

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 25 September 2017.

PRESENT Councillors Roy Galley (Chairman), Chris Dowling, Kathryn Field, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, Stephen Shing, Francis Whetstone, Simon Parr, (Roman Catholic Diocese Representative) Lesley Hurst (Church of England Diocese Representative) Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative Councillor Julian Peterson (Borough and District Representative)

LEAD MEMBERS Councillor Sylvia Tidy (Lead Member for Children and Families)

OTHER MEMBERS Councillor David Elkin, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources

ALSO PRESENT Becky Shaw, Chief Executive, Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services; Louise Carter, Assistant Director (Communication, Planning and Performance) Liz Rugg, Assistant Director (Early Help and Social Care) Fiona Wright, Assistant Director (Education & ISEND), Reg Hooke, Independent Chair of the LSCB, Douglas Sinclair, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance, Sally Williams, LSCB Manager, Elizabeth Funge, Head of Education Improvement, Carrie Beech, Project Lead: Primary and Early Years

Stuart McKeown, Senior Democratic Services Advisor.

9 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2017

9.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 26 June 2017.

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

10.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Tania Charman and Councillor Alan Shuttleworth. Lesley Hurst, Assistant Director of Education (Diocese of Chichester) attended as substitute for Dr Ann Holt.

11 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

11.1 No disclosures were declared.

12 RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

12.1 Councillor David Elkin, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, Becky Shaw, Chief Executive and Stuart Gallimore, Director of Children's Services introduced the report by providing an overview of the context within which the current RPPR process is taking place.

12.2 The Committee then discussed the areas of search before them. The key discussion points are summarized below:

- **Integration of Health Services with Children’s Centres.** The Committee asked for more information about the integration of Health Services with Children’s Services. In particular the Committee wanted to establish whether there are any further significant opportunities for integration which could result in both improved services for the public and further efficiencies. In response, and for example, the Committee were informed that with regard to services relating to Looked After Children, the respective numbers of staff working within Children’s Services and Public Health are not commensurate: there are far fewer health staff operating in this area. As a result, the Department believe there is limited scope for further integration which might deliver additional significant efficiencies or improvements in customer service. However, it is an area of search that is kept under review by the Department.
- **East Sussex Better Together (ESBT) budget.** The Committee asked for more detail about how the ESBT revenue budget ‘fits’ with the Children’s Services Department revenue budget. In particular, whether the revenue identified in the Financial Budget Summary for 2017/18 is guaranteed and whether there is any flexibility regarding expenditure (see Appendix 1 attached to the report). In response the Committee were informed that the monies identified in the Financial Budget Summary represent the current spend, where the primary needs identified for families are health-related. As a result, these needs are dealt with by health services and spending on this budget is therefore driven by demands within that service area (in accordance with the priorities identified by the local Clinical Commissioning Groups).
- **Home to School Transport.** The Committee noted that a significant proportion of the total budget for the Children’s Services Department is set aside for Home to School Transport services (nearly £12 million out of an approximate budget of nearly £69 million). The Committee also noted that the Department have identified further potential savings within this budget for 2018/19. However, the Committee asked whether, at the same time as meeting its statutory requirements, the Department could identify further savings. Such savings could then potentially be re-prioritised to help protect other frontline services where there is greater need. In response the Committee were informed the Home to School Transport budget has already been largely reduced to its minimum statutory requirements. As a result, it is not possible for the Department to make further significant savings.

Given this, the Committee agreed a letter should be sent to the Secretary of State for Education. With supporting information provided by the Department, the letter would ask the Secretary of State to consider the Committee’s request that local government be given more control over how much is spent on home to school transport. This discretion would then potentially allow the Department to re-direct resources to services where there is greater need.

12.3 RESOLVED – to:

- 1) agree the key areas of interest/lines of enquiry for scrutiny set out in paragraph 12.2.
- 2) establish a scrutiny RPPR review board which will meet on 7 December 2017.
- 3) write to the Secretary of State for Education requesting that consideration be given to the Committee’s proposal that local government be given greater discretion over expenditure on home to school transport.

13.1 The East Sussex Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) annual report 2016/17 was introduced by Reg Hooke, the Independent Chair of the LSCB. Mr Hooke provided the Committee with an overview of the key issues covered in the report. This included highlighting, for example, a significant fall in the number of missing 12-18 Year Olds. In 2015/16 the number of incidents of 12-18 Year Olds who were reported missing totalled 693, for 2016/17 the figure dropped to a total of 367 such reports.

13.2 The LSCB are keen to continue with its focus on ensuring its work delivers clear benefits for young people and families in East Sussex. The Board are therefore undertaking a review of its work over the past three years. This review will include assessing the impact of its Serious Case Reviews and associated recommendations.

13.3 The Committee welcomed the progress identified across a range of different areas and commended the clarity of the information provided within the report.

13.4 RESOLVED – the Committee agreed to note the Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report.

14 LEAD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES UPDATE REPORT

14.1 The report provides a new opportunity for the Committee to understand some of the key developments within the portfolio for the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (EISEND).

14.2 The issues discussed by the Committee, together with responses from the Department (on behalf of Councillor Standley who had sent his apologies for the meeting) are summarized below:

- **National Funding Formula.** The Committee noted the continuing uncertainty surrounding the introduction of the National Funding Formula and the level of resources that will eventually be available to schools. The Committee therefore asked for clarification as to when the Council and schools will know what the final settlement will be. In response, it was clarified that whilst notification of how the National Funding Formula will be implemented has been received, the Department will not be able to model effectively the impact on individual schools until December. A final decision on the formula will then be taken by the Schools Forum in January 2018. With this in mind, the Department undertook to provide the Committee with relevant School Forum briefings on this subject and a breakdown of the key dates when relevant information will be available. On the understanding that the Department will have a clearer interim picture in November, the Committee also asked if the Lead Member for EISEND could update the Committee at its next meeting on any further developments.
- **Validated exam results.** The Committee asked for clarification as to when the validated exam results will be available. In response the Department confirmed that it would arrange for confirmation of the dates and the results to be circulated to the Committee at an appropriate time.
- **School Places and School Expansion.** In response to a query about the impact of additional school places on local infrastructure, the Committee were informed that the Department have an 'Education Commissioning Plan'. The Plan is agreed by the relevant Lead Member and takes into account a range of key factors; including live birth data and local borough and district housing plans. The Department confirmed it would make a copy of the Plan available to the Committee.

14.3 RESOLVED – the Committee agreed to:

- 1) With regard to the National Funding Formula, to request that the Department circulate to the Committee relevant briefings as they become available; to circulate a list of dates when key information will be released and to request that the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion and Special Educational Needs includes an update on this subject as part of his report to the Committee at its November meeting.
- 2) With regard to validated exam results, to request that the Department arrange for confirmation of the dates and the results to be circulated to the Committee.
- 3) With regard to the discussion about the impact of providing additional school places, to circulate a copy of the latest edition of the Education Commissioning Plan.

15 APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT WITHOUT LEVELS (AWL)

15.1 At its meeting in June 2016, the Committee asked for an update on progress with the implementation of the 'Assessment Without Levels' assessment framework. A summary of the key issues discussed are set out below:

- **Key Stage 2 (KS2).** Whilst the Committee welcomed the overall positive position set out in the report, the Department were asked to comment on the outcomes at Key Stage 2 for East Sussex, which are below the National figure. In response, the Department explained there was a significant improvement in outcomes 3 years ago. As a result the gap between local and national rates significantly reduced. However, and despite an improvement last year, the Department are disappointed that East Sussex has not achieved further progress in KS2. The Department will therefore continue to help schools improve outcomes for this Stage by facilitating collaborative working arrangements. For example, the Department is actively supporting the establishment of Education Improvement Partnerships which aim to share good practice and resources. A newly formed Primary Consultant Head teacher team is also being established. This team will also work towards helping raise standards in Key Stage 2 (more detail is provided in the next point).
- **Primary Consultant Headteachers (PCHT).** In response to a question from the Committee, it was clarified that a total of six former primary school Headteachers have been appointed to the role of 'Primary Consultant Headteacher' (PCHT). It was also confirmed that all six appointees retired from East Sussex schools rated by Ofsted as either 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Given they are retired, the Committee also asked the Department to explain how it would ensure PCHTs keep up to date with new developments in the field. In response, it was confirmed that all six PCHTs only retired recently and therefore have up-to-date knowledge. The PCHTs are also appointed on the basis of a one year contract. This relatively short contract gives both parties an opportunity to review the efficacy of any ongoing arrangements.

15.2 RESOLVED – the Committee agreed to:

- 1) note the 2017 outcomes for Key Stage 1 and 2, and the actions being taken at Key Stage 2.
- 2) that once national data is available to consider the outcomes at Key Stage 4 at a future meeting.

16 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

16.1 The Committee agreed to keep 'how schools are coping with change' on the work programme as a potential future scrutiny review topic. However, it was agreed it would be appropriate to revisit this topic in the new year as by then, there would be more scope for identifying a specific subject area.

16.2 The Committee also noted the increase in the numbers of children being home educated. Whilst it was accepted that home education is not in itself a risk, the Committee agreed that this is an area which they might need to investigate in future. As a result, it was agreed to add this topic to the 'potential scrutiny review' section of the scrutiny work programme.

16.3 The Committee also noted the proposal to discontinue the Education Performance Panel (EPP). In the event that the EPP is discontinued, the Committee asked that the work programme be amended to note that in future it may have an increased focus on scrutinizing attainment and performance.

16.4 **RESOLVED** – to update the scrutiny work programme so that:

- 1) In relation to minute 15.2, that wording is added to reflect the Committee's decision to review outcomes at Key Stage 4 once the national data is available.
- 2) in relation to minute 16.1, wording is added to the 'how schools are coping with change' item which reflects the Committee's decision to revisit this subject area in the new year.
- 3) In relation to minute 16.2, the issue of the increase in the numbers of children being home educated is added to the 'potential future scrutiny review' section.
- 4) In relation to minute 16.3, and in recognition of the proposed discontinuation of the Education Performance Panel, that wording is added to the work programme to reflect the Committee's interest in continuing to scrutinize attainment and performance.

17 FORWARD PLAN

17.1 The Committee noted the Forward plan for the period to 31 December 2017.

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.

Councillor Roy Galley, Chairman