

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 17 June 2008.

PRESENT	Councillor Maynard (Chairman) Councillors Dowling, Field, Gadd, Kramer Ost, St Pierre, Waite and Whetstone
	Sarah Maynard (Parent Governor) Councillor Paul Silverson (District and Borough representative) Jeremy Taylor (C of E Diocese) Tony Campbell (RC Diocese)
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 Elkin, Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and School Effectiveness Councillor Stroude, Lead Member for Children and Families Alison Smith, Commissioning and Strategic Development Lead for East Sussex Marilyn Stephens, East Sussex PSHE and Healthy Schools Adviser Dave Sugg, Extended Schools Strategy Manager Helen Davies, Deputy Director, Children and Families Gemma Barlow, Democratic Services Officer

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1.1 The Committee received an update on the Children Are Unbeatable Campaign, further to it being raised at the Safeguarding Board.

1.2 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 March 2008.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from, Rhiannon Barker, Mrs Carole Shaves and Sam Gregory.

2.2 As Rhiannon Barker had now stood down from the Committee it was agreed to write a letter of thanks for all of her work with the Committee.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

3.2 Councillor Field declared an interest in item 7 as she was Chair of Action Rural Sussex as it delivered services to the youth.

4. REPORTS

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

5. EXTENDED SERVICES THROUGH SCHOOLS

5.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services that provided an update on the progress of the Extended Services through schools within East Sussex. Dave Sugg was in attendance to give a short presentation and answer any questions from Members.

5.2 The Committee were advised that extended services were aimed all children, not just the vulnerable sector and aimed to target all the current key issues impacting on children, such as drugs and obesity.

5.3 Members were advised that the targets set for take up for East Sussex County Council to be achieved by September 2008 had already been exceeded and that East Sussex County Council was now ranked 5th in the South East region for the level of provision provided.

5.4 It was acknowledged that the child care element of the core offer had not quite been achieved. This was mainly in the rural areas of the County and was due to transport issues and that fact that in some areas the need for child care was too small to be cost effective.

5.5 In response to questions from the Committee the following points were made:

- There was joined up thinking between departments to help solve the transport problems. Discussion with Transport and Environment were taking place about what provision could be made available, especially in light of the fact that the bus contracts were up for renewal in July 2008. The Local Partnership for Children Extended Schools Project Board was also looking at the transport issue and considering evidence from other authorities that had cracked this issue.
- It was recognised that families would only take up child care when they were sure that it was reliable and would be permanent.
- The aim was for after school clubs to be run by people specialised in play or by the voluntary sector rather than teachers. This would ensure that there was a marked difference in this provision and core school time.
- It was noted that school buildings were the County Councils most substantial asset, but were not being used for 60% of the time. Community use would ensure that they were fully utilised.
- The Council were not trying to develop child care provision where there was already provision. The Council also tried to bring providers in to use school premises. There could be a conflict between business interests and community benefit.

5.6 The Committee suggested that the consultation included talking to parents prior to their child attending the school to find out what type of provision they would like to see available. It also suggested that all governing bodies needed to be having discussions about how their school was going to develop the extended services agenda.

5.7 RESOLVED to (1) note the contents of the report

(2) congratulate staff on their hard work to date in developing extended services in schools

(3) email Members an update from each of the Local Partnerships for Children on what extended services provision was being developed in that area.

6. TACKLING OBESITY IN EAST SUSSEX

6.1 The Committee received a presentation and a report on tackling childhood obesity in East Sussex. Alison Smith and Marilyn Stephens were in attendance and to answer any questions.

6.2 Members were advised that although obesity in young people in East Sussex was below the national average the County could not afford to be complacent. Screening of children in the reception year and year 6 had been carried out and data was provided on the percentage of children in 2006-08 that were overweight or obese in. Data revealed lower levels of overweight and obese children in the Hastings and Rother PCT area than in the East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT area. This was contrary to expectations and there was speculation that obese children in the Hastings and Rother area had not attended school on the day the measurements were taken. All schools received individual reports on the data so that they were aware of particular issues in their school.

6.3 Initiatives and examples of good practice from schools had been put on the website and were shared amongst schools at network meetings. Work was also being carried out with Local Partnerships for Children to find ways of continuing this work with young people after they leave Year 6 and move into secondary school. Future work would include looking at what happens to children between reception year and Year 6 and in 2008/09 it was hoped that statistics on underweight children could be developed and that this issue could be explored further.

6.4 Unlike in adults, there was no definition for obese and overweight children. This was because the BMI that was used for adults was unpredictable in children. Instead a national average was used as an indicator and where a child fell in relation to this indicated if they were overweight.

6.5 In order to promote healthy living, activities such as 'walking buses' to schools were organised, along with promoting safe pavements and cycle. All the schemes were evaluated and some schools were beginning to see a positive change in behaviour. However it was difficult to measure the impact that individual activities were having to a child's weight and it would take many years to see if this work was making an overall change to the health of the population.

6.6 The committee raised concerns about the power of advertising and how this was counter productive to promoting healthy living. Members also suggested that this could be an area of work for the Local Strategic Partnerships.

6.7 RESOLVED to note the presentation and the progress being made towards combating obesity in East Sussex.

7. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

7.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services that requested consideration of the proposals following the strategic review of the Youth Development Service (YDS).

7.2 Members were advised that the review of the YDS was carried out following an inspection of the Service by Ofsted in Summer 2007. The review was overseen by a multi agency project board and included consultation with a range of stakeholders, including young people and schools. The consultation document including recommendations and proposals would end on 22 June 2008 and the results would be put forward to Council Cabinet on 29 July 2008.

7.3 Resources would be aimed at detached and mobile provision to reach out to those most needing support. Funding would also be made available to a group for each of the

District and Borough areas so that they can decide how best to distribute them, rather than to the community colleges, which had been the way funding had been distributed in the past. There was close working with the community colleges in order to try and ensure continued involvement despite the proposed funding changes. Matt's - As part of this it was proposed to aggregate funding (including that currently devolved to Community Colleges) in five areas co-terminus with the district and boroughs to commission youth development services across those localities.

7.4 Members raised concerns that children in some areas of the County seemed to get more resources than others. This was due to the way the system was set up historically and over time had evolved into a funding model that was unbalanced, hence the reason for review.

RESOLVED to (1) note the proposals currently out for consultation and to make the following suggestions:

- To make the mission statement more specific, with measurable targets
- To broaden the age range the YDS works with to include 11 and 12 year olds

8. FORWARD PLAN

8.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period June to September 2008.

8.2 RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

9. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

9.1 RESOLVED to (1) move the report on Equalities and Diversity to the November meeting of the Committee

(2) to delete the School Transport item from the work programme as it was being considered by the Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee in September. However it was agreed to send Members the report that was being presented to the Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee so that they could make comments on it or attend the meeting.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.40pm