

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 19 September 2011

PRESENT Councillor Ensor (Chairman)
Councillors Field (Vice Chairman), Kenward, Lock, Stephen Shing, St Pierre, Stroude, Webb and Whetstone,
Mr David Sanders (RC Diocese representative),
Mr Mike Wilson (C of E Diocese representative),
Mr Jeremy Alford (Health representative), and
Councillor Jonathan Johnson (District/Borough representative).

Scrutiny Manager Paul Dean

Also present Penny Gaunt, Deputy Director of Children's Services
Lou Carter, Assistant Director, Planning and Performance Management, Children's Services
Brian Hughes, Acting Head of Youth Justice and Targeted Youth Support Service for item 5 (see minute 16)
Steve Hook, Head of Assessment, Learning Disability for item 7 (see minute 18)
Nina Siddall, Heads of Standards and Learning Effectiveness for item 8 (see minute 19)
Clare Roberts, Standards Improvement Manager for item 8 (see minute 19)

Lead Members: Councillors Elkin (Children's & Adults' Services), and Bennett (Learning & School Effectiveness).

12. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

12.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 14 June 2011.

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

13.1 Apologies for absence were received from Ms Kym Hearn (Parent Governor Representative), Mr Sam Gregory (Parent Governor Representative) and Ms Carole Shaves MBE (Police Authority representative).

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

14.1 Councillor Ensor declared non prejudicial interests in matters related to special education needs (SEN) as his wife is associated with an organisation delivering related services; and in matters relating to youth services as he is associated with a youth club in Bexhill.

14.2 Councillor Field declared a potentially prejudicial interest in matters related to SEN as the business manager of a school placements agency.

14.3 Councillor Webb declared a non prejudicial interest as Cabinet Member for

Leisure on Hastings Borough Council in respect of minute 16 (targeted support to young people).

14.4 Councillor Kenward declared non prejudicial interests as a) Cabinet Member on Rother District Council for Leisure and Culture, and b) an association with a youth project in Bexhill, both in respect of minute 16 (targeted support to young people).

15. REPORTS

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

16. TARGETED YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE (TYS)

16.1 The Committee considered a report and a supplementary briefing paper by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the new model of Targeted Youth Support. The Committee focused on questions to assess the extent to which the new service is meeting the needs of young people.

16.2 The Committee made the following observations and comments:

- The Committee is confident that new TYS will provide a good service for those who receive it; in particular the introduction of a 'single point of contact' to access the service and the development of youth partnerships are particularly welcomed. The determination to remove duplication of activities and the 'intelligence' and 'evidence' based focus and aims of the service are fully endorsed.
- How individual young people access the service, and the criteria for self referral in particular, are less well understood at present.
- More 'targeted' services mean fewer 'universal' services; this is of concern because young people who do not qualify for the TYS service, but who are 'on the margins', may slip into requiring the service in the absence of other kinds of support. Also, stigma is more likely to act as a deterrent in the take-up of targeted services. Consideration therefore should be given to the position of young people who don't qualify for the TYS, but whom some kind of 'preventative' service would be beneficial.
- Greater clarity is needed about exactly which services have now ended and which are to be provided in each area, and by whom. The challenge of providing services in rural areas will be of particular interest.
- Performance targets to measure the success of the service should take account of the considerable volume of existing historical intelligence and data.
- For a service which increasingly relies on partnership working, targets and performance data need to distinguish between activity carried out by the Council and the services provided by the voluntary and community sector and other partners.

16.3 **RESOLVED** – to (1) welcome the report and note early progress with the development of the new Targeted Youth Support Service;

(2) to receive an interim evaluation report (in March 2012) that will: indicate how the service is working in each of the areas; show progress with the development of performance indicators, targets and other means of measuring outcomes of the service; provide greater clarity about the criteria for accessing the service; explain the nature of

the relationship between the different organisations involved; and, provide an opportunity to further develop the issues of interest listed above.

(3) to request a written briefing for all Members of the Council explaining the new service and how it operates in each area.

17. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

17.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive setting out the detailed planning for 2012/2013 and beyond as outlined in the State of the County report.

17.2 Committee Members made the following general comments about the performance stories and policy steers, and received responses from Lead Members and officers as indicated:

- The Committee sought assurance that *young people and education* are adequately reflected in the Council's *Promise* statement and requested the addition of an additional element, if necessary, to remedy any perceived shortfall.
 - Officers considered that 'safeguarding young people' is already included within the "support the most vulnerable people" element; a focus on educational standards is covered by "making East Sussex prosperous" and by "encouraging personal and community responsibility".
- Members were concerned at the apparent lack of ambition, reflected both in the performance stories and policy steers, to achieve educational outcomes beyond average.
 - This challenge to achieve higher educational outcomes is reflected in the revised policy steers as far as practicable, bearing in mind that the ability of the County Council to influence educational outcomes is reducing.
- Rather than include "work with partners" in individual policy steers, the Committee recommended that partnership working would better be reflected elsewhere, such as in a separate steer for the whole Council or in an overview commentary.

17.3 The Committee made specific suggestions to amend individual policy steers as follows:

<i>Suggested Policy Steers 2012/13</i>	<i>Scrutiny suggested amendment</i>
1) Protect children and young people from harm and neglect.	<i>Endorsed this policy steer.</i>
2) Work with partners to develop resilience in families through providing early co-ordinated help for children aged 0-11 and streamlined support for families with multiple problems.	2) Develop resilience in families through providing early coordinated help for children aged 0 – 11 and streamlined support for families with multiple problems.
3) Work with partners to provide early support to young people aged 11 – 19 who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes.	3) Provide early support to young people aged 11 – 19 who are most vulnerable. (The Committee requested that data and underlying performance

Suggested Policy Steers 2012/13	Scrutiny suggested amendment
	indicators are separated for young people aged 11 – 15 and those aged 16 – 19 as far as practicable; this is to reflect the different issues faced by each of these age groups).
4) Improve outcomes for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers.	<i>Endorsed this policy steer.</i>
5) Ensure appropriate support for children and young people with disabilities, and their families, including supporting young people aged 16 – 25 with complex special needs to make a smooth transition into adult life.	5) Support children and young people with disabilities, and their families, including supporting young people aged 16 – 25 with complex special needs, to make a smooth transition into adult life.
6) Work with schools and families to identify, assess and support appropriately children with special educational needs.	6) Identify and assess appropriately children with special education needs and work with schools and families to ensure appropriate support is provided.
7) Identify, challenge and, where appropriate, support those schools and settings most vulnerable to underachievement in order to maximise young people's chances of a fulfilling and economically active life.	<i>Endorsed this policy steer.</i>
8) Promote the access, inclusion and achievement of all pupils through a fair admissions policy and with extra support for those with specialist needs or who are vulnerable to missing education.	8) Promote the access, inclusion and achievement of all pupils through a fair admissions policy; with extra support for those with specialist needs or those who would be vulnerable to missing education.

17.3 RESOLVED - to (1) report the above observations and proposed amendments to the policy steers to Cabinet;

(2) to establish a Scrutiny Board to act on behalf of the Committee to provide ongoing input into the RPPR process until March 2012 and, in particular to consider the detailed Departmental portfolio plans when available;

(3) agree that the membership of the RPPR Board should comprise Councillors Ensor (Chairman), Field, and Whetstone; and that the Members should be offered the opportunity to take part if they wish.

18. TRANSITION FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE IN EAST SUSSEX

18.1 The Committee welcomed a report by the Director of Children's Services advising Members of the development of the new Transitions Service and the planned improvements to the transition process from Children's Services to Adult Social Care. The report outlined the background and aims of the new service from an organisational

perspective.

18.2 In endorsing and supporting the initiatives outlined, the Committee made the following observations and comments:

- 'Improving satisfaction' should not be the highest priority amongst the list of aims and objectives of the Transitions Service.
- A clear description is needed to assist members of the public and elected Members in understanding how the system works from the point of view of a service user; in particular how the new service will guarantee a smooth transition and actively prevent a 'cliff edge' drop in service.

18.3 RESOLVED – to note (1) the latest developments of the Transitions Service (supporting young disabled people between the ages of 16-25); and the key governance work streams and issues related to those developments.

(2) To consider in due course an outline of how the new service will work in practice, from a users' perspective, to provide a smooth transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Care.

19. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ATTAINMENT IN MATHEMATICS AT KEY STAGE 2

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services detailing the updated actions in response to the scrutiny review's recommendations which are set out in appendix 1 to the report.

19.2 The Committee made the following comments and observations:

- The introduction of five-day maths courses for teachers to promote enthusiasm and confidence in maths teaching is a welcome initiative; indications are that this initiative is successful and so consideration should be given to publicising its effectiveness nationally and with a view to persuading teacher training institutions to adopt similar maths training.
- Quality Maths Programme (QMP) schools have witnessed a 6.7% increase in numbers of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 Maths; these schools have contributed 2.1% to the overall 1.6% increase across East Sussex.
- The risk that other programmes promoted and run by Children's Services would suffer because of the additional attention being given to maths has not materialised. No detrimental impact on other results has been observed.

19.3 RESOLVED – to note the updated actions in response to the Scrutiny Review recommendations and their implementation as set out in the action plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

20. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Scrutiny Manager setting out the current work programme for the Committee.

20.2 Evaluation of Hastings Secondary Schools Performance: An evaluation has been undertaken of the work to secure improvement in three Hastings secondary schools. The

evaluation report assesses the impact and long term sustainability of the investment. The report will be forwarded to scrutiny Members who are invited to identify any issues that can usefully be discussed at the next scrutiny committee (21 November 2011).

20.3 Trust schools and academies: Members requested:

- greater clarity about exactly what these terms mean and the differences between trust schools and academies;
- an explanation of the role of the local authority in respect of these schools, for example regarding admission arrangements; and
- advance information in future of schools that are changing status to be sent to all council Members.

20.2 RESOLVED – to note the updated scrutiny work programme.

21. FORWARD PLAN

21.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period of 6 September to 31 December 2011.

21.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan.

The meeting ended at 13:00.