it would be helpful to review the Findings and Recommendations from the Children's Delivery Programme and the Serious Case Reviews with the Improvement Plan for West Sussex.
122. Resolved – That the Children's Delivery Programme Findings and Recommendations Appendix A and Learning from Serious Case Reviews – Findings and Recommendations - Appendix B - be endorsed.

Cabinet Member for Children and Families

123. The Leader explained to the Committee that, with immediate effect, Mr Peter Evans would be taking on the role of Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Mr Pete Bradbury would be moving to the Public Protection portfolio. Mr Evans would take forward the Children and Families portfolio and focus on improving safeguarding and upgrading the Ofsted rating.

Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children

124. The Committee discussed the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children report by the Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

125. Mr Gallimore, Director for Children's Services, introduced the report. He gave some background to the Ofsted inspection in November. He said that Ofsted overall grading for the effectiveness of children's services and the

capacity to improve because of the safeguarding assessment had been judged to be 'poor'. The improvement programme would be monitored by the Department for Education. He outlined the Children's Services had produced an improvement plan which would address areas of concern such as child protection processes, educational attainment, performance management arrangements, partnership and governance arrangements and corporate parenting. He told members about the staff support for improving the situation and the additional support which would be put in place. Specialists were being brought into the department and working with staff and management. Work was currently underway on section 47 investigations, reviewing record keeping and decision making to ensure that it was appropriate. Sue Cart would be overseeing the work which it was estimated could take up to 8 weeks. An independent Chairman of the Improvement Board; Nick Jarman would take the lead in providing scrutiny and challenge. Kevin Peers has been appointed to ensure delivery of the plan.

126. Nick Jarman, Chairman of the Improvement Board, explained the background to the Board, his role and how the Board was likely to be set up for 6 months, initially.

127. Members discussed the report. Members:-

- Discussed how focusing on improving quality and timeliness of assessments would have a positive impact on the service provided.
- Considered how performance levels of assessments in the service would be affected during this period of transition in areas of risk and during the changeover from ERIC to Frameworki. *Mr Gallimore said that during this period there would be additional staff and that there would be greater attention to high risk areas and further work on benchmarking systems. He added that there was a contingency in the budget for this work but that any additional finance would need the authorisation of the Cabinet.*
- Asked whether there was staff capacity for any increase in referrals. *Mr Gallimore responded that it depended on the level of increase for example if child protection plans were to increase at the same level as currently, there would be resource issues.*
- Requested that the membership/minutes of the Improvement Board be made available to committee members. **(Action: Nick Jarman).**
- Discussed the way in which other partners would be involved in the Improvement Board. *The Leader responded that there had been support from health partners and co-operation from districts and boroughs to improve services to residents and help to provide a seamless service.*
- Discussed early intervention issues. *The Leader explained how better ways of doing things such as "think family" initiatives were being pursued.*
- Considered how, following the reconfiguration of social worker locality areas, issues on managing staff travel had been addressed. *Mr Gallimore said that the work on focusing people in areas of greatest service need*

would continue and it was important that there were ways of allowing staff to work flexibly.

- Considered how future progress with the Improvement Plan could be considered in conjunction with the Children's Delivery Task Force report as recommendations covered similar issues. Members agreed it would be helpful to have feedback on the meeting with the Minister anticipated in June.

128. Resolved – that the Committee's comments above be noted, and that members note the findings and actions taken to date on the Improvement Plan.

Budget and Performance

129. The Committee considered a report on Budget and Performance 2010/11 by the Director for Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

130. Resolved that the Committee notes: –
- 1) the current budget position for the Service and the improvement in the projected year end position,
 - 2) the performance of key Children's Services measures in the corporate performance framework, principally Initial and Core Assessments against the background of increasing demand across all areas of the service, and
 - 3) the Corporate Performance Framework summary and Children's Services action plans.

Local Government Finance Settlement and the County Council Budget 2011/12 onwards

131. The Committee received a report on the Local Government Finance Settlement and the County Council Budget 2011/12 onwards (copy appended to the signed minutes).

132. Graham Smith, Deputy Group Manager, Financial Services, introduced the report. He said that as a result of the late and complex Government settlement the usual draft budget and portfolio budget papers were still being processed. The County Council Formula Grant for 2011/12 had fallen by 14% (£20.2m) and the reduction in grant was the equal worst of any County Council. Part of the reason that the County Council had the maximum cut in grant is that the Government considered that West Sussex was not reliant on Formula Grant. This was in spite of a number of years of low funding. He also said that the Government settlement provided support for a council tax freeze and that a couple of specific grants relevant to the Children's budget remain to be announced. As regards Capital grants, there had been an increase and a change in the method of funding with the impact on the capital programme still being considered. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was cash frozen. He said that a Pupil Premium grant had been introduced on top of the DSG which would be £430 per pupil for those entitled to a free paid meal in schools. The Government had set the Minimum Funding Guarantee level for schools to minus 1.5% per pupil which implied that some schools would have less funding.

133. The Leader drew members attention to the budget priorities focusing on safeguarding and early intervention. The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools said how portfolio priorities included supporting communities through the "Big Society" vision, improving children's health in schools, and successful delivery of the Ofsted Improvement Plan. This included reducing the level of permanent exclusions of looked after children, all looked after children having high quality Pupil Education Plans, improving educational performance data, reducing achievement gaps between children, moving from being a provider to being a commissioner and increasing academisation of schools.

134. Chris Earwaker, UNISON representative, said that UNISON were concerned with the proposed cuts. She raised concerns about the review of Children's homes – Shoreham and Crawley with a view to closure which would be risky for children's safeguarding and both homes had excellent records. She said that the homes were fully occupied, offered good value for money and if the Council homes were sold there was a real risk of "being held to ransom" and there would be increased costs. She considered that there would be disruption to young people's lives and no real savings if the Council closed the homes.

135. Members discussed the issues. Members commented on Appendix 1 of the report Schedule of Savings by the Cabinet Member for 2011/12 and 2013/14.

Members: -

- Wanted to see a proper financial case for alternative services of equal quality to the in-house Children's home provision and yet achieve the proposed savings on Seaside and Teasel.
- Agreed that communications with staff working in these two homes should be improved to ensure that they were fully aware of the proposals.
- Discussed maintaining income level at Beechfield and were concerned that the proposals could result in Beechfield operating at a deficit and that costs needed to be managed to avoid this.
- Discussed the important role members played in the community and the useful geographical representation and overlay with other agencies and youth services etc
- Considered the youth services and were concerned about further reductions. Members were pleased to note the range of ways in which support could be provided to alternative providers for universal youth services. Members recognised the important role of councillors in supporting this but remained concerned about the relative scale and impact of the proposed savings on this service. The Committee asked for a report back on progress with groups who could be identified to take over provision of universal services before further savings proposals progressed further by the Cabinet Member.

- Were concerned that a viable alternative should be found to sustain services to support Gifted and Talented pupils and the performing and visual arts programme.
- Were concerned about the potential impact of the proposals on the most vulnerable Special Educational Needs children and wished to have feedback on the impact of implementing the changes.
- Expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on low income families and those who did not claim free school meals. They were also concerned about the consequences for wider school place planning and parental nominations for school preferences.

136. Resolved – that the Committee’s comments on the key budget issues above be considered by the Policy and Resources Select Committee at its meeting on 21st January.

Review of Education and Schools Policy

137. The membership of the Education and Schools Policy Task Force (considering the performance of the learning service) was agreed as Mr Strong, Mrs Mills, Mrs Le Rossignol, Mr Graysmark, Mr Simmons and Mr Wilson.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

138. The Forward Plan (February – May 2011) was tabled for members consideration.

139. Members noted the Forward Plan.

Date of the Next Meeting

140. The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is to be held on 9th March 2011 at 10.30 am at County Hall.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm.