

MINUTES of the meeting of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Wednesday, 31st May, 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:	Councillor	J.P. Thomas (Vice Chairman)
	Councillors	N.J.J. Davies, G. Lucas, R.M. Manning, Mrs. J.E. Pemberton, Mrs. S.J. Robertson, D.C. Taylor, Mrs E.A. Taylor, Ms. A.M. Toon and W.J. Walling
	Parent Governor Members	Mrs. C. Woolley (Secondary School Parent Governors)
	Teacher Representatives	C. Lewandowski (Secondary School teachers)

In attendance: Councillors A.C.R. Chappell, D.W. Rule MBE (Cabinet Member - Children and Young People) and R.M. Wilson

COUNCILLOR J.P. THOMAS IN THE CHAIR.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr A. Geach, Mr A. Marson, Miss S. Peate and Councillor B.F. Ashton (Chairman).

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March, 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

No suggestions for areas of scrutiny were received from the public.

6. BRIEFING ON REVISED MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND STRUCTURE IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIRECTORATE

The Committee was briefed on the purpose and details of the revised management arrangements and structure in the Children and Young People's Directorate and

progress to date.

The Director of Children's Services outlined the various objectives of the change and highlighted that the revised senior management structure would enable an appropriate response to be made to national initiatives; enable an integrated approach to the three core functions of the directorate, which now included the Youth Service and strengthening the links to the Connexions Service, and enable third tier officers to mature as leaders and develop their particular service areas.

During debate the following principal points were noted:

- responding to questions concerning the number of changes to post titles the Director explained that these reflected the range of the post holders portfolios and she briefly outlined the core activities for the three Heads of Service. She emphasised that there would be close co-ordination between the Service areas.
- to further develop the links with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and other partners, a "Children's Trust Office" would be responsible for joint planning and commissioning.
- the role of school nurses would develop under the management of the PCT, however, nurses would be part of any multidisciplinary team working co-ordinated by the Council.
- The Children and Young People's Partnership Board will include sub-groups to ensure multi-agency input.
- the Accommodation Board was aware that ideally second and third tier staff should be co-located.

Responding to the invitation to comment on desired outcomes from the revised structure the Committee indicated that it wished to see:

- Clearer pathways – between Children's Services, in particular the CAMHS Service, and the PCT possibly via school nurses, through multi-agency access points.
- Earlier intervention to identify Special Needs cases in pre 16 year olds.
- Youth Service – more classes/activities for youths and an even distribution of services throughout the County.
- Evidence of school activity in engaging in the Every Child Matters programme.
- Continued staff development, including ensuring that staff "own the message" under the new agenda and a further development of the working relationship with the PCT.
- Swift and appropriate action, particularly when "Staying Safe" issues were identified.
- Improved monitoring of transition planning for all young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (referred to in subsequent Minute No 7).
- Improved suitable housing for young people and families.

RESOLVED: that the new arrangements be noted and the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) be advised of the desired outcomes, identified above, that the Committee would wish to see from the revised management arrangements.

7. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN HEREFORDSHIRE

The Committee received an update on 'Staying Safe' improvements since the Joint Area Review (JAR) and were advised on the criminal record policy and practice locally. The Committee commented on progress on the JAR improvement plan and best practice procedures for criminal records checks.

The Director of Children's Services reported that the JAR action plan, considered by Cabinet on 30th March, appended to the agenda report, was being revised to ensure that it was more focused for managers and staff and that the DfES was content that it was more robust. The latest progress against the JAR action plan (as at 19.5.05) was also appended to the report. A final response to the Action Plan was expected from the Social Care Inspectorate and DfES. However, the Director commented that the feedback received from them so far indicated that progress had been made and that the Service was unlikely to be subject to intervention. The Service may, however, be subject to assistance in maintaining 'sustained improvement'.

During the course of debate the following principal points were noted:

- The Committee would be kept up to date with the JAR Action Plan. The final JAR Action Plan would be included in the Council's Annual Performance Assessment.
- Responding to questions on JAR recommendation 6 (concerning staff training/implementation of Child Concern Model) a local network of multidisciplinary 'consultants' had worked on revising the Child Concern Model and were available to advise e.g. schools, on issues of concern. A team of lead consultants were available to fast-track issues of concern and provide training.
- Baseline data would be established. Success would be measured by reference to newly set targets, determined by reference to the revised threshold criteria, for a number of key performance indicators. Performance would be reported to Committee at appropriate stages.
- While acknowledging that improvements had been made in Housing Services, including undertaking increased levels of mediation work (JAR recommendation 16 – improve housing provision for both single young people and families) concern was expressed in relation to the welfare of children in homelessness families.
- Responding to concerns over transition planning for all young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and the Committee's wish to see a comprehensive approach to the issue, the Director of Children's Services reported that this issue was part of a scrutiny review being undertaken by the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee. The Committee would be kept informed of progress with the review.
- All objectives in plans and strategies would be cascaded down to staff through the Staff Review and Development programme and, for this year, through the Directorate Plan.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **the report and progress detailed in the JAR Improvement Action Plan and Summary Progress Report (date: 19.05.06) be noted;**
- b) **the Director of Children's Services convey to the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) the Committee's concern regarding suitable housing for young people and**

young people and families experiencing homelessness; and

- c) the Committee be kept informed of progress with the transition planning aspect of the scrutiny review being undertaken by the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee of Services for people with a learning disability.

8. TO CONSIDER A SCRUTINY REVIEW OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

The Committee considered a draft scoping statement for a scrutiny review of behaviour and discipline management in schools.

The Committee considered that the review should include:

- obtaining comparable benchmark evidence of behaviour;
- consideration of instances of low-level annoyance in schools, which contributed to the interruption on lessons and school life.
- the Health and Safety issue of employers towards employees.
- all schools in the County.
- highlighting local examples of best practice.

The Committee noted that aspects of the new Education and Inspections Bill 2006 may be relevant to the review.

RESOLVED: That

- a) Subject to the above considerations the focus of the review be approved;
- b) Following consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman the Director of Children's Services finalise the details of the scoping statement, including the timetable; and
- c) The Review Group to comprise of:
 - Councillor B.F Ashton (as Chairman of the review)
 - Mr C. Lewandowski
 - Councillor G. Lucas
 - Councillor Mrs S.J. Robertson
 - Councillor J.P. Thomas
 - Councillor Ms A.M. Toon
 - Mrs C. Woolley

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.

CHAIRMAN