

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee

## **Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee**

20<sup>th</sup> April 2011 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr R Burrett (Chairman)

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

In attendance by invitation: Mr Griffiths (Cabinet Member for Education and Schools) and Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children’s Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Strong.

### **Declaration of Interests**

1. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared: -
  - Mr Simmons – Item 6 as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Item 8 as a Cabinet Member on Adur District Council
  - Mr Coleman – Item 6 as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Item 7 as a member of the West Sussex Children’s Services Improvement Board
  - Mr Burgess – Item 4 as a Governor of St Wilfrid’s School, Crawley
  - Mrs Mills – Item 8 as a member of the Lancing Children’s Centre Committee
  - Mrs Le Rossignol – Item 4 as a Governor of Holy Trinity School, Lower Beeding
  - Dr Wilsdon – Item 5 as a member of the Links College South Management Committee and Item 6 as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel
  - Mrs Ross- Item 7 as a member of the West Sussex Children’s Services Improvement Board
  - Mr Burrett - Item 8 as the Chair of Governors of Bewbush Primary School
  - Mr Oxlade – Item 6 as a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel
  - Mr Smytherman – Item 5 as a member of the Links College South Management Committee

### **Minutes**

2. Resolved - that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

### **Transport to Church Aided (Denominational Schools)**

3. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools introduced the report.

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee

4. Mr Wilson gave an overview of the issues the Church of England Diocese wanted to be considered. It was understood that the County Council had to put forward the proposal due to budget pressures but the Diocese was concerned about the adverse effect on schools and the potential to de-stabilise the pattern of education provision in both the short and long term. The process felt rushed in that it was to be implemented in September 2011 giving those affected little time to find alternative means of transport. The Diocese requested that provision be retained for Year 9 pupils and was concerned that those families who were more vulnerable financially would be most adversely affected.

5. Mary Reynolds gave an overview of the issues the Roman Catholic Diocese wanted to be considered. The Diocese was concerned about the pace of change and the fact that the admissions process had already been completed for the September term meaning that parents weren’t aware of this issue when deciding on their choice of school. This could lead to children being withdrawn from their school of choice. There was concern about whether the costs and risks had been fully assessed and the Diocese hoped that retention of provision for Year 5 and 6 pupils would also be considered.

6. The Committee made comments and asked questions. Members:-

- Requested clarification regarding the percentage of transport costs that WSCC charges parents for currently and requested details of the approach taken by the neighbouring Local Authorities. *Ian Gwenlan, Principal School Transport Officer, advised that there was a current flat rate charged of £285 per annum for a Secondary School pupil and £189 per annum for a Primary School pupil. This provided income for the year 2010/11 of £120,000 with costs to WSCC of £650,000. East Sussex County Council were withdrawing transport provision from September 2011 with concessions to retain provision for current Year 10s and contract buses for another year. Kent and Surrey County Councils were at the consultation stage at present.*
- Expressed concern that the current revision of bus routes may lead to removal of alternative methods of public transport for the affected pupils and that existing public transport provision would not have sufficient capacity to absorb the additional pupils using the 3-in-1 card. Provision in rural areas may not be available. It was hoped that train services to smaller stations serving schools were not under threat. *Ian Gwenlan advised that he was in discussion with those involved in the revision of bus routes and with train operators to ensure that the school routes were not affected. There was generally sufficient provision but it was acknowledged that it is likely there will be problems in some specific locations.*
- Queried why an Equalities Impact Assessment had not been undertaken. *Ian Gwenlan explained this would be covered as part of the Customer Focus Appraisal which was being undertaken as part of the Cabinet Member Report.*
- Expressed concern that the admissions process meant parents had indicated their school of choice by 15.01.11 and had made this decision prior to being aware of the proposal to remove transport, as knowledge of this proposal may have influenced their choice. It was felt that there would be a risk that the ability to pay would influence who could attend aided schools. It was suggested that if a more phased approach was adopted savings would have

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee

to be found elsewhere and it was hoped that a contingency had been included within the savings for unexpected eventualities. *Ian Gwenlan confirmed that there was a contingency. The eligibility criteria for financial assistance would continue to be those receiving Free School Meals or full Working Tax Credits. The assessment process for financial assistance was quick if a pupil’s circumstances changed.*

- Expressed concern that there could be limited capacity in non-faith schools to absorb pupils who wish to change schools due to the proposal.
7. Resolved – That the Cabinet Member:
- (1) be requested to explore the options for greater transitional support or phasing-in of the proposed budget reduction;
  - (2) seeks re-assurances from public transport providers with regard to the sustainability and capacity of services to schools;
  - (3) ensures that where there are specific local issues, local solutions are delivered to mitigate the reduction in service.

### **Review of progress with delivery of Education & Schools Policy**

8. The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Task Force to review achievement towards delivery of the Council’s Education and Schools Policy (copy appended to the signed minutes).
9. Mr Graysmark, Chairman of the Task Force, introduced the report.
10. The Committee made comments and asked questions. Members:
- Agreed that assessing achievement should be focussed on the ability of the individual pupil and supporting them to achieve their potential rather than ‘reducing the gap’. It was noted that more work needed to be done on provision of joined-up services outside of school hours and that there was a need for more research into the reasons for the lower performance at Key Stage 2. *Mary Carrigan (Principal Advisor, Support and Intervention) advised that in the past there had been a tendency to focus on attaining a good Ofsted report but now the priority was to focus on achievement.*
  - Questioned how parents of children with Special Educational Needs could be encouraged to have their children educated within West Sussex rather than outside of the County. *Mr Graysmark advised that by emphasising the good Ofsted reports that West Sussex special schools had received this should help limit numbers seeking schooling outside of the County.*
  - Hoped that further consideration would be given to safeguarding following the outcome of a recent legal case. *Mary Carrigan advised that as a priority a review was being carried out of children missing in education, looked after children and those being home tutored and that additional staff training around safeguarding was to take place after Easter.*
11. Resolved - That the Task Force recommendations be agreed.

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee

### **Update on the Corporate Parenting Panel**

12. The Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). Mr Coleman, Chairman of the Panel, introduced the report.

13. The Committee made comments and asked questions. Members:

- Queried how the achievements had been made without increased funding. *Stuart Gallimore (Director of Children’s Services) advised that colleagues in Health and Education have been working on issues raised by the Panel which have been absorbed into their existing workload so have not required additional funding. If this were to change then he would take the matter up with the Cabinet Member.*
- Requested clarification regarding the decision-making and reporting process. *Mr Coleman advised that he reports as required to the Cabinet Member or Leader of the Council and that all political groups were represented so were all informed. Mr Evans explained that this was a two-way process in that he would report back on any discussions and in addition the matter would also be discussed at Full Council.*
- Queried what processes are in place to obtain feedback from those children that have been through the system and are now grown up. *Stuart Gallimore advised that there is a contract with The Children’s Society to follow up with young people who have been through the system and an initiative where they come in to talk to the current Looked After Children and share experiences.*

14. Resolved -

- (1) That the Committee supports the proposal for the Panel to assume lead responsibility on issues relating to Looked After Children and to report key issues to the Select Committee.
- (2) That a general dispensation be sought from the Standards Committee to enable Panel members to take on a scrutiny role at Select Committee meetings.

### **Improvement Board progress report**

15. The Committee considered a report by the Independent Chairman of the Children’s Services Improvement Board (copy appended to the signed minutes).

16. Nick Jarman, Independent Chairman of the Children’s Services Improvement Board, introduced the report and advised that there had been a proactive response to the Ofsted report prior to the Improvement Notice being issued. There was a cautious optimism that improvement actions are taking place and are on time.

17. Stuart Gallimore updated the Committee on the progress of improvement within the service. He commented that the backlog of out-of-time assessments had been resolved and that a common access policy was being introduced with the

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

single access point being established from July. Joint staff meetings would be taking place quarterly to examine performance across the team and seek improvement. He reported that implementation of the Framework computer system continued and staff were being supported in the new ways of working.

18. The Committee made comments and asked questions. Members:

- Requested clarification regarding the scrutiny arrangements set out in the Improvement Notice. *Nick Jarman advised that intervention was a timed process and when the Improvement Board ceased to be necessary the scrutiny role would be resumed by the Select Committee. He advised that it is useful to benchmark with other authorities to assist with scrutiny and clarified that the intervention would be completed twelve months from the date of the notice with a final review in September 2012. Stuart Gallimore described the current process of scrutiny of progress which includes reporting to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Performance Challenge Board, Improvement Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel.*
- Requested an update regarding the progress of the American Social Workers. *Stuart Gallimore advised that they had settled in well and any performance issues were being assessed.*

19. Resolved:

- (1) That the Independent Chairman of the Children's Services Improvement Board provide a further update report on progress with implementation of the Improvement Plan in Autumn 2011;
- (2) That the BPG plans the approach for the Select Committee to take over scrutiny of progress when the Improvement Board ceases to exist;
- (3) That the BPG develops an appropriate set of measures to enable the Select Committee to scrutinise performance and quality;
- (4) That a general dispensation be sought from the Standards Committee to enable Improvement Board members to take on a scrutiny role at Select Committee meetings.

### **Future management and delivery of Children and Family Centres in West Sussex**

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

21. Marilyn Barton (Principal Manager Early Childhood) gave a Powerpoint presentation providing an overview of the current service and proposals for the future of the service (copy of slides appended to the signed minutes).

22. The Committee made comments and asked questions. Members:

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Children and Young People’s Services Select Committee

- Requested clarification as to the use of both Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) scores, on the number of under fives stated for each area in Appendix 3 and on funding arrangements. *Marilyn Barton advised that both IMD and IDACI are used in calculating the national funding formula to ensure financial and other factors are considered. Appendix 3 showed the number of under fives in the area, not necessarily just those registered at the Centre; average registration across West Sussex is just under 68%. She advised that funding will be on a differentiated basis with those Centres in areas with a high IMD getting more funding.*
- Understood the reasoning behind merging the Pulborough and Storrington Centres due to the relatively low number of under fives in each area; however, the Maidenbower and Pound Hill Centres covered a much larger number of children. *Marilyn Barton advised that these Centres were very close geographically and shared services such as health provision already.*
- Requested clarification as to the number of posts that would be lost. *Marilyn Barton advised that this cannot be quantified at present but that managerial posts will be reduced by 30% with an increase in the number of operational posts created within the Centres. However she explained that there were already high vacancy levels within the service, so the effects of the reductions in workforce should be limited.*
- Expressed concern as to how consultation on the changes would be managed. *Marilyn Barton advised that the Centre Partnership Groups (CPGs) would be the main vehicle for the consultation. It should be noted that a third of the members of the CPGs are parents. A letter has been made available to all parents whose children attend the Centres informing them of the proposal. There was also an intention to hold family event days which would enable consultation in a more informal setting. Mr Evans advised that he had already sent an email to all the Centres and the press to make them aware of the situation.*

23. Resolved - that the Committee is supportive of the principles and proposals and recognises the positive approach to maintaining service delivery in line with the ‘Think Family’ Policy.

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

24. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – May - August 2011 (copy appended to the signed minutes), which was noted.

25. Members requested clarification on the following:

- The appropriate Committee to carry out scrutiny of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. *Mandy Shipley advised that the BPG would be assessing whether this should be looked at by CYPSSC or HOSC.*
- West Sussex County Council Policy on Academies. *Mandy Shipley advised that a Task and Finish Group, including Mr Griffiths, would be established to put forward firm proposals but it was not yet determined who would be on the Group.*

Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the  
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**Date of the Next Meeting**

26. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 30 June 2011 at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 2.25pm.

Chairman