

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

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

Present: Mr Cloake (Chairman)

Mr Blunden	Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Parsons
Mr High	Mrs Jupp	Mrs Ryan
Mr Hillier	Mrs Mullins	Mr Smith
Dr Holt	Mr R Oakley	

In attendance by invitation: Mr Burrett (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills).

Apologies for absence were received from: - Mrs Bennett, Mrs Duncton, Mr Wickremaratchi and Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life). Mr Oppler was absent.

**Declaration of Interests**

131. No interests were declared.

**Minutes**

132. The Chairman requested that the appreciation of the Committee be recorded in relation to Mrs Duncton acting as Chairman at the meeting of the 14 January 2016.

133. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**Education and Skills Annual Report 2014-15**

134. 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).

135. Jay Mercer, Interim Director of Education and Skills, introduced the report and highlighted that he was keen to hear the Committee's comments and particularly welcomed suggestions in relation to what they would like to see covered in future versions of the executive summary.

136. Chris James, Senior Adviser, highlighted the following points: -

- Outcomes at Key Stage 2 were of most concern with a 1% decline in the proportion of pupils attaining level 4+ in combined reading, writing and maths. This had led to the gap in performance between West Sussex and the national average increasing to 3%.
- The national measures would be changing at the end of this school year, meaning that, from September, the County Council would be assessed on a different set of outcome measures.

137. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills highlighted that the national system for ranking the performance of authorities was incredibly sensitive to even small percentage increases or decreases in outcomes. In this respect a 1% increase in performance could lead to a dramatic rise up the ranking of authorities; it was also possible for an authority to increase its performance but fall several places in the rankings if other authorities increased their performance by a greater amount.

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

- Were encouraged by outcomes at Key Stage 1 but felt it would be helpful to see a breakdown of the figures to show performance in different parts of the county. This would help to identify whether there were any geographical areas where pupils were performing less well and additional support may be required.
- Raised concern regarding the lack of consistency amongst pre-school children in their readiness for school due to the variability in the level and availability of nursery provision and the fact that some parents actively chose not to enrol their child in pre-school education. It was felt that this could impact on Key Stage 1 outcomes as some children started school lacking very basic skills. *Avril Wilson, Executive Director, Care, Wellbeing and Education explained that improving take-up and outcomes within the Early Years' sector was a priority for the County Council. A joint piece of work between Children's Services and Education and Skills was being progressed via the Education and Skills Forum to address this. In addition a Department for Education pilot study was underway to analyse the impact of increasing the number of hours of pre-school education; Portsmouth City Council (PCC) was part of this pilot so the County Council would be closely watching the outcomes PCC achieved.*
- Highlighted the disparity across the County and the subsequent impact on outcomes of some pupils living in rural areas attending small schools, with low class numbers, the presence of mixed age classes and fewer teachers whereas others in more urban areas may experience higher density classes of more than 30 pupils. *Mr James explained that the service had carried out some analysis of performance across the county to assess whether these type of factors were having an effect but the results had not identified any obvious trends, i.e. poor performance was not consistently seen amongst those in small classes or amongst those where class size exceeded 30 pupils.*
- Suggested that the service explore the options to provide additional support for schools by utilising the experience of retired headteachers and governors. *Mr Mercer explained the service was already doing this. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the role of the school improvement boards in identifying and brokering support for schools, with one board already in place in Crawley and another being created in Chichester.*
- Requested clarification regarding the action plan put in place to address declining performance at Key Stage 2 (KS2) and highlighted concern regarding the adequacy of funding for the school improvement service. *Mr Mercer explained that additional external resource was being engaged to assist schools in improving KS2 results. As progress in English was generally good the support provided would target maths where performance was pulling down overall attainment levels and this resource would be focussed on the biggest schools with the lowest results. Mrs Wilson acknowledged the relatively low level of funding provided for the school improvement service*

*but highlighted that the continuing need for the County Council to find savings meant it was unlikely to change. Mr Mercer explained that work was ongoing to ensure the limited resource for school improvement was used as effectively as possible. He acknowledged that taking a light touch approach to working with schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted had meant the service were less aware when performance at these schools started to dip. This approach was being reviewed and a more effective relationship developed with all schools, regardless of Ofsted rating.*

- Queried what work was being done to narrow the gap in achievement particularly of those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). *Mr Mercer explained that a review of the special needs strategy had been initiated as there were proportionately less pupils with an EHCP in West Sussex than nationally but the County Council still had a high spend on out of county specialist educational placements. In this respect an assessment of how mainstream schools managed children with special needs was required to ensure the correct approach was being taken and children weren't being referred for specialist placements when education in a mainstream school would meet their needs.*
- Highlighted that employers did not necessarily recognise or understand the achievement of the English Baccalaureate and so pupils who did obtain this would not perceive any benefit from it.
- Welcomed the work of the schools and Cabinet Member in seeking fairer funding for schools in West Sussex and were encouraged that the Cabinet Member and headteacher representatives were to meet with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Childcare and Education to put forward a case that an interim funding settlement should be provided for West Sussex. The Committee agreed that the Chairman should write a letter expressing concern about the poor funding West Sussex schools received compared with other shire authorities for the Cabinet Member to present to the Minister at the meeting. The Committee asked that the Cabinet Member provide feedback on the outcome of the meeting.
- Requested clarification regarding the work the County Council were doing to establish the number of 'unknowns' and therefore get an accurate picture of the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). *Annie MacIver, Director of Family operations explained that the service were in discussion with the DfE regarding the problems in data collection and ways to address this. A number of organisations, such as Colleges/Universities and the Department of Work and Pensions were previously required to provide the County Council information about young people registered with them for various purposes which would assist in identifying whether the young people were in education or employment. This requirement had since been removed; however the County Council were in discussion with these organisations to initiate the resumption of the provision of this data to help improve understanding of the level of NEETS in West Sussex.*
- Highlighted that in previous years a Task and Finish Group had been convened to consider the executive summary of the Education and Skills Annual Report which had allowed more detailed and focussed scrutiny and suggested that this approach be considered again for next year.

139. Resolved that the Committee: -

- (1) Request that future editions of the Annual Report Executive Summary should include broader

## Agenda Item Number 2

information, not only about learner outcomes but also the work in progress within the Learning Service to improve outcomes for children and young people and to support delivery of corporate objectives.

- (2) Request that information provided for scrutiny in 2017 should include data broken down into smaller geographical areas within the County.
- (3) Request that a report on Early Years developments, including detail on the impact of the pilot programme in Portsmouth, is provided to the Business Planning Group (BPG) to enable members to monitor the impact of initiatives and identify if a further item on this issue is required by the full Committee.
- (4) Asks the BPG to consider the most appropriate way to facilitate more detailed scrutiny of the annual report, whilst ensuring that this scrutiny is undertaken in the public domain, given the importance of the issues.
- (5) Requests that a report of the impact of current initiatives on Key Stage 2 results should be provided to the Committee when it becomes available following assessment in May 2016.
- (6) Asks the Cabinet Member to ensure that the review of support provided to schools within the County by the Education and Skills service makes best use of the resource available in maximising benefits in terms of outcomes for children.
- (7) Asks the Cabinet Member to share with the Minister a letter from the Committee expressing support for improved funding for West Sussex Schools and that the Cabinet Member provides the Committee with feedback from the meeting.

### Forward Plan of Key Decisions

140. The Committee considered a tabled paper which was a new version of the Forward Plan, March – June 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.

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

### Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

142. Mr Hillier highlighted concern in relation to the perceived lack of provision of buildings for community use, such as for nurseries or scouts and whether there was any scope for the County Council to influence this. *Mrs Wilson indicated that the requirements around provision of sufficient nursery places would be considered as part of the process of developing the growth plans.*

**Date of next meeting**

143. The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 9 March 2016 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 12.35pm.

Chairman