

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 11 March 2013.

---

PRESENT Councillor Michael Ensor (Chairman),  
Councillor Stephen Shing, Councillor Rosalyn St Pierre,  
Councillor Meg Stroude, Councillor Trevor Webb and  
Councillor Francis Whetstone.  
Ms Susan Thompson (Church of England Diocese  
representative)  
Mr Simon Parr (Roman Catholic Diocese Representative)  
Mr Jeremy Alford (Health representative).  
Ms Nicola Boulter (Parent Governor Representative)  
Ms Catherine Platten (Parent Governor Representative)

Lead Members: Councillors David Elkin, Nick Bennett and Colin Belsey.

Scrutiny Manager Paul Dean

Also present Matt Dunkley, Director of Children's Services;  
Liz Rugg, Assistant Director Children's Services  
(Safeguarding, Looked After Children and Special  
Educational Needs)  
Nathan Caine, Head of Inclusion Support Services  
Andrew Lock, Head of Finance (Business Services  
Department)  
Steve Hook, Head of Assessment & Care Management,  
(Adult Social Care)

### 30. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

30.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 12 November 2012.

### 31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

31.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Field and Fawthrop.

### 32 TRIBUTES

#### Jeremy Alford

32.1 This was the last committee meeting for Jeremy Alford (Health representative). The Chairman and committee members thanked Jeremy for his years of support and contributions to the Committee. Jeremy had helped cement an effective relationship between the committee and health that had proved particularly valuable on a number of scrutiny projects. Health Service structures were set to change from 1st April and a new kind of relationship between the Committee and Health would now need to be developed.

#### Matt Dunkley

32.2 The Committee thanked and paid tribute to Matt Dunkley who was leaving the County Council at the end of May 2013. As Director of Children's Services, and with

considerable national standing, Matt had provided invaluable insights to assist the committee over many years and would be sorely missed.

### 33. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS IN EAST SUSSEX (SIX MONTH MONITORING REPORT) / ANNUAL REPORT ON EXCLUSIONS AND ATTENDANCE

33.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which a) detailed the progress made against the recommendations of the scrutiny review of school exclusions completed in June 2012 and, b) included the annual report (September 2012) on exclusions and attendance compiled by the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service (ESBAS).

#### Annual Report on exclusions and attendance (September 2012)

33.2 In an environment of increasing school autonomy and with an increasing range of school education providers, the Council's role in supporting vulnerable young people has changed significantly. The County Council's role has shifted towards that of advocate for *children in schools*, rather than an advocate *for schools*. A key challenge for the Council in future will be to ensure that all vulnerable young people get a 'fair deal' and are not disadvantaged by an increasingly fragmented school admission system.

33.3 The Annual Report indicates that exclusion remains a significant national issue. However, East Sussex has experienced higher than national levels of exclusion in some categories. Several issues are of particular concern to the committee:

- the number of permanent exclusions from East Sussex primary schools is particularly high; with just four primary academies (to date) in East Sussex, 'acadamisation' cannot be a factor
- vulnerable children with special educational needs are over-represented nationally amongst excluded children; in East Sussex the proportion is well above the national average
- the reasons for exclusions remain broadly unchanged from previous years; a third of all exclusions are for persistent, disruptive behaviour
- the average number of days for which a child is excluded is falling; but in East Sussex there is a high frequency of repeat exclusions.

33.4 ESBAS intervention has been successful in managing attendance problems where they are actively involved. But many schools, and primary schools in particular, appear to be 'under-referring' attendance concerns to the service. To address this problem will require schools to have a greater awareness of the availability and value of this service.

33.5 Supporting excluded children with special educational needs to enable them to remain in the school poses significant problems. Key to resolving this is the Council's ability to counter the inaccurate notion, often held by schools, that a statement of SEN and/or permanent exclusion are necessary prerequisites to access ESBAS services. 'Soft' influence and the promotion of behaviour and attendance partnerships are the solutions being promoted by Children's Services.

#### Scrutiny review of school exclusions

33.6 The Committee welcomed the progress that had been made in furthering the recommendations of the scrutiny review. However, it considered that more work was needed to promote to school leaders the vision that every East Sussex school should aim to be amongst the lowest pupil excluders. The Chairman had witnessed a recently

appointed headteacher who had excluded two pupils within their first week of starting a new job in an East Sussex school.

33.7 School governors need to clearly understand their role in *scrutinising* exclusions and the changing related role of Ofsted and DfE. Hence, the committee welcomed the recognition of the need for a proactive approach to providing effective induction and ongoing training for school governors in these areas.

33.8 The twelve month update on progress with the scrutiny report's recommendations will be in November 2013.

33.9 RESOLVED – to note the Annual Report on Exclusions and to welcome progress made in delivering the recommendations of the scrutiny review.

#### 34. TRANSITION FROM CHILDREN'S TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

34.1 The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Community Services which outlined the findings of an introductory scrutiny seminar into supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly in the transition from Children's to Adults' Social Care Services.

34.2 Reflecting on the report's conclusions, the Committee noted that:

- the Transitions Service has demonstrably reduced the 'cliff edge' drop in service experienced by young people with the most challenging needs as they transit from children's to adult social care services
- the number of young people aged 16 to 25 receiving the full range of support from the Transitions Service will increase from the current 112 to approximately 600 when the full cohort of eligible young people are using the service
- Adult Social Care currently needs to identify considerable budget savings and is therefore not intending to extend its eligibility criteria to include new kinds of need beyond the current 'substantial and critical' criteria currently in place.

34.3 Young people with a moderate disability and statement of SEN (the *middle tier* of need identified in the report) include such a wide spectrum of needs and circumstances that the committee considers that a further scrutiny exercise is needed. Such a review would seek to better understand the pathway for these young people and carers.

34.4 Officers consider that many young people with moderate or minor needs will not meet the criteria for accessing Adult Social Care services. Indeed, it will be difficult to gain a practical understanding of the pathway followed by many of these young people because they become 'lost to the system' once they leave Children's Services. Given the economic landscape facing local authorities, it is unlikely that the County Council will be in a position to provide services to more individuals within this group once they reach adulthood. Instead, scrutiny may need to review the role of the Council's partners, and consider whether the Council needs to play more of a 'signposting' role than it does already.

34.5 RESOLVED – to (1) endorse the outcomes of the introductory seminar into supporting young people in the transition from children's to Adult Social Care Services

(2) recommend that a future joint Children's Services /Adult Social Care and Community Safety scrutiny review investigates the transition experiences of young people with moderate or minor needs (as outlined above).

35. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

35.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which reviewed the Scrutiny Committee's input into the Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) process during 2012/13.

35.2 RESOLVED – to note the outcomes of the RPPR process during 2012/13.

36. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

36.1 RESOLVED – (1) to note the updated scrutiny work programme; and

(2) to include a further update on the THRIVE project at the June 2013 scrutiny committee which would assess progress against a range of relevant indicators, especially: a) the impact of the changed processes on clients and b) the financial impact against original targets.

37. FORWARD PLAN

37.1. RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan for the period 1 March 2013 to 30 June 2013.

37.2 The Chairman thanked all Members of the committee and officers for their support and contributions to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee over the last four years.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm

COUNCILLOR MICHAEL ENSOR  
Chairman