

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 28 November 2007.

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PRESENT	Councillor Elkin (Chairman) Councillors Dowling, Kramer, Ost, St Pierre, and Whetstone  Tony Campbell (RC Diocese) Sam Gregory (Parent Governor) Rhiannon Barker (Health 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	Councillor Simmons, Lead Member for Learning and Effectiveness Councillor Stroude, Lead Member for Children and Families John Hawkins, Head of Youth Offending Services Alison Horan, Head of Community Partnerships Annie Petch, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the meeting the committee were updated on the following items:

### Safeguarding

The Director of Children's Services advised that he and senior officers had met with the 3 Lead Members for Children's services; opposition spokespeople; Chair of the Scrutiny Committee; and a parent governor representative, to discuss a reporting structure following the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) meetings. They agreed that the above representatives would all receive a copy of all non confidential agenda papers before all LSCB meetings and following each meeting they would also be debriefed.

### Children are unbeatable campaign

The Local Safeguarding Children Board would be asked at their next meeting to consider working with the 'Children are unbeatable' campaign.

### Gifted and Talented children

A pilot scheme involving primary schools would be launched early next summer with the intention of seeking to add 2 private sector schools. Should the pilot be successful it would be rolled out across the county for Key Stage 2 children. The pilot was being funded by independent money.

## 27. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

27.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 September 2007.

## 28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

28.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Field, Gadd and Waite; and Jeremy Taylor, Sarah Maynard, Mrs Carole Shaves MBE, and Councillor Paul Silverson.

## 29. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

29.1 Tony Campbell declared a personal interest in item 7 in that he was a head teacher.

29.2 Sam Gregory declared a personal interest in item 6 in that he worked with children in this sector.

## 30. REPORTS

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

## 31. FINAL REPORT FROM THE JOINT AREA REVIEW (JAR)

31.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services. The report provided the findings from the Joint Area Review.

31.2 The Director of Children's Services provided the background to the inspection, explaining that all local authorities had inspections on services for looked after children; learning disabilities; and safeguarding. In addition to these areas our inspection looked at local data and chose a further two areas to inspect, which were the impact of 14-19 strategy on vulnerable groups and the services and outcomes for children and young people using the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

31.3 The response to the inspection is due be sent to Ofsted by the end of January 2008. Rather than producing a separate action plan for the recommendations, the majority of them will be linked to action in the Council Plan and progress monitored through that.

31.4 The Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services will be published shortly and is rated against the 5 outcomes for children, along with management ability and capacity to improve. East Sussex County Council received an overall rating of good, with an outstanding rating in 3 areas. This result put East Sussex County Council in the top 5-10% of local authorities in the country. It recognised that attainment in Key Stage 4 needed to improve and there were a range of actions in place to achieve this.

31.5 When questioned about the uneven provision of leisure facilities the Director advised district and borough councils had reached an agreement for youth leisure provision which was due to be published in March 2008.

31.6 In response to further questioning the Director of Children's Services advised:

- An action plan had been developed on equalities and diversity and this could be brought to a future committee meeting for scrutinising.
- The inspection on staff morale was based on a consultation with a random selection of staff, staff forums, and staff surveys. The result compared favourably with national figures.
- Great progress had been made around youth homelessness in the past year. Children's Services are working with district and borough councils and will have a joint strategy in early 2008.
- Findings of the inspection report would be disseminated to children and young people in the area, via consultation with the Youth Cabinet and consultation on the Children and Young People Plan.
- Personnel and Training Department are helping to develop an action plan to ensure a high standard of recruitment checks.
- The largest employers in East Sussex are in the public sector (Council and Health sectors) and Children's Services are working with them all to establish placements for education and training for vulnerable young people (14-19 years old).

- To help increase employer engagement in 14-19 partnerships discussions were continuing around using Section 106 agreements through the planning process to encourage developers to offer apprenticeships and training in construction to young people whilst the sites were being developed.
- CAMHS was being monitored tightly and was being reported on quarterly. Acute provision (Tier 4) was still an issue and the department was in the process of recommissioning for this. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that acute cases did not wait 12 weeks to be seen and secondary schools are commissioning their own support for Tiers 1 and 2. The CAMHS service had previously been poor but the service was now one of the best in the country. This turn around had been helped by pulling together funding from Health partners, Children's Services and grant funding, as well as the determination of staff on the ground to succeed.
- The next phase of extended school services and Children's Centres was starting. There would be a concentration on services in rural areas in this phase, which would present issues around transport and work on this was currently being carried to try and resolve it. There had been great success with online e-learning packages for use remotely, for children who could not access an extended schools programme, and these gave a good basis to develop further IT solutions.

31.7 RESOLVED to (1) thank staff and members for the hard work and contribution to the inspection;

(2) agree that the recommendations from the Joint Area Review report will be monitored within the Council Plan and will be brought back to the Committee for monitoring at an appropriate time;

(3) request an update report in 6 months time on the implementation of the actions around equalities and diversity; and

(4) request a report to a future committee meeting on issues around school transport in rural areas, its effect on 14-19 strategy and the extended schools programmes, and in particular how the responsibilities for school transport are shared between the Children's Services and Transport and Environment Departments.

## 32. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH OFFENDING TEAMS – 6 MONTH UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN

32.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the action plan.

32.2 The Head of Youth Offending Services advised the Committee that since the review was concluded there had also been an inspection of the Youth Offending Team. One recommendation was to draw up a multi-agency youth crime prevention strategy, in which they plan to incorporate some of the relevant recommendations from the review.

32.3 There had been no further information received concerning the continuation of the Youth Crime Prevention Grant and therefore it was not possible to confirm whether preventative work delivered by the Youth Offending Team that is funded by this Grant would continue past April 2008.

32.4 The Head of Youth Offending Services responded to questions from the Committee on progress on the recommendations and advised:

- Regular liaison meetings between the Youth Offending Team and the East Sussex Division of Sussex Police have been established and the first two meetings had been positive. They were trying to change how the police handled child on child crime and

the inappropriate child prosecutions by the CPS. The new Chief Constable was due to meet with the Head of Youth Offending Services to discuss how they could improve the way they worked together.

- The East Sussex Children's Index held information on which agencies were working with the children. This information was held on a database which was security encrypted and very secure. Government had decided not to adopt the East Sussex Children's Index model and the national model roll-out had been delayed to September 2008.

32.5 RESOLVED – to (1) approve the proposal to incorporate Action Points R1-5 into the development of a multi-agency Youth Crime Prevention Strategy;

(2) request a progress report on Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 at the Scrutiny Committee in March 2008;

(4) write to the appropriate Government Departments in support of the Youth Crime Prevention Grant being awarded in 2008/09.

### 33. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROVISION

33.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which informed it of recent actions in relation to the review.

33.2 The Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that progress had been substantial and the special education needs provision was improving.

33.3 The Committee noted that the Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee had requested that they investigate the delegation of SEN funds and agreed it would be timely to discuss it in depth at a future Committee meeting.

33.4 The Director of Children's Services confirmed that East Sussex still issued 80% more SEN statements than other counties. This was largely due to the fact that money was linked to these statements and it was felt that if that incentive is removed the number requested would reduce. He also confirmed that the number of requests for statements had increased by 35%; however the number of statements being issued had not increased, which may give the impression that less people are successful in their request for a statement.

33.5 Cases of Speech and language difficulties, and Autistic Spectrum Disorder had gone up proportionally and the figures mirror national increases. Increases in autism were associated with an increase in the number of children born to older parents and more babies surviving difficult births. The numbers of statements for Specific Learning Difficulties, including dyslexia, were going down because teachers were getting better at understanding and recognising symptoms and meeting the children's needs without the need to issue a statement.

33.6 Children's Services were good at providing schooling for children with special needs in the County, but this did cause a strain on transport costs. Following the recent Best Value Review of Transport, two research officers had been appointed to look at SEN transport issues.

33.7 RESOLVED – to (1) note the actions relating to the recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Review; and

(2) request a further report at a future committee meeting on changes to the Special Educational Needs funding

#### 34. EAST SUSSEX SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (SCS)

34.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Policy and Communication informing members of the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).

34.2 The Committee was advised that all local authorities had a statutory duty to prepare a sustainable community strategy. An agreement had been reached across East Sussex to have a joint strategy with Local Strategic Partnerships, Councils and other partners. The strategy would be supported by the new Local Area Agreement which would be in place by June 2008.

34.3 RESOLVED – to (1) Feedback comments regarding Children’s Services areas of the strategy to the Chairman;  
(2) ask the Scrutiny Chairmen to consider the draft at their meeting and respond on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees; and

(2) agree that Members review and respond individually (directly to officers and also through debate at County Council) rather than as a Committee.

#### 35. QUARTER TWO MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE 2007/08 COUNCIL PLAN

35.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Policy and Communication which provided an update on performance against the Council Plan for the second quarter of 2007/08.

35.2 The Committee questioned whether the recording of incorrect targets around the foundation stage profile performance had impacted on actual performance in these areas. The Director of Children’s Services confirmed the targets were set against the wrong years in the monitoring plan, and not the actual Council Plan itself, possibly due to confusion between academic years and financial years. He also confirmed that staff were working to the correct targets and the error had not had any adverse impact on performance.

35.3 The Committee agreed that it did not require additional monitoring of specific performance results at this time.

35.4 RESOLVED to note the achievements made by the Children’ Services Department and the performance against the Council Plan for quarter two.

#### 36. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2007 WORK PROGRAMME

36.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel.

36.2 The Committee agreed to add the following items to the work programme:

- Presentation at a future meeting on global data sets on children in East Sussex against the 5 outcomes for children.
- Carry out a review on the role of Governors in schools
- Report on Extended Schools at the meeting in June 2008
- Update on the tabletop review of recruitment and retention of teachers at the March 2008 meeting

36.3 RESOLVED – to update the work programme.

37. FORWARD PLAN

37.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2007 to 31 March 2008.

37.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan without comment.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 1.10pm