

PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENT IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CABINET

12TH APRIL, 2007

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To advise Cabinet of the position following the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) Board meeting on 21st March, 2007 and for Cabinet to note and consider the next steps with GOWM.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

THAT the next stage of formal engagement for Herefordshire Council be noted.

Reasons

To ensure that Cabinet is advised of the focus of the next period.

Considerations

1. The progress on the service success criteria was reported to the March GOWM Improvement Board. These areas were regarded as concluded satisfactorily and the criteria met.
2. The Minister had decided before the Board meeting that there would be continued engagement until September 2007 with possible light touch after that until the end of 2007.
3. The focus of this engagement will be confidence in sustainable self-improvement.
4. The progress on performance management is seen as good. The inquiry will be – has it been further embedded?
5. The progress on project management of service change was not regarded as good enough, even though extra capacity was put in on the two exceptions areas.
6. The reports on Disability and Workforce Strategies were delivered to the Board.
7. The Workforce Strategy was assessed as AMBER. The Disability Strategy was assessed as RED. Whilst the Board were disappointed with the analysis and were

anxious to establish an understanding of the basis for that analysis, they accepted that further work would be required given the draft Strategies were for local consultation. An understanding of the conclusion reached would, however, be important in ensuring that that response was properly focused.

8. There was concern about both the timing and the content of the project management report received from GOWM immediately prior to the Board meeting. It had been agreed that there would be a response to those concerns with the intention of enabling the Council to understand and build upon those apparent differences in view.
9. There continues to be a view about the strengthening of project management into the future. There appear to be continuing high level issues about the confidence in Herefordshire to self analyse and drive change and improvement. There is a concern about the continuing inability to translate those into the specifics that will create the necessary reassurance.
10. GOWM is, of course, aware that there will be both a new Director of Children's Services and a new lead Member for Children's Services following retirement of Ms. Sue Fiennes and the indication given by Councillor D. Rule that he will not be continuing post the election. GOWM accepts that this creates an opportunity to build on the success achieved so far but also see it as a risk as the process of those changing roles may of themselves create more uncertainty with regard to the sustainable self-improvement. Whilst it is difficult to see what further the Council could do to manage that risk, which is a risk which is faced by every council from time to time, the Council will ensure that any risks arising from that situation are carefully managed.
11. There will need to be new discussions on the focus of engagement over the next few months. The pattern on detailed action plan/service reporting is now concluded.
12. There will also need to be careful assessment of the service management grade in the APA 2007.
13. There are no legal or financial implications.

Risk Management

Formal engagement continuing through 2007 does impact on the APA self-assessment and the capacity of the Children & Young People's Partnership to deliver improvements. It also will impact on Direction of Travel 2006-07 assessment in the area of capacity to improve. In order to reach improving well, the Council will have to demonstrate confidence in sustainable self-improvement.

Alternative Options

There are no alternatives.

Consultees

None

Appendix

Not Applicable

Background Papers

None identified.