

# CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING TO CHILDRENS SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To advise the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

### Financial Implications

2. Service changes will continue to be delivered on a robust invest to save basis in order to manage the high costs of placements for children with complex needs. The Directorate budget out-turn was a significant underspend (£647 k.), however this was managed through largely one-off savings and the challenges ahead remain. The resources for the Children's Centre programme are limited and need to be creatively delivered.

### Background

3. The Children & Young People's Plan for Herefordshire is now published. It sets the scene for change and improvement for 2006-08.
4. The priorities map for Herefordshire is outlined on page 14 of the Plan and is attached as Appendix 1.
5. The priorities for the Directorate are to demonstrate the improvements required following the Joint Area Review report which are outlined in the Joint Area Review Improvement Plan, alongside further progress in 14-19 provision, attendance and achievement of Looked After Children, increasing young people's engagement in education, employment and training, alongside improvements in suitable housing for young people and families.
6. There is a strong determination to ensure the improvements already made on safeguarding are sustained. The progress on filling the social work vacancies is an essential ingredient in that endeavour.
7. The outcomes identified by the Scrutiny Committee on 31st May, as important for the new management arrangements to deliver, will assist me as Cabinet Member in the testing of the planning and delivery of service changes and delivery.
8. The Children's Centres development programme across Herefordshire will bring a significant expansion of services.

9. The fostering regulation report 2006 has demonstrated significant improvements in standards and improved safeguarding practice. The revised regulation inspection framework means another inspection in January 2007.

## **Challenges**

10. There are currently 2 primary schools with notices to improve.
11. The performance management challenge remains and the performance function in the Directorate will be established quickly to assist in demonstrating the grasp on how we are doing and what steps are needed to further improve or mitigate concerns.
12. I receive a monthly report on key performance matters and the on-going scrutiny of the JAR improvement plan will ensure that any key issues are highlighted and resolved.
13. The Children & Young People's Partnership Board will agree governance and executive arrangements in July 2006. This is a challenge but one which will be met with enthusiasm by the Board.
14. The School Review programme is in progress and recommendations and further consultation will challenge schools to consider more formal collaboration as a model for sustaining local schools.
15. The JAR improvement plan will continue to need our attention. The Annual Performance Assessment of the Council's Children's Services will give us a benchmark for demonstrating the improvements in the CPA scores later in 2006. The DfES review report will be received prior to the Scrutiny Committee meeting and this will also give evidence of the determination to improve.
16. The APA self-assessment is attached for consideration (Appendix 2).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT Children's Services Scrutiny Committee note the Cabinet Member's report.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None identified.