

## 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 2008.

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PRESENT	Councillor Elkin (Chairman) Councillors Dowling, Field, Ost, St Pierre, Waite and Whetstone
	Sarah Maynard (Parent Governor) Rhiannon Barker (Health representative) Councillor Paul Silverson (District and Borough 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 Stroude, Lead Member for Children and Families Trudy Mills, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator Richard Watson, Head of Health Improvement, PCTs Annie Petch, Democratic Services Officer Gemma Barlow, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the meeting, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that he would advise Committee members, outside of the meeting, of the date of the last Local Safeguarding Children Board meeting and whether they discussed the 'Children are Unbeatable' campaign.

### 38. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

38.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 November 2007.

### 39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

39.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kramer, Mrs Carole Shaves, Mr Jeremy Taylor, and Mr Tony Campbell,

### 40. REPORTS

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

### 41. KEY ISSUES FOR REDUCING TEENAGE PREGNANCY

41.1 The Committee received a presentation by the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator and Health Improvement Manager for the PCTs which provided recent teenage pregnancy data and key work aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

41.2 Through the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (1999) there was a national target to reduce by 2010 the number of pregnancies to under 18 teenagers by 50% (against the 1998 baseline).

41.3 Members were advised that mapping exercises were being completed in order to assess why there had been increases in conception in some districts and borough (eg Wealden), yet reductions in other areas. It was noted that the conception data had been rebased for 2005 and this may have resulted in Lewes having a high percentage decrease.

41.4 A recent survey carried out across East Sussex secondary schools showed that young people saw their school as being their main source of information on issues such as sex education. It was acknowledged that adequate training was needed for those teachers providing the Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) programme in schools to ensure that the programme was effective and relevant to young people. An audit of Sex and Relationship Education across the country was to be carried out during 2008.

41.5 In response to questions from members the following points were made:

- It was acknowledged that the target of a 50% reduction in teenage pregnancies would probably not be reached by 2010, but that this did not stop it from being an aspiration.
- Consultation with primary schools had taken place about the services that they were delivering and what support was needed to help deliver this. A toolkit would be developed that could be accessed by the schools.
- Research had shown that teaching primary school children about sexual health did not encourage sexual activity from an earlier age.
- Work was being done with parents through parent evenings; work with school governors; and at Children's Centres to help parents develop the skills to be able to do this.
- At present only four of the 27 secondary schools provided specific sexual health services on site.
- Foster carers also received training to help develop their skills. Although it was recognised that Looked After Children in private care was an area where more work needed to be done.
- The PCTs were developing a new strategy in relation to teenage pregnancies, with greater investment in this area. This work was seen as a key priority area for them.
- Previously work on teenage pregnancies had focused on the 'hubs' of Hastings and Eastbourne. In future more work would be done in the rural communities as well.
- A single service was commissioned (BPAS) to collate the data on births and abortions. Private abortions were included in this data.
- Those teenagers in the east of the county (eg Hastings) seeking an abortion had to travel to Brighton for it to be performed, although follow up services were now available locally. The number of pregnancies resulting in abortions was lower in Hastings than other areas and members raised concerns that this was due to the need to travel to Brighton for the procedure. However, other factors such as a greater social acceptance of teenage pregnancy and an aspiration amongst teenagers to have children were seen to be behind this trend.
- It was highlighted that there was a strong correlation between teenage pregnancies and alcohol and that only 10% of teenage conceptions were actually planned.

41.1 RESOLVED to (1) express their support for the work undertaken to date; and  
(2) receive a further report in one years time to update the Committee on further work being done to reduce teenage pregnancies.

## 42. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES – FEEDBACK TO SCRUTINY

42.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel which provided feedback on the outcomes of scrutiny input into the Reconciling Policy and Resources (RPR) process in 2007/08.

42.2 The Committee was pleased to note that all the recommendations it had made during the Reconciling Policy and Resources process had been acted upon. To further improve the process members suggested that plain numbers were used as well as plain English, the

labelling of savings as high, medium or low impact should be removed as they were not always relevant and the savings should be shown as a percentage figure of that particular budget area.

42.3 RESOLVED – to request that, in future Reconciling Policy and Resources processes, plain numbers as well as plain English is used; the labels of high, medium or low impact are removed and the savings should be shown as a percentage figure of that particular budget area.

#### 43. UPDATE REPORT ON DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT

43.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which updated them on the developments in the Reintegration Service and the Secondary Behaviour Support Service since the reorganisation of provision in April 2007.

43.2 The Committee discussed how distance learning could help children who are excluded from school to continue with their education. The Director confirmed that this was an area of significant development and children could now link up their computer to a live teacher who will take them through learning materials whilst on-line.

43.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the progress to date following the reorganisation of provision in the Reintegration Service and the Secondary Behaviour Support Service; and

(2) request feedback to the Committee in June 2009 on the creation of a combined Reintegration and Secondary Behaviour Support Service and how this change of provision has impacted on service users.

#### 44. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

44.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which updated them on the outcomes in relation to recommendations 7 and 8 of the Action Plan from the Youth Offending Team Scrutiny Review.

44.2 RESOLVED – to note the contents of the report.

#### 45. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ALCOHOL MISUSE AMONGST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

45.1 The Committee considered a report by the Review Board which presented the findings of the review and proposed recommendations relating to alcohol misuse amongst Children and Young People. The review followed on from the Youth Offending Team review where a link between entrance in to the criminal justice system and alcohol consumption had been identified.

45.2 The Chairman of the Review Board thanked all the members of the Review Board, scrutiny support officers and all those officers and young people who had contributed to the review.

45.3 The Director of Children's Services confirmed that it was more difficult for young people under 18 years of age to buy alcohol in pubs and shops, and the issue now was that most young people obtained alcohol from adults. He supported the sensitive and selective use of a

range of police powers, including testing drinks, use of curfews and alcohol confiscation, as well as writing to the children's parents when a child is caught drinking on the streets.

45.4 The Committee was advised that the Children's Services Department had recently developed a family substance misuse service which worked with the family as a whole to tackle issues affecting both parents and children. This had proved to be very successful demand for the service already exceeds capacity.

45.5 The Director of Children's Services advised that Cabinet had considered a community strategy on alcohol at its meeting on 11 March. A conference on risky behaviour in young people would be taking place and he would seek invitations for scrutiny members.

45.6 The representative for the District & Borough Councils asked that when the report had been agreed by the Council he would like to present the report to the Youth Forum for consideration and comment.

45.7 RESOLVED to (1) support the report of the Review Board and recommends it to Cabinet for comment and County Council for approval; and

(2) present the report to the Youth Forum for consideration and comment.

46. TABLETOP SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS IN EAST SUSSEX

46.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the tabletop review which presented the outcomes of the review and proposed recommendations relating to recruitment and retention of teachers in East Sussex.

46.2 The Chairman of the review confirmed that the effect of the cost of housing on recruitment had not been an area covered by the scope of the review, but that officers did provide information to new teachers moving into the area to help them find accommodation.

46.3 The Committee discussed the potential positive impact that the new Hastings Cluster could have on teacher retention. It asked that this area be looked at, as well as the issue of recruitment and retention and the outcomes of pupil attainment when an update of the review is carried out in the autumn.

46.4 RESOLVED to support the recommendations in the report and receive an update report in November 2008.

47. QUARTER THREE (Q3) MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE 2007/08 COUNCIL PLAN

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

47.2 RESOLVED to note the achievements made by the Children's Services Department

#### 48. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2008 WORK PROGRAMME

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

48.2 Councillor St Pierre, Councillor Ost and Sarah Maynard volunteered to be on the School Governors Review Board. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to write out to all members who were not present at the meeting for further volunteers.

48.3 The Committee requested a briefing on special educational needs (SEN) children, particularly regarding their outcomes from different school settings. Committee members were asked to forward any specific questions to the Chairman so that the officer could be guided on the information needed in the briefing.

48.4 A member of the Committee requested that an annual report from the Education Standards Panel be requested to be presented to the Committee. The Chairman agreed to check the constitution on the reporting process and advise the Committee before the next meeting.

48.5 The Committee requested an update on the take-up of school places across the county. A review in this area was currently in progress and a report would be presented to the Committee when this work was concluded.

48.6 The Committee discussed how best to keep up to date on matters discussed at meetings without overloading committee meeting agendas. Ideas put forward included the information being circulated via a scrutiny newsletter, the Committee agenda to include items for information or using a call over system for agenda items. The Chairman advised he would consider the options with the Scrutiny Officer and legal advisor and provide an update at the next meeting.

48.7 RESOLVED – to (1) support a review on School Governors to be carried out by Councillor St Pierre, Councillor Ost and Sarah Maynard and that further volunteers for the review board be sought from those members not present at the meeting;

(2) request a future briefing on special educational needs (SEN) children, particularly regarding their outcomes from different school settings;

(3) check the constitution on the reporting process of the Education Standards Panel and advise the Committee before the next meeting; and

(4) receive an update at the next Committee meeting on how best to receive update on information previously reported to the Committee.

#### 49. FORWARD PLAN

49.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 March to 31 July 2008.

49.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan without comment.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.55pm