

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

7 March 2012 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mr Burgess	Mrs Le Rossignol	Mr Smytherman
Mr T M E Dunn	Mrs Mills	Mrs Waight
Mr Graysmark	Mrs Ross	Dr Wilsdon
Mr Lanzer	Mr Simmons	Mr Wilson

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

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Reynolds and Mr Strong. Mr Oxlade was absent.

Declaration of Interests

146. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared (see also minutes 150, 164 and 169):-

- Mr Burrett - Item 7 (The Capacity of the West Sussex County Council Learning Service to fulfil its current and future functions and Basic Need Projects and Capital Resources) as Chair of Governors of Bewbush Primary School, Vice-Chair of Governors of Thomas Bennett Community College and as a member of the Academies Task and Finish Group.
- Mr Dunn - Item 7 as a member of the Academies Task and Finish Group.
- Mr Lanzer – Item 7 as a member of the Academies Task and Finish Group.
- Mrs Le Rossignol – Item 7 as a member of the Academies Task and Finish Group and as a Governor of Holy Trinity Primary School, Lower Beeding.
- Mrs Mills – Item 7 as a member of the Management Committee of Links College South.
- Mrs Ross – Item 5 (Improvement Board Progress Report) as a member of the Improvement Board.
- Mr Smytherman - Item 7 as a member of the Management Committee of Links College South and Item 10 (Members' Items) as a trustee of Worthing and Arun Mind.

Minutes

147. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2012 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Member Responses

148. The Committee considered responses from the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools to the recommendations made at its meeting of 18 January 2012 regarding the Future Options for the West Sussex Enrichment Programme for Gifted and Talented Children and Future Options for sustaining the West Sussex Youth Theatre Function (copy appended to the signed minutes).

149. Resolved – That the Committee notes the responses from the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools.

Improvement Board Progress Report

150. Mr Simmons declared a personal interest as a member of the Improvement Board.

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

152. Nick Jarman, Independent Chairman of the Improvement Board, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- ❑ Over the last 14 months there had been a significant improvement in safeguarding services which had been confirmed by the outcome of the peer review.
- ❑ At the December meeting of the Improvement Board the Leader, Chief Executive and Chairman of the Improvement Board had concluded that, due to the clear progress made, meetings of both the Improvement Board and Performance Challenge Board could now be held bi-monthly.
- ❑ Performance data was now readily available relating to the completion of Initial and Core Assessments and demonstrated an improvement in performance from the bottom quartile to the top quartile.

153. Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, advised the Committee that it was anticipated the Ofsted re-inspection would take place during the summer although, in theory, it could be as late as March 2013. The inspection would be under the new Ofsted regime, which was less process and more practice-focussed. The inspection would consist of an unannounced two-week visit concentrating on the social workers and their cases. Inspectors would accompany staff on visits to clients, attend strategy meetings and observe social workers as they work with Frameworki.

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

- Raised concern about the delay in establishing a Designated Doctor post for Looked After Children. *Mr Gallimore advised that this post had now been established and a person allocated to the role on an interim basis, until a permanent appointment was made.*
- Requested clarification regarding the preparedness of the service for an inspection under the new Ofsted regime as the focus until recently had been on meeting criteria required by the previous inspection process. *Mr Gallimore confirmed that staff had been made aware of the changes and what would be required of them during the inspection. As data could be requested by Inspectors at 24 hours' notice, the service had been doing some data-cleansing work to ensure accuracy of information in preparation for the inspection. For business continuity purposes a larger number of staff were now able to produce this data on demand, resolving the problem of annual leave/absence preventing access to data. In addition the service had liaised with authorities who had been*

involved in piloting the new Ofsted framework and as a result of this felt confident they were prepared.

- Queried the timeframe for the Improvement Board ceasing to be necessary. *Mr Jarman advised it was likely that this would be assessed following the outcome of the Ofsted inspection; however it could cease from as early as September this year. As the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) currently runs in parallel with the Improvement Board the proposal was for the LSCB to take over some of the inter-agency monitoring tasks from the Improvement Board when it ceased to exist.*
- Sought clarification regarding the data contained in Appendix 2. *Mr Gallimore explained this demonstrated that the completion of both Initial and Core Assessments within the required timeframe had exceeded the targets set at the beginning of the year. The Committee were concerned regarding whether the money spent on creating data sets would be better spent on staff. Mr Jarman confirmed that the money spent on creating an accurate data set had not been disproportionate and that the development of the Children's Access Point had been cost-neutral.*

155. The Leader, who was seated in the public gallery, was invited to speak to the Committee by the Chairman. She explained that receiving the Improvement Notice from Ofsted had provided the opportunity to create a clear focus for the service. She considered that staff were doing an excellent job in contributing to the improvement seen within the service. Members would benefit from building relationships by visiting front-line staff and were encouraged to attend the Member Development Session on 28 March 2012 focussing on the future role of the County Councillor.

156. Resolved that :–

- (1) The Committee continues to receive update reports on developments from the Director of Children's Services at each Committee meeting.
- (2) The Independent Chairman of the Improvement Board attends the Committee meeting on 4 October 2012 to provide a detailed report on progress in delivering against the Improvement Plan.
- (3) The Committee supports the approach taken by the Leader and Independent Chairman of the Improvement Board in expressing their dissatisfaction to the Chairman of the Primary Care Trust regarding the delay in appointment of a permanent Designated Doctor for Looked After Children.

Children's Delivery Programme Task Force

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

158. Mr Coleman, Chairman of the Task Force, thanked the members of the Task Force and the officers involved for their contribution to the work of the group.

159. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families welcomed the fourth recommendation within the report and advised that he felt Judges were becoming more aware of the effects delays in decisions regarding parental and sibling contact for Looked After Children can have on the child. He also explained the benefits he gained from engagement with front-line staff and extended an offer to members of the Committee to accompany him on visits to the service.

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

- Asked how the County Council could influence improvements to the public law processes relating to children. *Mr Gallimore explained that this was a priority for the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and that he, together with his counterparts from East Sussex and Brighton and Hove met regularly with Judges to ensure processes were working as efficiently as possible.*
- Sought clarification regarding how the Business Planning Group could carry out meaningful scrutiny of Serious Case Reviews. *The Chairman emphasised that the scrutiny would be of improvement actions arising from the reviews, and not scrutiny of the reviews themselves, and advised that the intention was to ensure that any lessons learnt led to improved processes being put in place.*

161. Resolved – That the Task Force recommendations be agreed with the addition to Recommendation 2 that the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Learning should ensure provision of all necessary information to those officers negotiating the contract process.

The Capacity of the West Sussex County Council Learning Service to fulfil its current and future functions

162. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Learning (copy appended to the signed minutes). David Sword, Director of Learning, introduced the report and gave a presentation on the strategy to deliver the new Learning Service, which would be implemented from April 2012 (copy of slides appended to the signed minutes). Mr Sword highlighted that the figures in the slide titled 'Budgetary Drivers' were the most recent figures and replaced the figures stated for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and Local Authority (LA) funding in section 1 of the report.

163. The Chairman welcomed Steve Johnson, Headteacher of Warden Park School, and Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Chair of Governors of Warden Park School, who would be able to answer the Committee's questions on a school's perspective of working with the Learning Service.

164. Dr Wilsdon declared a personal interest as a Governor of Downlands Community School and Mr Dunn declared a personal interest as an Advisor on Academies to the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools. Members of the Committee who had declared an interest as being part of the Task and Finish Group on Academies either sat with the Cabinet Member for Education and Schools to assist in answering questions or left the room and did not participate as a member of the Committee when matters relating to Academies were discussed during this item.

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

- Asked what had been the main drivers for Warden Park School deciding to become an academy, what were the school's perceptions of County Council traded services, and raised concerns about the school's revised admission arrangements. *Mr Ash-Edwards advised that Warden Park focussed on delivering excellence and high quality teaching and concluded that becoming an academy was an appropriate way for the school to achieve this. The outcomes of becoming an academy were greater freedom and flexibility to create opportunities and make changes (such as altering admission arrangements) and the school having full control of its budget. It was felt the County Council excelled in providing niche services such as governor support and Special Educational Needs; however, generic service provision, such as Human Resources could be provided more effectively from the private sector or via a partnership arrangement with other schools. With regards to admission arrangements Mr Johnson re-assured the Committee that the policy had remained unchanged since before the school had become an academy. He stated that there were a relatively low number of pupils in the catchment area for the school meaning they were a small proportion of the overall intake so should always obtain a place at the school if they wished. The school therefore had a greater capacity to accept pupils from outside the catchment area although the school was over-subscribed.*
- Raised concern that the reduction in service provision from the County Council would mean schools felt coerced into becoming academies and questioned the capacity of the Learning Service to cope with the quantity of schools wanting to convert to academies. *Mr Sword advised it was anticipated that a significant proportion of schools, particularly primary schools, might not wish to convert. However, in the future, it was expected that a greater proportion of funding would be delegated to schools providing them greater flexibility in their spending. At present there were sufficient resources within the Learning Service to support schools in the conversion process, but if the numbers increased dramatically the service would have options to bring in additional resources and invoke a charging structure or schools could choose to delay conversion until there was the capacity to undertake the necessary work for free.*
- Queried whether academies were required to have a Local Authority Governor. *The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools explained that the Education Act did not enforce this requirement and he had made representations to national government expressing his concerns about this. He thanked Warden Park School for choosing to include a County Councillor within their governing body to maintain links with the Local Authority.*
- Felt that solely judging the outcomes for children on the results of an Ofsted inspection did not provide an accurate overall picture of the school's achievements. *Mr Sword explained that schools have access to a range of other data to assist with self-evaluation and target setting such as Fischer Family Trust performance data. The importance of Ofsted outcomes were emphasised as this information was published and readily available.*

- Asked how the service intended to achieve the key aim of improving relationships with parents. *Mr Sword advised that the Parent Partnership Service was working with the Parents' Forums to implement an agreement with schools on how to work with parents of SEN children. With the move to area working the opportunity of establishing a local parents' group in each of the three areas was being explored to act as a forum for emerging issues to be discussed.*

166. Resolved: That the Committee includes scrutiny of the following items within its work plan for 2012-13:

- i) The Learning Service Business Plan
- ii) The adequacy of resources within the Learning Service to fulfil demand
- iii) How learning from best practice at other authorities could be used to inform development within the West Sussex County Council Learning Service.

Basic Needs Projects and Capital Resources

167. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Learning and Head of Capital and Asset Management (copy appended to the signed minutes).

168. Mr Proudley, Principal Manager Capital Planning and Projects, introduced the report explaining that nationally the increase in the primary school population over the next five years was anticipated to be in the region of 10% and additional school accommodation was required to support this. In West Sussex basic need requirements for additional classrooms and remodelling works at schools across the county had been established for the period to 2014 with anticipated need for beyond 2014 identified but not planned in detail.

169. The following personal interests were declared - Mrs Mills as a Governor of Buckingham Primary School and Mr Graysmark as a Governor of Shoreham Academy.

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

- Wondered what factors were creating the 10% increase. *Mr Proudley explained that there seemed to be a trend of more children coming from within existing housing and increased numbers of children coming to schools in West Sussex from across the borders of East Sussex or Brighton and Hove. In rural areas the increase in ownership of substantially-sized properties by families with children in contrast to their previous occupation by pension-age residents was also becoming a factor. The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools suggested that a baby boom was being experienced and there was a need to plan strategically for the longer term. He emphasised the importance of Section 106 agreements in assisting with creating increased capacity.*
- Noted that the County Council did not have any input into the Local Development Frameworks of District and Borough Councils in proposing where development should be sited and the ability of schools to provide the additional placements generated and suggested this may be an area where

the County Council should look to become more involved. *Mr Proudley explained that the mix of housing contained within a new development would influence whether or not it was attractive to families and likely to lead to an increased need for school places. Developers did work closely with the Capital and Asset Management section as they understood the importance that purchasers placed on being able to access school places as a factor in choosing to buy a property.*

- Requested clarification on the information contained in Appendix C of the report. *Mr Proudley confirmed that this was a list of anticipated need for 2014 and beyond but that if developments proposed for the surrounding areas to the schools on the list did not occur then the additional capacity may not be required. To ensure accurate information was maintained a document entitled 'Planning School Places' was produced annually by Capital and Asset Management. In addition projected pupil numbers were updated twice yearly in October and May and these figures could be provided for circulation to the Committee as a briefing note.*
- Noted that none of the schools requiring increased capacity were located within the South Downs National Park and wondered if this was having a disproportionate effect on schools on the boundaries of the National Park.

171. Resolved – That the Committee notes the report and that the Business Planning Group gives consideration to whether an item on the impact of the South Downs National Park on school places should be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

Total Performance Monitor

172. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Finance and Performance and Director of Children's Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). Clare Hodgson, Client Service Support Manager, introduced the report and updated the Committee on the current position advising that:

- The projected underspend for the Children and Families portfolio was now £1 million but that £200,000 of this may be required to cover the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) process relating to the Babcocks employees
- The projected underspend for Education and Schools was now £153,000.

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

- Requested clarification regarding the reference in the report to the Joint Commissioning Unit (JCU) savings targets. *Mrs Hodgson explained that the JCU was included within the Children and Families portfolio for financial reporting purposes.*
- Expressed concern at some of the larger variations reported in Appendix 1. *Mrs Hodgson advised that a data cleansing operation needed to be undertaken within the County Council's 'One Way To Buy' purchasing system and it was anticipated this would resolve these variations.*

- Raised concern that by only looking at figures over the period of a year the on-going fluctuation in occupancy of the Beechfield Secure Unit could be distorting the commercial viability of the unit. *The Cabinet Member for Children and Families explained that the unit was now at a break-even point and any decisions regarding its future would not be made solely on income generated over one year. Mr Gallimore confirmed that in order to break even four fee-paying pupils were required to offset the running cost of the unit.*

174. The Cabinet Member for Education and Schools highlighted that the fourth bullet point of point 9 of the report should read as follows:-

- £1.006m reduction for removal of endowment for the Littlehampton Academy and Lancing Academy (Sir Robert Woodard). These endowments ***for the benefit of developing community relations*** related to the old Building Schools for the Future Academies where the County Council was a co-sponsor. The Government were initially asking sponsors to contribute towards an endowment however, this requirement has since been reviewed and the contribution is no longer required.

175. Resolved - That the report be noted.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

176. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – March 2012 - June 2012 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

177. Resolved - That the Forward Plan be noted.

Members' Items

178. A query was raised regarding whether the Committee should be scrutinising the impact of the Autism Act. It was agreed that this should be referred to the Business Planning Group to assess whether an item on the Autism Act should be brought to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

Date of the Next Meeting

179. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 25 April 2011 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm.

Chairman