

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

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

Present: Mr Burrett (Chairman)

Mrs Arculus	Mr Cloake	Mr Parsons
Mr Barling	Mrs Duncton (part)	Mrs Ryan
Mrs Bennett	Mr High	Mr Smith
Mr Blunden	Mr Oppler	Mr Wickremaratchi

In attendance by invitation: Mr Evans (Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life) and Sally Collins, representative of the Church of England Diocese of Chichester.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Le Rossignol and Mr Oxlade.

Declaration of Interests

84. In accordance with the Code of Conduct the following personal interests were declared: -

- Mr Cloake – Item 5 (Planning Worthing Schools for the Future) as a member of Worthing Borough Council and as a parent whose children attend school in Worthing.
- Mr High – Item 5 as a member of Worthing Borough Council who was Chairman of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the time it considered the issue of the Age of Transfer in Worthing, and as a parent of a child who attends school in Worthing.

Minutes

85. Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Member Responses

86. The Committee considered responses from the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life to the recommendations made at its meeting of 24 October 2013 in relation to the Youth Support and Development Service Review – Savings Proposals and the Learning Improvement Strategy (copy appended to the signed minutes).

87. Members queried whether the issue of encouraging schools to publicise contact details of their Chairs of Governors could be escalated to the Secretary of State.

88. The Cabinet Member advised that he would be emphasising the importance of ensuring contact details of the Chair of Governors were available on their website when undertaking school visits. The Chairman also indicated that the facility was available for Chairs of Governors to obtain a West Sussex Grid for Learning email address to avoid the need for publishing a private email addresses.

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

Planning Worthing Schools for the Future

90. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Communities Commissioning (copy appended to the signed minutes).

91. Colin James, Head of Capital and Infrastructure, introduced the report and provided a Powerpoint presentation (copy appended to the signed minutes); the following points were highlighted: -

- The proposals would bring the age of transfer in line with key stages of the National Curriculum.
- Where possible the aim was to restrict primary schools to three forms of entry (3fe) with a maximum of 30 pupils per form but local issues may mean this was not possible in certain areas.
- So far the public consultation meetings had been well attended and produced some valuable feedback.

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

- Queried how the County Council obtained details on projected pupil numbers. *Mr James advised that this information originated by collecting birth data from the Child Health Bureau, which was later updated to reflect numbers of children who actually registered with GPs' surgeries. This provided an indication of the number of children expected to be entering primary education in the coming years. This information was then moderated over time firstly by data provided on the number of placements taken up within the Early Years sector and then, by annual returns on pupil numbers from schools. This ensured the County Council obtained the most accurate representation of the number of pupils within the school system and assisted with planning places for progression from primary to secondary school. Members asked whether the projected figures allowed for any flexibility to cater for a large influx of pupils. Mr James explained that the County Council did account for additional housing development taking place and the subsequent additional school places required and included some capacity within the projections. However if numbers grew substantially, more basic need grant would be required from central government to fund the additional places required.*
- Requested clarification regarding how the preference for primary schools having 3fe was determined and what would be considered a suitable size for a secondary school. *Mr James explained that when there were proposals to change the age of transfer in Crawley a clear outcome of the public consultation was a preference for primary schools that were not too large. This feedback, along with other evidence that this was a preferable scenario, meant that, where possible, the County Council endeavours to adopt this as policy. Historically Worthing had large and successful schools, however, as part of altering the age of transfer the opportunity also existed to meet the aim of having fewer forms of entry. With regard to an optimum size for secondary schools, these needed to be large enough to attract the funding and resources to sustain and deliver a varied curriculum; so a very small secondary school could be at a disadvantage.*

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- Raised concern that as the funding available for the new secondary school was less than that used to build other new secondaries in recent years, the school would be of a lower standard and parents may not want to send their children there. *Mr James advised that there would be a similar approach to the build of the new secondary schools in Crawley, and that the school would have modern facilities crucial to delivering effective teaching and learning.*
- Requested clarification regarding how the disparity of places between single sex schools would be reduced. *Mr James advised that currently Davison Church of England High School for Girls had 10fe and St Andrew's C of E High School for Boys had 6fe. The proposals would bring St Andrew's up to 8fe thereby creating more places for boys.*

93. Steve Mercer, headteacher of St. Andrew's C of E High School for Boys, representing Secondary heads and Andrew Jolley, headteacher of Chesswood Middle School, representing Primary heads, addressed the Committee and highlighted the following issues: -

- Age of Transfer was an exciting opportunity to maintain and build on the quality of secondary education in Worthing and meet the needs of young people.
- Aligning the age of transfer to the key stages would provide better opportunities for young people.
- Maintaining the secondary schools of sufficient size was important to delivering the curriculum and meeting the varying needs of young people.
- There was broad support for the proposals from heads in the Primary sector who felt the suggested model was a pragmatic solution.
- There was concern that the emphasis in the consultation documents that the best provision was via an 'all through' Primary school was misleading and that children would be equally well educated via an infant and junior system. This had led to unnecessary concern amongst parents whose children were not in the catchment area of a primary school.
- There seemed to be a driver to merge those schools in the infant and junior sector to all through primary schools at a later date yet this may not be necessary if they perform well.
- It was reported that 6 schools did not feel that the proposed solution was appropriate for their setting and it was considered that the County Council needed to engage in more dialogue with these schools to try and resolve the issues of concern.
- There was concern that some of those schools which would become primary schools under the proposals were not located on suitable sites.

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

- Queried what was being done to address the concerns of the schools which were not satisfied with the proposal for their setting. *Mr James explained that they would be working with these schools to ascertain whether any alterations could be made to the proposal to assist in reducing concerns, but it may not be possible to resolve all issues.*
- Highlighted that those schools which were currently middle schools changing to junior schools would lose a proportion of their funding which could have a detrimental impact on the education of the children. Mr James advised that the revenue funding for schools is driven by a fair funding formula that

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ensures all children of the same age receive the same level of funding in whichever school they are in. Middle schools get extra funding for Year 7 pupils, under the proposals they would no longer be required to educate these pupils and so their schools would get the same level of funding as for junior -aged pupils in the rest of the county.

- Concern was raised regarding whether siblings would be able to attend the same school. *Mr James advised that the proposals would, in the longer term, enable parents to express preferences about which school they wanted their child to attend at an earlier stage of a child's schooling, much as they do across most of the county. For a transitional period parents would be encouraged to make indicative preferences, including any requirements about siblings attending the same school, as early as possible to assist the County Council in taking these issues into account when planning places.*
- Queried whether the option to attend Worthing secondary schools would now be available to pupils in neighbouring areas such as Lancing. *Mr James confirmed that, should the proposals be implemented, the age of transfer in Worthing would be the same as in Lancing so parents could make the choice to apply for a place at a Worthing secondary school.*
- Felt there was a general consensus that the proposal was a good idea but there were concerns about the impact on pupils already in the school system and doubts that the catchment areas accurately reflected the needs of all areas of Worthing. *Mr James explained that the County Council would welcome suggestions in relation to possible alterations to boundaries of catchment areas. Worthing Members could assist this process by imparting their knowledge of local issues to inform the consultation process and suggest where boundary changes should be considered.* Members welcomed this advice and proposed that this matter be referred for consideration by Worthing County Local Committee and feedback be provided to Mr James.
- Queried whether Chatsmore Catholic School would be disadvantaged by being a smaller secondary school. *Mr James explained that this was not the intention as the proposal assumes no change to the Catholic sector which already has transfer at 11.*
- Felt that it was a comprehensive proposal but that the lack of funding meant the change could not be fully implemented. *Mr James advised that there was a window of opportunity to create change and there was a need to make this work as best as possible with the funding available. The Cabinet Member concurred and stressed that the option to obtain a site for a new secondary school was available for a limited time so must be capitalised on.* Members wondered whether a long term plan could be formulated to create further change in Worthing in the future. *Mr James explained that time was needed for the proposals to bed down to assess whether any further changes were required. In addition, in future, potential change may be school-led rather than imposed by the County Council. Mr Jolley commented that achievement of children should be assessed before any further proposals for change were made and that the infant and junior school model could produce pupils who achieve equally well as those in primary schools.*
- Queried whether the option should be considered to only expand good and outstanding schools. *Mr James commented that this risked being a very short term view, given that a school that was unsuccessful in an OFSTED inspection 12 months ago could be highly successful in a few years' time. This was an opportunity to set the basis of a sustainable school system for a generation. He also explained that it might not be possible to meet the timeline of implementing the changes by 2015 and that it might require more*

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parents and pupils to travel greater distances – potentially past their local school - if restrictions were placed on the number of schools to be enlarged.

95. Mr Barling proposed that the recommendation contained within the report be amended as follows: - the Committee support the ~~proposals~~**principles** for reorganisation of schools within Worthing, subject to the outcome of the consultation, to enable the Age of Transfer to change, to bring these schools into line with the policy of the County Council. This was seconded by Mr Cloake.
96. A vote was held and the proposal was agreed.
97. Mr Cloake proposed the following additional recommendations :-
- (1) The Cabinet Member be asked to support a phased approach of moving all infant and junior schools to straight through primaries if this approach is shown to be beneficial for educational attainment of the children in Worthing.
 - (2) That Worthing County Local Committee Members be asked to consider catchment areas.
 - (3) That the Cabinet Member be asked to look at ways to decrease the potential funding gap for junior schools losing Key Stage 3 funding
 - (4) That the Cabinet Member be asked to look at further provision for schools proposed to be expanded in pupil numbers that are currently rated as Inadequate or Requiring Improvement.
 - (5) That the Cabinet Member be asked to look at ways to guarantee sibling admissions at the same schools.
98. The Committee agreed that the recommendations contained in minute 97 should be referred to Worthing County Local Committee for consideration.
99. Resolved: that the Committee: -
- (1) Supports the ~~principles~~ for reorganisation of schools within Worthing, subject to the outcome of the consultation, to enable the Age of Transfer to change, to bring these schools into line with the policy of the County Council.
 - (2) Agrees that the recommendations contained in minute 97 should be referred to Worthing County Local Committee for consideration.

Total Performance Monitoring Report to the end of September 201.

100. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Communities Commissioning (copy appended to the signed minutes).
101. Nigel Street, Service Finance Manager – Children's and Learning, introduced the report and confirmed that the carry forward request in relation to the adoption reform grant had been approved.
102. The following points were raised in discussion; Members: -
- Requested clarification regarding staffing figures being lower than anticipated. *Sue Hawker, Director of Communities Commissioning, advised that a number*

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of staff had retired from the Learning Service and that these vacancies had not been filled while the future operation of the service was being considered.

- Commented on the significant underspend that was projected for year-end and queried whether staff were being encouraged to make additional savings on top of the existing savings target. *Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services, confirmed that, where managers could identify opportunities for additional savings, these were highlighted to the Cabinet Member so a decision could be made on whether to go ahead with the additional saving. Mr Street confirmed that work was currently underway to identify those areas where there was an on-going need for additional spending and those areas where there had been an on-going underspend to try and more accurately match the budget to the need in the future.*
- Raised concern that some of the performance framework targets used proxy measures which may lead to a lack of precision.
- Queried what was being done to mitigate the risk of insufficient resource being available to assist schools that required intervention. *Mrs Hawker confirmed that it was anticipated this risk would be downgraded to amber for the October Total Performance Monitor as measures had been taken to employ more staff in this area.*
- Confirmed that the Corporate Parenting Panel regularly received performance information in relation to Children Looked After and so were confident this data was being adequately scrutinised.

103. Resolved: that the Committee notes the report.

Future West Sussex Commissioning Intentions and Plans

104. The Committee considered a report by the Director Public Health, Commissioner for Health and Social Care (copy appended to the signed minutes).

105. Judith Wright, Director Public Health, Commissioner for Health and Social Care, introduced the report and highlighted the following points: -

- The County Council would be taking on delivery of school nurse and early years health visiting services and so the opportunity existed to utilise these trained individuals across a wider area in a multi-disciplinary way.
- The development of the Early Help and Prevention Strategy would provide the basis for setting out the work to be done with families who required early intervention.
- A through-life disability pathway would be developed to assist in creating a seamless transition for a child across different services, as and when these were required over time.
- The comments provided by Members at the two development sessions that had taken place would be incorporated into a revised version of the plan and there would be a further opportunity to scrutinise this at the Select Committee meeting in January 2014.

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

- Felt that the Start of Life section of the Commissioning Intentions and Plans document would benefit from simplifying, removal of jargon and inclusion of examples, to make it easier for the public to understand. It was considered

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that adopting the style used for the Later Life section would create a more cohesive document.

- Suggested that the outcomes set out on pages 66 - 68 should be grouped by subject across the entire timeline to help clarify the approach to each of these over the full 5 year period.
- Felt that consideration should be given to re-wording the phrases "children of concern" and "in need".

107. Resolved: that the Committee:

- (1) Endorses the commissioning intentions relating to its areas of responsibility
- (2) Refers the concerns noted in minute 106 to the Performance and Finance Select Committee.

Requests for Call-In

108. The Chairman explained that the Business Planning Group had decided to refuse a request received to call-in the decision by the Cabinet Member for Children – Start of Life in relation to Youth Support and Development Services Review – Savings Proposals (copy of call-in request and reasons for rejection appended to the signed minutes).

109. Some Members raised concern that the Committee may have made the wrong decision when the Cabinet Member Decision was previewed at the meeting of 24 October 2013 and requested clarification about the call-in process.

110. Mandy Shipley, Senior Advisor Democratic Services, explained that she would investigate the possibility of arranging training for those Members who felt they would benefit from more information about the call-in process.

Forward Plan of Key Decisions

111. The Committee considered the Forward Plan – December 2013 - March 2014 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

112. Resolved: that the Forward Plan be noted.

Members' Items

113. Mr Parsons advised he had been made aware that the 39 Club in Bognor Regis was experiencing delays in resolving some issues in relation to its lease with the County Council. As a result this was having an impact on its ability to make funding applications for much needed building improvements. Mr Gallimore and the Cabinet Member agreed to investigate this matter.

114. Mrs Arculus raised concern about special schools which were struggling to manage the needs of pupils placed at their schools with complex high end needs. Mrs Shipley agreed that she would ascertain whether a briefing note could be provided to the Committee to update Members on measures being taken to address this issue.

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Date of the Next Meeting

115. The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will be held on 16 January 2014 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 2.40pm.

Chairman