

At a meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 4th DECEMBER, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Stewart in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Bell, Kelly, Paul Maddison, Oliver along with Mrs P. Burn, Mrs C. Hutchinson, Mr S. Laverick

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate

Councillor P. Smith, Children's Services Portfolio Holder

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P. Dixon, Gofton, Morrissey, Snowdon, L. Walton and D. Wilson along with those from Mrs D. Butler, Mr M. Frank, Prof. G. Holmes, Mr A. Pearce and Mr. D. Snowdon.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 6th November, 2008

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 11 –Ofsted inspections

Councillor Bell declared a personal interest in the item as a governor of Castlegreen Community School.

Portfolio Holder for Children's Services – Quarterly Report

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with an introduction to a performance report from the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

(For Copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor P. Smith thanked the Committee for her invite and advised Members that she was present to share key issues with the Committee.

Councillor P. Smith provided Members with a table detailing the key actions for Portfolio Improvement for Children's Services and highlighted the following significant areas:

- The transformation of services for children through Children's Trust arrangements
- The establishment of strong commissioning arrangements which reflect the participation of children and young people
- The improvement of arrangements for the monitoring and management of performance, including the achievements of good impacts and outcomes in Safeguarding
- Strengthening of engagement with key partners to secure improvement in risk and resilience amongst children and young people
- The implementation of the Building Schools for the Future and academies programmes.
- The promotion of equality and diversity.

Councillor P. Smith also referred to School Place Planning for the future and suggested that the Children's Services Review Committee set up a working group to examine the surpluses of school places.

Councillor P. Smith made the following points in response to questions from members:

- Regardless of what was achieved the targets would always need to be strengthened. The main target area for concern was Safeguarding.
- It was unknown whether the number of school places required would become steady removing the need for school closures. 10 years ago there had been a need for Venerable Bede School to be built in order to fill gaps but now there was a surplus of places throughout the city.
- Relationships with Head teachers, teachers and governors were important and efforts were made to attend forums and to understand the challenging roles of everyone involved.

The Chairman invited Councillor P. Smith to the extraordinary meeting to be held on 12 December 2008. He also asked for volunteers to attend the working group on School Place Planning for the Future on 12 December.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i). The 2nd quarterly report be received and noted.
- (ii). A working group be set up to look at School Place Planning for the Future with Councillors P. Stewart, Bell, and Kelly as members.

Change in the Order of Business

The Chairman advised that the items on the 14 – 19 Draft Strategy 2009 – 2013 Consultation and Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) would be discussed as one item.

14 – 19 Draft Strategy 2009 – 2013 Consultation and Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on the 14 – 19 Draft Strategy 2009 – 2013 Consultation which informed Members of the content of the Draft Strategy and a report on Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (copy circulated)

(For copy reports – see original minutes)

Lorraine Johnson, EiP Manager, presented the report on the 14 – 19 Draft Strategy 2009 – 2013 Consultation and Lynda Brown, Head of Standards, presented the Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training report.

Following questioning it was established that:

- There was more information available to enable targeting of young people who were likely to become NEET
- The information provided by schools and Connexions was improving which allowed better tracking of young people who previously could have been involved in Education, Employment or Training but were not recorded in the statistics. The problems with recording of information were not encountered only in Sunderland. This accounted for some of the early reduction in NEET figures.
- The Council has a proactive policy for providing employment and training opportunities for young people who were likely to become NEET.
- There was a need to get more employers involved with offering training and apprenticeships.
- The new college facilities at Newcastle Road and in the Coalfields area would provide improved facilities and 45 percent more capacity than the existing centres at Hylton and Shiney Row. The Shiney Row centre was being moved to Hetton or Houghton as a response to requests from the local Schools.
- Investment in adult education would help to reduce the numbers of NEET within young people
- There was an excellent take up level for the Level 2 pre 16 diplomas however there were problems with the Level 1 diplomas as the specifications did not meet the needs of Level 1 youngsters. There were difficulties with the diplomas at post 16 level however it was

anticipated that these would be reduced once the young people currently in Key Stage 4 moved on.

- There were several options for education and training for 16 – 19 year olds including A Levels, NVQs, and vocational training such as apprenticeships.
- Support was needed for 14 -16 year olds with the potential to become NEET to help remove the barrier to further training or education at 16.
- There was a need to support young people through college to ensure that they did not drop out as currently support was only offered for three months after leaving school and in the six months after the support was removed some of the young people dropped out.
- Public Libraries were an under-utilised resource and closing on Saturday afternoons, Sundays and Bank Holidays was an archaic practice. The Learning Centres provided a link between the College and Libraries.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i). The reports be received and noted.
- (ii). The comments made be considered for inclusion in the Draft Strategy.
- (iii). The advice given be used to help meet the NEET targets.

Annual Performance Assessment 2008

The Chairman advised that the Annual performance letter had not yet been published and as such the item would be deferred. The information would be circulated to members when it became available.

Ofsted Inspections – 12 Months Progress

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed members to consider the progress made by schools which had been inspected by Ofsted approximately 12 months ago.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

- 4. The report be received and noted.

Prevention Strategy 2009 – 2012

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided members with an overview of the Draft Prevention Strategy.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

- 5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Consultations and Publications

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which notified the Committee of current Government consultations and recent publications within the scope of the review committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Ofsted Inspections

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with recently published Ofsted inspection reports.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

(Signed) P. STEWART,
Chairman.