

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

13 March 2013 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mrs Arculus	Mrs Mills	Mrs Waight
Mr Burgess	Mrs Ross	Dr Wilsdon
Mr Graysmark	Mr Smytherman	
Mr Lanzer	Mr Tyler	

In attendance by invitation: Mr Griffiths (Cabinet Member for Education and Schools) and Mrs Thompson, representative of the Diocese of Chichester.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Le Rossignol and Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children and Families). Mr T M E Dunn, Mr Oxlade and Mrs Reynolds were absent.

Declaration of Interests

193. None declared at this point (see minutes 198, 204 and 213)

Minutes

194. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2013 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Member Responses

195. The Committee considered a response from the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools to the recommendations made at its meeting of 17 January 2013 in relation to School Funding Reform 2013/14 – High Needs Block and regarding School Funding Reform 2013/14 –Schools and Early Years Blocks (copy appended to the signed minutes).

196. Resolved – That the Committee notes the responses from the Cabinet Member.

West Sussex Children's Services Improvement Board

197. The Committee considered a report by the Independent Chairman, West Sussex Children's Service Improvement Board (copy appended to the signed minutes).

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

199. Nick Jarman, Independent Chairman, introduced the report and advised that he felt satisfied the improvements made within the service were sustainable.

Agenda Item Number 2

200. Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, updated the Committee on the unannounced inspection which had occurred during February explaining that the inspection report would be published on the Ofsted website on the 22nd March 2013.

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

- Queried what measures had been taken to ensure sustainable management arrangements were in place, particularly once the Improvement Board ceased to exist. *Mr Gallimore advised that during the latter part of 2012 the senior management structure of Children's Services had been reconfigured and the additional post of Head of Children's Social Care had been created meaning a robust hierarchy of management was in place. Processes that had been put in place to ensure better communication and improved practice such as the weekly performance reporting had now been incorporated as part of usual procedure. It was also felt important that the Performance Challenge Board continue but chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Families rather than the Chief Executive. In addition independent scrutiny of Children's Services would be maintained through the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee.*
- Asked whether the service had improved staffing levels. *Mr Gallimore explained that in February the vacancy rate across the service was 8%. There was an improvement in both staff retention and the proportion of experienced staff, with 59% of staff categorised as experienced.* The Committee suggested that it would be beneficial to receive future regular updates on staffing levels within the service.
- Commented on the benefits and positive experience of Members being actively involved in working with the service to challenge and assist with driving through improvements. *Mr Gallimore acknowledged the significance of Member involvement explaining the benefits of Members visiting staff working within the service and highlighted the important roles Members can take on such as being a Regulation 33 visitor or member of a Foster Panel.*

202. Resolved - that the Committee recommends that updates on vacancy levels in Children's Services be provided to the Committee on a regular basis as part of the suite of performance information about the service.

Dual Registered Pupil Task Force

203. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Task Force (copy appended to the signed minutes).

204. Mr Burrett declared a personal interest as a Governor of Thomas Bennett Community College.

205. Pat Arculus, Chairman of the Task Force, introduced the report explaining that schools were looking for strategic leadership from the County Council to guide them in cases where it was necessary to arrange alternative provision for pupils on their roll. She emphasised that although the Members' work had been wide-ranging it was felt that the time-limited nature of the Task Force meant it was not possible to explore all the issues uncovered in detail. In this respect it would be beneficial for the Committee to consider doing further work in this area.

206. The following points were raised in discussion; Members:

- Highlighted the high success rate achieved by Further Education Colleges within the 14-16 age group. *David Sword, Head of Learning, concurred with this point emphasising the positive relationship the County Council had with these Colleges and the good work they do with pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour in a school environment.*
- Queried how engagement between schools and the wider range of children's services could be improved, particularly in cases where a child was experiencing difficult circumstances but not to such an extent that Social Services were involved. *Mr Gallimore explained that if a school identified that its own pastoral services were insufficient for a particular child then there were avenues available to them to engage assistance such as through the Common Assessment Framework and the Team Around the Child processes. Mrs Arculus stressed the importance of awareness of the vulnerability of these pupils within the relevant teams in Children's Services and that the creation of a strategic vision as set out in the report recommendations should help to improve engagement.*
- Asked how the County Council could ensure that schools took a consistent approach to dual-registered pupils, what enforcement measures were available when schools acted inappropriately and how the County Council could ensure Academies fulfilled their requirements. *Mr Sword explained that one of the changes to be implemented as part of the creation of the Alternative Provision College was the introduction of an assessment process for every child identified as requiring educating at a provider other than the school they were registered at. This would mean the Local Authority being aware of all dual registered children, having the ability to ensure the correct arrangement was put in place for each child and that a clear set of measurable outcomes was identified for each pupil. In this respect if the initial assessment indicated the pupil did not require alternative provision they would remain at school, thereby reducing the instances of schools seeking to place 'difficult' children elsewhere.*

Protocols were in place that defined the requirements of the establishment where the pupils was registered – whether a school or Academy. If the establishment failed to adhere to these protocols and the child was considered at risk then the County Council had the authority to intervene, as appropriate, and in the case of Academies the ultimate sanction would be to highlight the matter to the Department for Education.

- Requested clarification regarding how pupil attendance was monitored. *Mr Sword explained that the establishment the pupil attended was responsible for noting attendance of that child and sharing this information with the school at which they were registered, who would maintain the child's attendance record. Daily monitoring of attendance must occur and the school at which the child was registered was responsible for intervention if the child was persistently absent.*
- Requested clarification regarding those pupils, sometimes described as 'ghost children' which a school was required to register on their roll but who would only ever attend alternative provision. *Mr Sword explained that this could occur when a year 10 pupil moved schools mid-way through the academic year and was encountering difficulties in progressing towards GCSE's. Currently it was necessary to register the pupil at a school even though their*

requirements would be better met through alternative provision. In the future, with the creation of the Alternative Provision College it was hoped that such a pupil could be registered solely at the College.

207. Mr Griffiths thanked the Task Force for their work and stressed the importance of the robust protocols that were being put in place regarding monitoring and accountability ensuring the authority could be confident that all children were safe and that the partnership arrangements were quality assured.

208. Resolved - that the Committee agrees the Task Force recommendations.

Total Performance Monitoring Report to 31st January 2013

209. The Committee considered a report by the Director Finance and Assurance and Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). Clare Hodgson, Client Service Support Manager, introduced the report advising the Committee that the Performance Framework measures would be reporting green by year end.

210. The following points were raised in discussion. Members:

- Raised concern that the welfare reforms leading to a reduction in benefits for some families could bring these families into an income bracket whereby they were eligible for Free School Meals and, as a consequence, put additional pressure on County Council budgets.
- Highlighted the potential difficulty in finding the savings that were required as a result of the shared responsibility with the Joint Commissioning Unit.
- Queried whether continued high occupancy rates would lead to an expansion in the number of places provided by the Child Disability Service. *Mr Gallimore explained that currently work was progressing with assessing the outcomes of the South East 7 group of authorities project which offered the opportunity to transfer funding for care to the parents thereby offering them the choice of what services to purchase for their child. It was anticipated that, in the future, a range of provision would be offered including the County Council's own accommodation and procuring accommodation with specialist services which the authority couldn't provide.*
- Asked how prepared the service were to cope with the rising number of Looked After Children (LAC) placements. *Mr Gallimore advised that the numbers in this cohort fluctuated vastly throughout the year but overall the number of LAC at the end of the year would be similar to the figure at the start. The service continued to work on preventative measures to ensure children were not coming into care unnecessarily.*

211. Resolved - that the Committee notes the report.

Post 16 Transport Policy – Impact on College Attendance

212. The Committee considered a report by the Director Communities Commissioning and the Head of Learning (copy appended to the signed minutes).

213. Mr Sword and Mr Griffiths declared a personal interest as being members of the governing body of Northbrook College.

Agenda Item Number 2

214. Mr Sword introduced the report cautioning that it would be necessary to assess data for a greater time period to obtain a more conclusive result but initial indications were that the implications of the policy had caused a limited impact on College attendance.

215. The following points were covered in discussion; Members: -

- Raised concern that the figures indicated that overall there had been a drop in students taking part-time courses. *Mr Sword explained that participation rates had been decreasing anyway prior to the policy coming into force.*
- Were encouraged that the County Council were establishing processes to enable the data-gathering on those classed as not in education, employment or training (NEETS) that was previously carried out through the Connexions service and noted that the authority were focussed on reducing the number of NEETS.
- Asked when discussions would commence regarding the potential future of the Sussex Student Card Scheme. *Ian Gwenlan, Principal School Transport Officer, explained that meetings with the other authorities involved would be happening within the next few weeks.*
- Highlighted the potential inequality of access for students who wished to pursue land-based courses where there was limited choice of provider.

216. Mr Griffiths highlighted that the 16-19 bursary scheme worked well and that since the introduction of the post 16 transport policy there had only been one appeal that had progressed to a hearing by the Appeals Panel. He also stressed the expense of running the 3in1 scheme.

217. Resolved - that the Committee:

- (1) Agrees that it is reasonable to conclude that the change to the County Council's home to school and college transport policy for post 16 students has not had a significant detrimental impact on attendance and participation.
- (2) Asks the Cabinet Member to work with Cabinet colleagues to seek sustainable funding for the continuation of the 3in1 and Sussex Student Card schemes to support post 16 students in West Sussex.

Report from the Business Planning Group

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

219. Members highlighted that they would welcome further information on the use of Free School Meals eligibility as a criteria for indicating deprivation. *Mandy Shipley, Scrutiny Officer, suggested that this could be provided in the form of a briefing note to all members of the Committee.*

220. Members indicated that it would be beneficial to receive an agenda item at a future meeting that covered the issues surrounding school admissions and parental choice. *Mandy Shipley indicated that this could be incorporated into the item on the future operation of the Learning Service scheduled for the autumn.*

221. Resolved: that the Committee supports the proposed outline work programme as recommended by the Business Planning Group at its meeting on 28 January 2013.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

222. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – April - July 2013 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

223. Mr Smytherman requested that consideration be given to previewing the decision regarding the approval of a procurement process to award Youth Service contracts for young people within West Sussex at the June meeting.

224. Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

Members' Items

225. None raised.

Date of the Next Meeting

226. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 19 June 2013 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm.

Chairman