

MINUTES of the meeting of Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at : The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 7th July, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:	Councillor	SJ Robertson (Chairman)
	Councillor	WU Attfield (Vice Chairman)
	Councillors	ME Cooper, BA Durkin, G Lucas, R Mills, JE Pemberton, AM Toon, WJ Walling and JD Woodward
	Church Members	J.D. Griffin (Roman Catholic Church)
	Parent Governor Members	Mr N Parker (Secondary School Parent Governor)
	Teacher Representatives	Mr C Lewandowski (Teachers)
	Headteacher Representatives	Mrs D Strutt (Secondary School Headteachers)

In attendance: Councillors: WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards, JP French, JA Hyde (Cabinet Member - Children's Services), TM James and PD Price (Cabinet Member – ICT, Education and Achievement)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor P Jones CBE; Councillor RV Stockton; Ms K Berry; Mr S Pugh; Ms D Scott; Mr R Stevenson and Mr A Wood.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor R Mills substituted for Councillor Brig. P Jones CBE. Mrs L Townsend substituted for Mr S Pugh.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Toon declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9 – Capital Budget Monitoring – with specific reference to the Hereford Skate Park.

4. MINUTES

On considering the minutes of the meeting held 21 April 2008, for clarification the following points were noted:

Minute No. 53 – Swimming Provision in Hereford City and Surrounding Area – 9th paragraph 'Invited by the Chairman....' following the words 'using the Leisure Pool' add the words 'and concerns over the loss of use of the St Martins (LEA) Pool'.

Minute No. 54 – Wyebridge Academy – third point made under paragraph three, insert at the beginning 'questioned on the specification and costings for ICT provision,'.

Minute No. 58 – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Add to the end of the final sentence 'The committee noted that in relation to Assessment and Family Support there had been three overspends and one underspend and the service had not met the target.'

RESOLVED: That subject to incorporating the above the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2008 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 were made by Members of the Public.

6. PRESENTATION BY CABINET MEMBER

The Committee received an overview of the Children and Young People's Directorate's performance, Annual Performance Assessment - self assessment (APA) and activities for 208/09.

The Cabinet Member (Children's Services) with the Cabinet Member (ICT, Education & Achievement) gave a PowerPoint presentation indicating the role of the Cabinet Members and gave an overview of the work of the Directorate.

The principal points from the presentation were:

- The Cabinet Member (Children's Services) would fulfil the lead Member role under the Every Child Matters agenda with specific responsibility for: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Making a Positive Contribution. The Cabinet Member (ICT, Education & Achievement) would have specific responsibility for Enjoy & Achieve and Economic Well-being. Close liaison would be maintained between Cabinet Members to ensure consistency and joined-up thinking.
- Annual Assessment and Inspection (APA). Following consideration by Cabinet Members the APA self assessment document had been submitted on 26th June. The APA self assessment document together with the evaluation of grades had been included in the agenda at appendix 1 and 2. The Cabinet Member (Children's Services) commented that the self assessment grade indicated that a further inspection may be undertaken in the autumn, and that Members may be called upon by the inspection team. She felt that areas of strength could be demonstrated but further work was needed to improve the areas of Economic Well-being, Stay Safe; Positive Contribution and Capacity to Improve/Service Management.
- The Children and Young People's Directorate Plan 2008-2011 was an excellent document and provided an overarching framework for the directorate's activities and fitted in with the Children and Young People's Plan (Children's Trust). She acknowledged that there was a need to look at the quality of service, not just to meet targets.
- The Area Based Grant (£3.5m) relating to children and young people, via the Local Area Agreement would be directed by the Children's Trust to meet the needs of young people.
- Scrutiny need to continue to look at areas of performance. There was also a need to ensure that information to Committee was presented in a timely fashion.
- The improvements made to the Performance Digest, the subject of a later agenda item, now provided a clearer means of examining the data.
- The Cabinet Member (ICT, Education & Achievement) reported that discussions were being held with schools prior to the December 2008 Conference, which would involve all schools, regarding the next steps in the

Schools Review. He appreciated the situation was causing stress in schools. To speed up the discussions, between now and September he would be consulting with school principals. He also appreciated that following recent changes in the directorate management team a degree of historical knowledge had been lost. He strongly emphasised that at this stage no particular view concerning the school review had been formed.

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

- Due to the national shortage of Social Workers a number of vacancies had been filled from abroad. While applicants had the required qualifications they would receive a local two week induction programme to ensure that they were fully aware of national legislation and policies.
- Questioned who could make referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) the Committee were informed that, as from 2007, schools can now make referrals in addition to GPs. The directorate was working with the PCT to improve the outcomes.
- With the shared responsibility both Cabinet Members should be appraised of any issues. Responding to a suggestion that a third link be established, namely with the PCT, the Director reported that close links were already in place.
- It was pointed out that the APA (agenda page 15 5th bullet point) referred to improving dental health for children whereas no mention was made in the Directorate Plan under a similar outcome area (section 4.3.1 Be Healthy). It was also noted that recent information to Members still contained 2006 dental health statistics. The Director reported that the number of children on dental waiting lists could be circulated to Members. The PCT were making progress in reducing the length of those lists. The best way to improve dental health was the highly sensitive issue of fluoridisation of the water which she acknowledged had cost implications and impacted on all the public.
- Referring to the 'solid foundation of performance across children's services '42% showed a positive improving trend' (Directorate Plan - page 5, section 2.2) it was pointed out that 53% (39% no discernable trend and 14% show a declining trend) indicated that performance was not improving. Questions were also raised regarding the statements under the Employees Opinion Survey (section 2.3 page 6).
- Questioned on any proposed changes to the school pyramid system under the Schools Review, the Cabinet Member (ICT, Education & Achievement) stated that this formed part of the current discussions with schools. Following the December conference with schools a report would be presented to Committee.
- Concern was raised that the Local Admissions Forum had not been consulted over the 14-19 strategy and that the strategy would not be in place for a further 2 years. The Director responded that lengthy discussions had been held over the strategy and 6th Form Plans and while schools were competitive over the areas of provision, between were being built across all types of providers. The Committee noted the rurality issues of the County and that through the partnerships the strategy was moving forward. It was commented that Wyebridge Academy would provide an added diversity to provision.
- Questioned on the review of the Education Welfare Service the Director reported that this work was ongoing. While secondary schools may have differing requirements from primary schools, a local model which met the statutory requirements would be tested before implementation.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for the presentation.

RESOLVED: that the presentation and comments be noted and a report on the School Review be added to the Committee work programme.

7. REVIEW OF DIRECTORATE AND SERVICE PLAN / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the Performance Digest covering the financial year 2007/08 and the Children's and Young People's Directorate Plan 2008-2011 both documents had been issued to Members as separate documents.

Directorate Plan 2008-2011

The Directorate Plan 2008-2011 covered the Children and Young People's Directorate's contribution to support and deliver Herefordshire's Corporate Plan. It also contained the work of the Directorate to support the Children and Young People's Plan.

Performance Digest – Year End

The Performance Digest was set out under the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Data was set out in graphical form for the Performance Assessment Framework indicators and Best Value Performance Indicators. Key areas in each of the outcome areas were drawn to the attention of the Committee in the agenda report.

During the course of scrutinising the reports the following principal points were noted:

- The Director of Children's Services reported that the Service already worked in partnership, in particular with Health, to embrace the necessary changes through the Local Area Agreement, the Children's Trust and generally work better and more efficiently.
- The Performance Digest still contained a number of provisional figures awaiting validation.
- While the Directorate Plan covered a three year period it was an evolving document. A number of new performance indicators would be incorporated later in the year.
- While the documents contained percentage figures it was requested that actual figures be included to enable comparison.
- Reference was made to the statements in the Directorate Plan (page 6 section 2.3 Employee Opinion Survey) concerning staff moral and excessive hours. The Cabinet Member (Children's Services) commented that staff were dedicated and for example when necessary went the extra mile to ensure the safety of a child. The Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) recognised the dedication of the staff but in recognising the duty of care towards staff commented that if necessary excessive hours would need to be reviewed.
- Responding to questions concerning the lack of consistency in the Education Psychology Service the Director of Children's Services acknowledged there had been recruitment and retention issues within the management of the Service. Changes were needed to address these problems and while staff and schools were nervous of change the issues would be addressed.
- Questioned on the performance indicator relating to 'Referrals and Assessment' (Performance Digest page 19) in relation to the inclusion of Travellers, and on BVPI40 (Digest page 36), why had the target been set at 82.0% in 2007-08 when only 77.0% had been reached, the Committee were informed that these were national targets. More information would be

- provided to Members on these issues.
- Under the pay and work force strategy (Directorate Plan page 7) training was given to managers to help collect data and identify, support and advise on staff attendance issues. The Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) reported that resulting from better analysis and management there had been an improved use of Occupational Health, particularly in the identification and support of long term illness.
 - On the identification of stakeholders for consultation the Director reported that a core list had been compiled and other stakeholders were included depending on the subject for consultation.
 - Concern was expressed that domestic violence was not specifically addressed in the Directorate Plan at 4.3.2 outcome area: Stay Safe. It was also noted that statistical information to Members appeared to originate from 2006 data. The Committee noted that protection from domestic abuse was a core element of the Directorate's work. A lot of work had been done through schools and partners and while progress had been made last year this was a priority area for the current year. It was also noted that domestic abuse had been flagged up as an issue in the APA inspection, however, no detail had been given as to why it had been identified. The Committee requested that further information on the subject of domestic abuse be submitted to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **the Children and Young People's Directorate Plan 2008-2011 and the position set out in the Year End Performance Digest be noted; and**
- b) **a report on the impact of domestic abuse on the lives of children be added to the Committee work programme.**

8. YOUTH SERVICE UPDATE: TARGETED YOUTH SUPPORT AND POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

The Committee were updated on progress of the Youth Service in adapting to the changes in youth work particularly the increased emphasis on Targeted Youth Support (TYS) for vulnerable young people and new legislation on the provision of Positive Activities.

The Community Youth Service Manager presented a report setting out: the service objectives in terms of the Every Child Matters (ECM) Outcome Framework; the government policy initiatives 'Targeted Youth Support' (TYS) and 'Positive Activities – Aiming High'; implications for the service and how the service had responded to date. The Community Youth Service Plan 2008-9 was appended to the agenda report.

The Community Youth Service Manager highlighted: that there was no new money to support these government initiatives; increasingly work was being devoted to target areas, particularly preventative work in collaboration with Community Services; investigations were underway (resource need and likely hood of winning) concerning a possible bid under the DCSF 'My Place' scheme for finance to build a youth facility. In relation to the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) government initiative that teenagers have 'things to do and places to go' he reported that currently the focus was on improving the 'youth zone' on the web site to inform young people of what's going on in their area. He anticipated that next year there would be a budget to support the further development of this work.

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

- In the interests of engaging with young people, full time youth workers go out on the streets to talk directly to youths, however, due to limited resources this can take resources from providing courses at youth centres.
- In response to a request for details about the numbers of young people accessing each youth centre and the location of these centres the Committee were informed that approximately 2,660 individuals used the facilities but further detailed information would be provided to Members. Concern was expressed that this represented a low proportion of young people in the County.
- Responding to questions on the equality of accessibility of facilities throughout the County e.g. were all youths offered courses in sailing, Members would be provided with further information on this issue.
- Out of necessity in a number of cases some youths looked after younger siblings. As part of trying to attract the older youth to attend and socialise, the Committee questioned whether any provision was made for the younger sibling in such instances. The Committee were informed that suitable support for younger siblings was not always available but this was being looked at as part of the 'Team around the Child' service provision. Further information would be provided to Members on this issue.
- While noting that the report specifically contained information about the Council's youth provision, the Committee requested further information on the voluntary sector provision and in particular the links and services provided and their location.
- Under a new 'contract' a clear picture of individual needs would be established using the Common Assessment Framework.
- Recruitment and retention in the Youth Service was a national problem. Following job evaluation salaries were on the local pay structure. Many part time staff entered the service to gain experience before moving on to other authorities.
- Concern was expressed regarding a rumoured reduction in financial support to Close House, Hereford. The Director of Children's Services and the Community Youth Service Manager reported that Close House received no direct funding from the Service, however, a number of facilities were rented from them.
- It was suggested that by failing to engage with youths at an early stage through an adequately resourced Youth Service, the Council and its partners may experience greater youth related problems in the future.
- Referring to action planning emerging from parish plans (previous agenda item Children and Young People's Directorate Plan 2008-2011 section 2.6 on page 10) and a question how parish councils could or should be involved in youth provision the Committee noted that through the precept the City Council had earmarked funding to youth projects. Noting that youth facilities were frequently mentioned in Parish Plans, Members requested further information on the links that could be made with parish planning work.
- The Committee noted that a lot of good work was undertaken by extended schools, which was outside the scope of this report.

The Director of Children's Services reported that this was a large and complex area of work which was limited by budgetary constraints. The Service was working with partners to maximise its use of resources. New initiatives driven by the Government agenda were proving to be challenging particularly in view of the change of emphasis towards becoming a commissioning service and the wider 'Team around the Child' service provision. While a scrutiny review of the service could be undertaken she strongly suggested that the new Head of Community Operations be given time to ensure that links were established into the strategic thinking for the 'Team around the Child'.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the report be noted and Committee Members be provided with the various information requested; and
- b) it is recommended that the Cabinet Members for Children's Services give further consideration to how the Youth Service engages with the youth in the County.

At this point the Committee adjourned for 5 minutes and reconvened at 12.25pm

9. CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2007/8

The Committee were updated on the capital budget for 2007/08 for the Children and Young People's Directorate.

The Finance Manager presented the agenda report. Details of expenditure on capital projects were set out in the appendix. He highlighted that for 2007/8 revised cash flows had been implemented at Sutton Primary school (£1,712,358) and The Riverside (£3,374,640), however, both were 100% funded by DCSF and there were no financial implications from this change. The Hereford City North Children's Centre had been delayed. The scheme was 100% grant funded and any funding will be carried into the financial year 2008/9. Other budget revisions totalling £977,896 were set out in the report.

During the course of debate the Committee noted that £3.8m for the Academy-Wyebridge Replacement was grant funded and had been shown in the appendix for accountancy purposes. There had been no underspend on the Sutton St Nicholas Primary School replacement.

Concern was expressed regarding the overspend (£147,000) on temporary classrooms and it was suggested that a scrutiny review be undertaken into the acquisition and disposal policy for temporary school classrooms.

RESOLVED: That the Capital budget outturn report for 2007/08 be noted and the suggestion of a scrutiny review into the acquisition and disposal of temporary school classrooms be considered under agenda item 13 – Committee work programme.

10. REVENUE FINAL OUTTURN REPORT 2007/8

The Committee considered a report on the final outturn of the Children and Young People's Directorate revenue budget 2007/8.

The Finance Manager reported that at the year end a balanced budget had been achieved by using the spend to mitigate budget and the centrally held social care contingency. An overview of the cost pressures and underspends were contained in the agenda report and appendix. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had been underspent in total by £1,199,000 and this was also set out in the report. He reported that the DSG underspend had been considered by the Herefordshire Schools Forum and would now be allocated out to schools.

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

- that the school year contained 11 more travel days and therefore the 2008/9 school transport budget was unlikely to show an underspend as in previous years.
- Section 106 funding (from planning gain) had been shown for 2007/8 as

capital income. It was acknowledged that changes had occurred in Section 106 funding and this would be reflected in future reports.

- the Special Needs Banded Funding budget included funding for Statemented children. Work was ongoing with the Resources Directorate to improve budget reporting.
- In view of the earlier debate concerning resourcing issues in the Youth Service (Minute No 8) concern was expressed about the £82,000 underspend shown against the Youth Service budget. The Finance Manager reported that this had occurred due to unplanned staff vacancies.

RESOLVED: That the revenue final outturn report 2007/08 be noted.

11. RACIST BULLYING "MEWE" VIDEO

The Committee were informed of the MeWe video tackling the challenges of racist bullying.

The Race Equality Development Officer reported that the MeWe video highlighted the effect that racism had on people in Herefordshire. The video had been made in Herefordshire and everyone who appeared in the video lived and worked in the county. The video had been shown at Borderline Film Festival in April. Full and short versions of the video were available and both versions would be issued to schools. Schools who had already seen the video reported it had generated a great deal of thought and debate particularly about bullying.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

12. REVIEW OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT IN HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

The Committee received an update with regard to progress made against the action plan following the Scrutiny Review of Behaviour and Discipline Management in Herefordshire Schools.

Arising from the scrutiny review of Behaviour and Discipline Management in Herefordshire Schools, considered by Committee on 19th March 2007, and resultant action plan, considered by Committee 5th October 2007, the Committee considered the further actions taken or proposed against the plan. The latest position was set out in the agenda report and appended action plan.

During the course of debate the Committee noted that:

- a further staff questionnaire (Rec 7.1) would be issued in the autumn term with the results being known in early spring 2009.
- parenting courses are being offered to parents, (Rec 7.2), however, a degree of difficulty was being experienced in informing parents of courses. Further information e.g. take up numbers, would be supplied to Members.
- leaflet information was being reviewed, however, greater use of the Web was being encouraged to ensure up to date information was available. Web based information was in the course of being updated and added to.
- of the 14 secondary schools 9 have Learning Support Units with the Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School due to bring an LSU on line soon (Rec 7.5).
- the early identification of moderate learning difficulties (Rec 7.6) was also being addressed through discussions with Connexions under the 14-19 strategy.
- referring to the recommendation added by the Committee concerning the Council's duty of care to its employees and paragraph 10 in the agenda

report, caution was expressed in the interpretation of the returns from schools. An example given was an alleged significant under reporting by schools of pupil exclusions. The Committee noted that schools had been written to and informed of reporting procedures. It was thought any discrepancy may have occurred due to a delay in processing the returns. Arising from this discussion it was suggested that in the interests of best practice school governors should receive regular reports on incidents at school.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the report and progress detailed in the appended action plan and also reported above be noted;
- b) Committee Members be provided with the requested information on the take up numbers for parenting courses;
- c) A report on the outcome of the staff questionnaire to schools be added to the Committee work programme for early spring 2009; and
- d) On the basis that the action plan arising from the review was substantially completed no further reports be submitted.

13. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

In the interests of furthering the Committee Members knowledge and appreciation of the varied issues within the Directorate, the Chairman proposed that the Committee consider appointing each of the Councillors on the Committee as either a Champion or Vice-Champion for one of each of the five outcome areas of the Every Child Matters agenda (Be Healthy; Stay Safe; Enjoy and Achieve; Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Well-being). Champions and Vice-Champions would be encouraged to take a more proactive role by shadowing and observing appropriate meetings to enable them to hear first hand some of the issues that had to be addressed. She also proposed that the involvement of the Champions would be governed by terms of reference. The Committee were informed that Strategic Monitoring Committee would be considering a report on the future structure of scrutiny arrangements and that this proposal, if accepted, should be included in that consideration.

During the meeting the Committee identified the following as being issues for programming into the Committee work programme:

- Review of provision of school places – the way forward. A report following the Cabinet Member discussion/consideration in December 2008. (see Minute No. 6)
- Stay Safe – reduce the impact of domestic abuse on the lives of children – Update. (see Minute No 7)
- Acquisition and disposal policy for temporary school classrooms. (see Minute No 9)

The following items were also suggested for inclusion in the programme at an appropriate time:

- The 14 – 19 Strategy
- Foundation and Academy schools
- Governance arrangements for the Children's Trust and partnership arrangements.

RESOLVED: That subject to the consideration of the above issues by the

Chairman and Vice-Chairman the work programme be approved and reported to Strategic Monitoring Committee.

14. MR C LEWANDOWSKI - TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE

The Committee noted that Mr C Lewandowski would be taking early retirement from teaching and that this had been his last Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Committee thanked Mr Lewandowski for representing teachers on this Committee and the former Education Committee since the inception of this Council and wished him a long and happy retirement.

15. REVEREND DR I. TERRY

The Committee noted that Reverend Dr I Terry, Director of Education, Hereford Diocese, would be leaving to take up an appointment as school Chaplain at St Edmunds School, Canterbury. The Committee thanked Reverend Terry for his contribution to education in the County and wished him well in his new appointment.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN