

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 7 March 2011

PRESENT Councillor Ensor (Chairman)
 Councillors Field, Kenward, Shing, St Pierre, Webb and
 Whetstone
 Jeremy Alford (Health Representative)
 Sam Gregory (Parent Governor)

Scrutiny Lead Officer Gillian Mauger

Also present Councillor Elkin, Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and
 School Effectiveness
 Councillor Stroude, Lead Cabinet Member for Children and
 Families
 Penny Gaunt, Deputy Director of Children's Services
 Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Children and Families
 Nathan Caine, Head of Secondary Behaviour and
 Attendance Service
 James Roberts, Governor Clerking Service Manager

31. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

31.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 November 2010.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

32.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gadd, Councillor Waite, David Sanders (RC Diocese), Mr M Wilson (C of E Diocese) and Carole Shaves MBE (Police Authority representative).

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

33.1 Councillor Webb declared a personal interest in item 35 as his landlady fostered a Looked After Child and he was Lead Member for Housing on Hastings Borough Council. He did not consider these interests to be prejudicial.

34. REPORTS

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

35. OUTCOMES OF OFSTED INSPECTION OF SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES

35.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services on the outcomes of the recent inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services.

35.2 In response to questions by the Committee the following points were made:

- The department was working with Health to develop protocols for children that did not currently meet the threshold for requiring a social workers.
- The use of CAFs (Common Assessment Frameworks) by health professionals was taking time to become common practice. An undertaking had now been agreed with Health and progress against this would be kept under review.
- The department, in conjunction with the District and Borough Councils, was making progress on eradicating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for care leavers. However, they had been unable to meet the original deadline that they had set and this had triggered the comment in the inspection report by Ofsted.

35.3 A request for further details on the development of a perinatal mental health service would be forwarded to Health for a response.

35.3 RESOLVED – to (1) congratulate the department on the excellent inspection result and ask that a thank you be passed on to all staff and the Corporate Parenting Panel; and

(2) request that the Health Action Plan be circulated to the Committee once it was available.

36. DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION AND CURRICULUM AT COLLEGE CENTRAL

36.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services outlining the development programme of ESCC provision for excluded children and the wider curriculum opportunities available under the new organisation.

36.2 In response to questions by the Committee the following points were made:

- A number of schools have been buying the Get Functional or Get Creative provision which was a full time alternative to permanently excluding pupils. There were also ongoing discussions with schools as to how they could best support pupils who were at risk of exclusion.
- It was difficult to predict the amount of provision that was needed for excluded pupils and in the early days however, level of service provision was now more in line with demand. The numbers referred to in the documentation were in terms of places rather than children (one child being able to access more than one course).
- At present when a pupil was permanently excluded they were removed from the school roll (and funding for them was withdrawn from the school). A national pilot was going to be launched soon whereby the school would remain responsible for the pupil and the pupil's outcomes would be included in the school's results. East Sussex had offered to become one of the pilot areas.

36.3 RESOLVED to (1) support the developments in both the organisation of provision and curriculum offer for children for whom the Local Authority has a statutory obligation to provide to; and

(2) endorse the future developments for Personalised Foundation Learning.

37. OUTCOMES FROM THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY CLERKS

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

outlined the progress which had been made with meeting the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Governing Body Clerks.

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

- When the initial idea of a centrally run clerking service had been discussed with Chairs of Governors and Headteachers it was clear that there would be a great deal of resistance to the development of such a service. Therefore a pragmatic approach had been taken and a centrally run support service had been developed instead, with the aim of improving the level of training, experience and expertise of clerks in East Sussex.
- To date 82 out of the 158 clerks had signed up, or were about to sign up, to the Clerking Service Protocol. These clerks provided an overall clerking service to 102 schools. 21 clerks had stated that they would not transfer to the Protocol and a further 35 clerks had not responded to the invitation. The clerking service would now be targeting visits to those who had not responded and at future school conferences to encourage them to sign up to the protocol.
- The Education Bill would result in fundamental changes in the accountability of schools and remove certain 'powers' from local authorities. This meant that the local authority would need to look at different ways that it could continue to work with schools on improving performance.

37.3 RESOLVED (by 8 votes to 1) to: (1) note with disappointment that there has been a change in policy with regard to developing a clerking service in East Sussex; and

(2) request that the matter of governance in schools be included in a report on Accountability of School Improvement being brought to the June committee meeting.

38. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES – FEEDBACK TO SCRUTINY

38.1 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director of Governance and Community Services outlining the scrutiny input into the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.

38.2 Members commented that they had found the council forums on the Reconciling Policy and Resources process useful. It was requested that if these forums were to be held again that the dates for them be arranged well in advance so that as many Councillors as possible could attend.

38.3 RESOLVED to note the outcomes from the Reconciling Policy and Resources process during 2010/11.

39. FUTURE SCRUTINY REVIEW

39.1 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director of Governance and Community Services outlining possible topics for a future scrutiny review.

39.2 RESOLVED to receive a report at the June meeting outlining a timetable for taking forward the scrutiny review ideas outlined in the report.

40. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

40.1 The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director of Governance and Community Services setting out the current work programme for the Committee.

40.2 The following items were added to the work programme:

- Initial report on transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Care
- Update on services and support for young carers
- Update on the Behaviour and Attendance Service (in 12-18 months time)

40.3 RESOLVED to note the updated scrutiny work programme.

41. FORWARD PLAN

41.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period of 1 March to 30 June 2011.

41.2 RESOLVED to note the Forward Plan.

This was the last Committee meeting for Gillian Mauger, Scrutiny Lead Officer, and the Members thanked her for all her work on the Committee over the past few years.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 12.25 pm