

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 13 July 2009

PRESENT	Councillor Ensor (Chairman) Councillors Field, Kenward, St Pierre, Waite, Webb and Whetstone. Councillor Paul Silverson (District and Borough representative) Jeremy Alford (Health Representative) Mrs N Parker (Parent Governor) Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor) Mr A Campbell OBE (RC Diocese) Mr J Taylor (C of E 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 Stroude, Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Families Councillor Elkin, Lead Cabinet Member for Children's Services Councillor Glazier, Lead Cabinet Member for Children's and Adults Services Mr M Wilson (C of E Diocese) Mrs S Maynard (for item 8 on the Agenda) Michaela Frost, Democratic Services Officer Bernadette Dawes, Short Breaks Development Manager, Children's Disability Services for item 5 Shaila Sheikh, Equality and Engagement Manager and Louise Carter, Assistant Director, Planning and Performance for item 6 Amanda Watson, Transition Programme Manager for item 7

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 March 2009.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gadd, and Councillor Ost.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 Councillor Waite declared a personal interest in that she was a Governor at Chailey Heritage School. Councillor Waite did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

3.2 Councillor Ensor declared a personal interest in that his wife was a social worker at St Mary's Special School in Bexhill. Councillor Ensor did not consider his interest to be prejudicial.

3.3 Mrs N Parker declared an interest in that she was a Foster Carer. Mrs N Parker did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

3.4 Mr S Gregory declared an interest in that he worked with an organisation which worked with young people. Mr S Gregory did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

4. REPORTS

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

5. AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN - IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSIONING PLAN

5.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which updated the Committee on how short breaks provision would be increased for disabled children in East Sussex via the implementation of the Commissioning Plan for Aiming High for Disabled Children. Bernadette Dawes, Short Breaks Development Manager, was in attendance for this item and was able to provide an update.

5.2 The Committee noted that the tender was now out for the implementation of a "Buddy Scheme" for 14 - 19 year olds. The scheme would allow for a volunteer buddy to help disabled children take part in activities. The winner of the tender would be known on the 20 July 2009.

5.3 The Committee was informed that further to the report being published, invitations to quote for residential breaks for children with complex needs and learning disabilities had been sent out. The Aiming High team had also begun work on the following initiatives:

- Invitations to quote for a befriending service for 8 -11 year olds had been issued.
- Quotes had been invited for outward bound activities as part of the East Sussex County Council disability outreach scheme.
- A specialist childminding service was being developed.
- Work was being undertaken to allow for more flexibility with the voluntary sector and grants of £500 to £5000 and where these organisations were going to use the grants for working with disabled children.

5.4 The Committee sought clarification concerning the definition of complex needs and learning difficulties and whether if a child had only one disability would they still come under the remit of Aiming High. The Committee noted that work was undertaken closely with other services and some children, for example a child who is

blind, but does not have any other difficulties may not fall within the remit of Aiming High, but may only need the services of the Sensory Needs team.

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

- Funding was being made available to support those families that wished to have direct payments and make their own provision, rather than having a short break.
- A PE and Sports team was carrying out work in promoting support for disabled children. The Sussex Sports Partnership Trust had received a lottery bid for four years to develop a programme for disabled children to get involved with sport with a view to becoming sports coaches.
- The Aiming High team promotes sport for disabled children by working closely with leisure centres and local swimming pools.
- All those tendering for services have been asked to include a sustainability element within their tenders to address how services could be maintained if funding is not available for post 2011.

5.6 RESOLVED - to endorse the contents of the report and request that an update report is received in due course concerning the take up rate of the services.

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES EQUALITY STRATEGY

6.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which shared equality data and the progress made towards equality, diversity and community cohesion for Children's Services in East Sussex. Shaila Sheikh, Equality and Engagement Manager, and Louise Carter, Assistant Director, Planning and Performance were in attendance for this item.

6.2 The Committee welcomed the improved data collection. In response to questions asked by Members the following points were made:

- Looked After Children were not captured within this group as being at risk of poor attainment. However, raising attainment of Looked After Children was monitored in other ways and remained a special area of focus for the Department as a whole.
- Although particular schools had been targeted for some of the work on community cohesion, all schools had now received targeted training. Community Cohesion was also an area that Ofsted was looking at during inspections and schools would be concentrating more on this area of work in the future.
- The national Preventing Violent Extremism Agenda was being taken forward at a local level with briefings for schools to help them develop a better understanding of cultural and religious beliefs.

6.3 The Committee requested that further information on objectives, targets and outcomes for this work should be provided to them in due course.

6.4 RESOLVED to continue to monitor the progress of the Strategy and in particular to encourage Equality Impact Assessments and improved equality Data collection.

7. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICE (SIS) TRANSITION

7.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services

which provided an update on the transition of SIS into the County Council. Amanda Watson, Transition Programme Manager, was in attendance for this item.

7.2 The Committee was further informed that the teacher training database aimed to be ready by the end of July and the transfer was due to take place on 17 August 2009. 1 to 1 consultation was available for all CfBT staff to discuss any issues they had about the transition of their employment to the County Council. In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- The staff from CfBT were transferring over in their current roles, but in the Autumn there would be substantial restructuring of the service.
- The Director of Children's Services will not have the same statutory right to intervene in an academy over falling standards. However, as a sponsor of the academies, the Director of Children's Services would be sitting on the Governing Body and could therefore monitor standards and have a more 'hands on' role in preventing them from falling in the first place.

7.3 RESOLVED to note the progress on the transition.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY CLERKS

8.1 The Committee considered a report by Councillor St Pierre, the Chairman of the Review Board. Councillor St Pierre outlined the objectives, the work and the recommendations of the review.

8.2 The Director of Children's Services informed the Committee that on 10 July 2009 the Schools Forum had agreed to fund the centrally run clerking service, as proposed by the Review Board, from £472k of Headroom money. The Committee noted that this was the first time that a scrutiny initiative had led to such a large amount of funding being secured for a specific project.

8.3 The Committee welcomed the report and the news of the funding and agreed that better training and transparency within the clerks service would greatly improve the role of the Governor and standards within the schools.

8.4 RESOLVED to note the scrutiny review with the additional information about the funding and to make recommendations to Cabinet and County Council.

9. SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

9.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel and the Director of Policy and Communications which was to consider scrutiny's role in performance management.

9.2 In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- Target 5.7b - the Strategy was now in place. The indicator was flagged up as 'not achieved' simply because the strategy had not been in place by April 2009 and this was due to the Youth Justice Board.
- Target 5.6d - it was not clear why the results were worse this year than last and the Director of Children's Services agreed to provide further information concerning the number of young people under 19 receiving substance misuse

treatment.

- Targets 5.11.e and 5.11.g - the Committee sought clarification as to the differences between these two targets and the Director of Children's Services agreed to provide further information
- Target 5.11.f – The reduction in this target was due to a number of teenage mothers being identified within this group. Unfortunately these teenage mothers were now classified as NEET. Although pathways were being established to support them back into education, employment or training once their children got older.

10. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

10.1 The Committee considered the scrutiny work programme. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee would be having an away day on 1st September 2009 and the Committee would then be able to develop the work programme further.

10.2 RESOLVED to note the work programme.

11. FORWARD PLAN

11.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 July 2009 to 31 October 2009.

11.2 RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

12. THANKS TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS

12.1 The Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee took this opportunity to thank those members who were standing down from the Committee. Mrs Sarah Maynard, Mr A Campbell and Mr J Taylor, who had all been longstanding members of the Committee, were thanked for their involvement in scrutiny and for their dedication and hard work over the past few years.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 13.05