

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 9 March 2009

PRESENT	Councillor Maynard (Chairman) Councillors Field, Dowling, Kramer, Ost, St Pierre, and Whetstone.
	Councillor Paul Silverson (District and Borough representative) Jeremy Alford (Health Representative) Mrs S Maynard (Parent Governor) Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor)
Chief Officer	Matt Dunkley, Director of Children's Services
Legal Adviser	Philip Baker, Senior Solicitor
Scrutiny Lead Officer	Gillian Mauger
Also present	Councillor Stroude, Lead Member for Children and Families Councillor Elkin, Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services Trudy Mills, Strategy and Planning Manager, Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health. Michaela Frost, Democratic Services Officer

33. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

33.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 November 2008.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

34.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gadd, Councillor Waite, Mrs Carole Shaves, Mr A Campbell and Mr J Taylor.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

35.1 Councillor Field declared a personal interest in minute number 37 in that her husband managed an independent school where children with autism attended. Councillor Field did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

35.2 Councillor Maynard declared a personal interest in minute number 39 in that he was Leader of Rother District Council which is a licensing authority as regards establishments that sell alcohol. Councillor Maynard did not consider the interest to be prejudicial.

36. REPORTS

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

37. AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

37.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which informed the Committee of the action plan underpinning the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategy, which had originally been presented to the Committee in September 2007.

37.2 The Committee acknowledged the actions being undertaken towards implementing the ASD Strategy and the key successes as outlined in the report. It was also noted that this was an area of growth in terms of the numbers of young people being diagnosed. Substantial progress had been made against most of the targets, but progress was still to be made with the recruitment of a Transition Co-ordinator. In response to questions from Members the following points were also made:

- Work was being undertaken closely with those teams who work on new builds in order to incorporate what was known about autistic spectrum disorder into the design of new buildings. It was known that this could have a positive impact on children diagnosed with ASD.
- In relation to transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Care for people with autism, the aim was to establish a 14– 25 age range team which would ensure young adults with ASD made a successful transition when moving between the two services (historically during some young adults had 'fallen through the gap' during transition). It was recognised that, due to the huge increase in children being diagnosed with autism, this would present a resource challenge for Adult Social Care in the future.
- Children's Services are aware of how many children in the County have autism, but were unsure as to whether Adult Social Care had the same detailed figures – The Director of Children's Services would try and find this information and forward it to the Committee.
- East Sussex County Council was seen as a leading authority in this area and had been held up as an example of best practice by the Department of Children Schools and Families.
- It was recognised that there had been a particular increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism in the East of the County, but it was worth noting that resources in this area had been increased significantly to meet this demand, particularly with the work being carried out at Filsham Valley School.

37.3 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and the progress made to date.

38. KEY ISSUES AND PROGRESS REPORT ON TEENAGE CONCEPTIONS

38.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which updated the Committee on recent teenage pregnancy data and progress work being undertaken on the prevention of teenage pregnancy. Trudy Mills, Strategy and Planning Manager, Teenage Pregnancy and Sexual Health, was in attendance to give a presentation on the data and to answer any member questions. The presentation would be circulated to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

38.2 In response to Members' questions the following comments were made:

- A challenging target had been set, but East Sussex was moving in the right direction towards meeting it and it was reported that the results for East Sussex compared well with the overall national picture.
- Partnership working in this area was good, which was assisting in reducing teenage pregnancies.
- It was noted that money was weighted depending on the conception rates. Therefore in the East of the County had received slightly more additional money which would be used in schools and colleges to educate young people further about sexual health.

- There were two action plans in place, one for the East of the County and one for the West of the County. The aim of the Plan in the East was to examine the aspirations of young people.
- A recent PCT social marketing exercise had looked at why teenagers had chosen to become parents. These results could be made available to members on request.
- GP provision and accessibility of services was currently under review and it was hoped that a specialist consultant for contraceptive services would be recruited to train up GPs. in how to offer the most suitable contraception to young people.
- A training co-ordinator has been recruited to ensure all staff who work with young people are trained in these areas of reducing teenage conception and sexual health. The post holder started in November 08.
- There was an obvious dip in conceptions in 2001, but there was no real explanation as to why this was so. A possible suggestion was that there had been regeneration money at this time which had resulted in more youth work during 2001.
- A young men's health worker had been recruited by PULSE and they would be looking at the type of information young men wanted to receive about sexual health and the preferred format to receive it in.

38.3 The committee agreed that information on teenage pregnancies should be reported to the committee annually. It also requested that information be included within this report in future on conception rates for all ages, so that these figures could be put in context.

39.4 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and the progress update on the work being undertaken to achieve the LAA target for U18 conceptions.

39. ALCOHOL MISUSE AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

39.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which was an update on progress made towards the recommendations outlined in the Alcohol Misuse amongst Young People Scrutiny Review. It also included information on the initiatives in place at a local and national level aimed at informing and educating children and young people about the dangers of alcohol misuse.

39.2 The Committee noted that there had been a delay in the publication of the Youth Alcohol Action Plan and other national guidance, hence the delay in meeting some of the targets set out in the action plan. The Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that the review had been well received and copies of the action plan had been requested by other local authorities as an example of good practice.

39.3 The Committee also noted that the Youth Cabinet had substance misuse as one of its campaigns this year, with a particular focus on alcohol. Young people would be involved in alcohol test purchasing and would also be looking at using young people to get the message across to other young people about the problems of alcohol misuse.

39.4 RESOLVED - to (1) note the report and the slippage on timescales due to the delay in publication of associated national guidance; and
 (2) request that a more detailed evidence based report be submitted to the Committee in September 2009; and
 (3) request that a more detailed breakdown of the data available on drugs in East Sussex be presented in September 2009 and to invite a police representative to that meeting to present the information.

40. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES UPDATE – FEEDBACK TO SCRUTINY

40.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Law and Personnel which provided feedback on the outcomes of the scrutiny input into the reconciling policy and resources

process in 2008/09. In particular the Committee noted that the County Council had received a commendation from the Centre for Public Scrutiny for its innovative approach to financial scrutiny.

40.2 RESOLVED to note the report.

41. QUARTER THREE MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE 2009/09 COUNCIL PLAN

41.1 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 2008/09.

41.2 In relation to indicator 3.1.1, regarding attainment of children in deprived areas, it was noted that the issue was not the lack of facilities, but the lack of take up of them. It was difficult to address this issue, other than to keep encouraging parents in this area to do so.

41.3 In relation to indicator 5.1.1, regarding the registered percentage of 16-18 year olds that are not in education, employment or training (NEET), it was agreed to have an additional report in due course on this issue, especially as it was a LAA reward target.

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

42. THE FORWARD PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1 MARCH 2009 TO 30 JUNE 2009

42.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 March to 30 June 2009.

42.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan

43. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

43.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel setting out the Committee's planned programme of work for the forthcoming year.

43.2 The Committee agreed to include a presentation of the Excellence Cluster in Hastings into their work programme.

44. LAST MEETING

44.1 The Chairman reminded the Committee that this had been the last Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting of the present County Council. He thanked the Members and officers for their support and work over the last four years, with particular thanks to Councillor Kramer, as she would not be standing for re-election.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 11.50am