

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 14 March 2007.

PRESENT	Councillor Gadd (Chairman) Councillors Elkin, Field, (Vice-Chairman) Kramer, Ost, St Pierre, Mrs Tidy, Whetstone and Waite Jeremy Taylor (C of E Diocese) Sarah Maynard (Parent Governor) Sam Gregory (Parent Governor) Carole Shaves MBE (Police Authority representative)
Chief Officer	Matt Dunkley, Director of Children's Services
Legal Adviser	Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Law
Scrutiny Lead Officer	Gillian Mauger
Also present:	Cheryl Miller, Chief Executive for item 5 (see minute 39 below) Chief Superintendent Nick Williamson, Sussex Police for item 5 (see minute 39 below) John Hawkins, Head of the Youth Offending Team for item 5 (see minute 39 below) Jenny Clench, Head of Inclusion Support Team for item 6 (see minute 40 below) Alison Jefferies, Children's Trust Manager for item 7 (see minute 41 below)

36. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

36.1 RESOLVED – to (1) confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 November 2006; and (2) note the minutes of the Reconciling Policy and Resources Board meeting held on 13 December 2006.

36.2 Under this item the following explanatory points were made in respect of the minutes of the Reconciling Policy and Resources Board:

(a) Paragraph 3.7 - Councillor Mrs Tidy explained that all other local authorities in the South East also supported their respective Music Services;

(b) Paragraph 3.10 (1) – the Director of Children's Services confirmed that, since the Board meeting in December 2006, the Schools Forum had agreed to a £2 million transfer from central Headroom funds to offset the reduction in funding for youth provision. This funding was subject to a three year notice period to be reviewed annually and, as a result, would be made available for at least the next three years. The Director welcomed the support of the Scrutiny Committee and the co-operation of the Schools Forum in achieving this result.

36.3 Members also noted that Marie Casey was no longer the Health representative on the Scrutiny Committee and it was hoped that a new representative would be in place for the next meeting. A letter of thanks from the Chairman had been sent to Ms Casey.

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

37.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Campbell.

38. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

38.1 Sam Gregory declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 5 (Scrutiny Review of Youth Offending Team) as the Chief Executive of Training Assessment and Progression (TAP).

38.2 Councillor Field declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 7 (Review of Information, Advice and Guidance Services for Young People) as a Director of the Sussex Careers Service.

39. REPORTS

39.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

40. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

40.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chair of the Scrutiny Review Board presenting the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of the Youth Offending Team and proposing recommendations for improvement to youth crime prevention work.

40.2 The Chair of the Review Board thanked the Board Members and officers for their invaluable contributions to the Review.

40.3 Chief Superintendent Wilkinson confirmed that the Scrutiny Review had reflected the significance of partnership working. Feedback from the Districts in East Sussex indicated that a very small number of youth offenders could have a significant effect on local communities, particularly in terms of fear of crime and quality of life.

40.4 The Director of Children's Services and the Head of the Youth Offending Team welcomed the Review and its recommendations: the outcomes would be very helpful for the Inspection of Children's Services and the Joint Area Review. Members had a detailed discussion on the Review report and its recommendations and the Director responded to some of the issues raised as follows:

- Recommendations 1 – 6 (Prevent and Deter Groups) – the recommendations were very helpful.
- Recommendation 11 (Youth Offending Team and Sussex Police discussions on custodial sentences) – it would be unrealistic to expect that the Youth Offending Team and the Police would always have the same view and careful thought would be given to the Departmental response on this issue.
- Recommendation 12 (Use of part-time timetables by schools) – from September 2007 Government regulations would require schools to provide 25 hours of schooling for young people who would otherwise be excluded for more than 5 days. This might, as a result, lead to a rise in permanent exclusions. Behavioural Partnership Boards would be set up to work collaboratively in addressing this issue.
- Recommendation 13 (Specialist foster parents) – the use of specialist foster parents could be a better alternative than custodial remand and its feasibility would be investigated.

40.5 It was suggested that there was a direct relationship between sustainability of funding and data management and collection. The Committee recognised the importance of collecting data to show how successful preventative work has been and to enable a better business case to be put for future funding. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Chief Officers Group

(COG) was working to determine the amount and nature of the data really needed to help with youth crime prevention work, and youth crime in general, whilst also avoiding a proliferation of unnecessary information collection.

40.6 RESOLVED – to (1) support the Review Board's report and submit it to Cabinet on 1 May 2007 for comment and to County Council on 22 May 2007 for approval; and

(2) request that the background papers to the Review be made available to the Committee's co-opted members.

41. EVALUATION OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY EAST SUSSEX'S ANTI-BULLYING TEAM

41.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services setting out the key achievements of, and challenges facing, the Anti-Bullying Team and outlining future developmental areas of work for the Team and key stakeholders.

41.2 Members were advised that approximately 3 to 4 referrals were received each week by the Anti-Bullying Team and these numbers were likely to increase as their work became more widely known. In terms of how the increasing workload would be managed, the Committee noted that a new case worker had been recruited to the Team and it was anticipated that engagement with other partners would help to spread the load and encourage greater ownership of the problem by schools.

41.3 RESOLVED – to (1) endorse the work of the Anti-Bullying Team;

(2) request the Director of Children's Services to thank the officers in the Anti-Bullying Team for all their work in developing anti-bullying strategies across the County ; and

(3) request the Director of Children's Services to ensure that all Members and partners are made aware of the achievements of the Anti-Bullying Team and their ongoing work.

42. REVIEW OF INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

42.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services outlining the issues relating to the Review of Information, Advice and Guidance Services for young people. Members' attention was drawn, in particular, to the proposed outline strategy set out in the appendix to the report and the development of consultation proposals to clarify which aspects of services and support should be recommended for direct provision or be subject to a tendering exercise.

42.2 Members welcomed the proposals and congratulated the officers on the way in which the discussions on this were being taken forward.

42.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the outline proposed strategy for information advice and guidance services set out in the report to the Children's Trust 11-19 Partnership attached as appendix 1; and

(2) note the timetable for completing the review set out in this paper.

43. QUARTER THREE (Q3) MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE 2006/07 COUNCIL PLAN AND FEEDBACK FROM THE VALUE ADDED DATA PRESENTATION

43.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Policy and Communications

updating on performance against the Council Plan for the third quarter of 2006/2007.

43.2 Members expressed concern about the proposal to delete the indicator relating to bullying (Appendix 1 – LAA 1.2.1) because of the difficulties in obtaining the data which, as a result, could not be considered reliable. The Director of Children's Services explained that this was a problem for most local authorities and, in place of the current indicator, it was intended to carry out some research sampling around perceptions and incidents, the outcomes of which would be reviewed on an annual basis.

43.3 The Members of the Best Value Performance Indicator Board reported that they had found the presentation on Value Added Data, referred to in appendix 3, to be excellent and very useful. It was suggested that, in addition to the Education Standards Board, the presentation should be made available to all Members.

43.4 RESOLVED – to (1) note the achievements of the Children's Services Department;

(2) request the Director of Children's Services to devise and include an alternative, more efficient and effective method of obtaining information on the incidence of bullying for inclusion in next year's Council Plan, and report back to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 June 2007;

(3) note the progress to date from the IDeA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan; and

(4) note the work to date of the Best Value Performance Indicator Review Board and suggest that the presentation on Contextual Value Added Data be opened up to all Members.

44. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2007 WORK PROGRAMME, FUTURE VISITS AND REVIEWS

44.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel setting out the Committee's planned programme of work for 2007 and the dates for Member visits to Children's Centres and Community Special Schools.

44.2 Members undertook to notify the Director of Law and Personnel of their interest and availability in respect of the visits listed in the report.

44.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the dates for future visits to Children's Centres and Community Special Schools; and

(2) agree the Committee's future work programme for 2007.

45. FORWARD PLAN

45.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 14 March 2007 to 10 July 2007

45.2 RESOLVED – To note the Forward Plan without comment.