

At a meeting of the CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 18TH JUNE, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor G. Hall in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Francis, Kelly, T. Martin, Oliver, D. Richardson, I. Richardson, Snowdon and Tye together with Mrs. P. Burn, Mrs. D. Butler, Prof. G. Holmes, Mrs. C. Hutchinson, Mr. S. Laverick and Mr. D. Snowdon.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Stewart.

Minutes of the last meeting of the Children's Services Review Committee held on 9th April, 2009

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Children's Services Review Committee held on 9th April, 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Reference from Cabinet 3rd June, 2009 – Youth Justice Plan 2009/10

Councillors Francis and D. Richardson declared personal interests in the item as Magistrates.

Urgent Item

The Chairman informed Members that an urgent request had been received from Nonnie Crawford, Director of Public Health, that the Committee receive a briefing on significant concerns arising from a measles outbreak in the Teesside area and the public health implications for Sunderland.

In accordance with Section 100(B) of the Local Government Act 1972, by reason of the special circumstances the Chairman stated that the following item was to be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgent business.

Briefing – Teesside Measles Outbreak

Mr. Keith Moore, Deputy Executive Director of Children's Services, advised the Committee that the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT) had significant concerns regarding the implications for Sunderland arising from the measles outbreak on Teesside.

Members were advised that 11,000 children and young people had not been vaccinated against the disease. This was mainly as a consequence of the now discredited concerns that had arisen regarding the potential side effects of the MMR vaccine. The PCT had concerns that should the outbreak spread to Sunderland then these young people could be at a considerable physical risk. The PCT were therefore proposing to offer the parents of these young people the opportunity to have their child inoculated at their local school before the end of the Summer term.

Parents of all unvaccinated children would be written to informing them of the invitation and this would be backed up by a large scale communications campaign advising of the benefits of inoculation.

In response to an enquiry from Members, Mr. Moore advised that the Director of Public Health would be present at the Committee's next meeting to report in more detail on the City's preparations in the event of a Measles epidemic together with the measures in place in respect of the Swine Flu pandemic.

2. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Children's Trust Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategy

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which presented the Sunderland Children's Trust Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategy. To compliment the report, Paul Threadgall, Workforce Development Lead, together with Paul Campbell, Head of Resources, provided Members with a detailed presentation which:-

- (i) outlined why the current strategy adopted by the Children's Trust in 2007 was being reviewed;
- (ii) the purpose and scope of the Strategy;
- (iii) the make up of the workforce providing services for children;
- (iv) the key features of the services, namely:-
 - a shared identity purpose and vision;
 - common values and language;
 - behaviours focused on positive outcomes for children and young people;

- integrated working practices;
- high quality, appropriately trained workforce;
- complementary roles focused around children;
- capacity to keep children safe.

(v) a statement of what the Strategy would do, namely:-

- It recognises that there are many areas of excellent practice already in place and is designed to bring all our work up to a 'world-class' standard by providing the vision, leadership and infra-structure necessary to meet that challenge;
- It will encourage the development of an organisational culture that can reflect on its work and explore how it can be '... even better if...';
- It will contribute to positive outcomes for children and young people and their families;
- It will help us to play our part in meeting the ambition that this should be the best country in the world for children and young people to grow up in;
- It will complement and help to shape the direction of all partner organisations' workforce development strategies and training plans.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

With regard to the implementation plan the Chairman requested that the Committee receive updates on a quarterly basis.

In response to an enquiry from Mrs. Butler, the Committee was informed that the electronic version of the Common Assessment Framework (eCAF) was planned to be introduced during 2010.

With regard to integrated working, Councillor Tye expressed concern over potential problems regarding identification and suggested that a standard system should be used across all agencies working to support children, including those in the voluntary sector.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Snowdon the Committee was advised that it would be possible, if required, to provide training for Councillors in respect of the Common Assessment Framework. Consideration would be given to the most appropriate forum.

In response to an enquiry regarding whether the 'gremlins had been ironed out' of the contact point, Mr. Campbell advised that the system had been populated from different databases and sources. The service was currently looking to cleanse the data and associated links.

With regard to the governance arrangements as detailed in Appendix 1, Councillor Kelly suggested that they should also include a reference to the Area Committees.

Professor Holmes welcomed the Strategy and the quality of its presentation. He believed the document to be long term and evolutionary but stated that what would be useful for the Committee would be examples of real operational change and an appraisal of whether it had the desired effect or not.

Mrs. Burn welcomed the document and the recognition it gave for the work of the voluntary sector. She referred to the reference in paragraph 4.2.3.4 that a lower proportion of Sunderland pupils have a statement of special educational needs compared to the national figure and asked if this was because of better provision in the mainstream. Lynda Brown, Head of Standards, replied that the aspiration was to see a reduction and that she would not want to encourage schools to use statementing as a tool to lever in additional funding.

There being no further questions for Mr. Threadgall and Mr. Campbell the Chairman thanked them for their presentation and it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be received and noted;
- (ii) the Committee receive quarterly updates on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategy with next report to be submitted to its September meeting; and
- (iii) a copy of the slides from the presentation be circulated to all Members of the Committee for their information.

Reference from Cabinet – 3rd June, 2009
Youth Justice Plan 2009/10

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought the Committee's advice and consideration on an appended report in respect of the Youth Justice Plan 2009/10 which had been considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting held on 3rd June, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Judith Hay, Head of Positive Contribution and Economic Well-Being, together with Alan Scott, Operations Manager at the Youth Offending Service presented the report outlining the background, purpose and intentions of the Plan.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Hay and Mr. Scott for their report and congratulated them on the gains already made. He stated that it was important to address perceptions and highlighted the fact that not every child had an A.S.B.O. or was ever likely to get one.

Councillor Bell referred to the value for money provided by the successful Restorative Justice and Phoenix Projects and suggested that representatives of the Phoenix project could be invited to provide the Committee with a presentation on their work.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor T. Martin, Ms. Hay advised that the service worked with parents and young people from the age of five. All looked after children were screened to see if they were at risk of offending.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor D. Richardson, Ms. Hay confirmed that procedures were in place with regard to the 17 to 18 transition period.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Oliver regarding the restorative justice programme, Members were advised that the usual response from young people was reluctance and scepticism however, the ultimate response having gone through the programme was positive. It had been seen as a major contributor to the reduction in re-offending.

Councillor Francis asked what was the rate of non co-operation among young people required to undergo the restorative justice programme? Ms. Hay advised that she did not have the figures to hand but could supply them following the meeting.

Mr. D. Snowdon referred to paragraph 4.1 of the report and advised that the reference to Sunderland Housing Group should be amended to read Gentoo Group Limited.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Hay and Mr. Scott for their report reminded Members that the Youth Justice Plan together with the Children and Young People's Plan and the Adult Learning Plan comprised the three Article Four Plans within the Committee's remit. He suggested that in order to provide a greater level of Member input into the Article Four process the Committee establish a Working Group comprising four to five Members to work alongside Officers and Partners with regard to the three plans. He requested that any expressions of interest from Members should be submitted to Karen Brown, Review Co-ordinator by 1st July, 2009.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Cabinet be advised that the Review Committee endorsed the Youth Justice Plan 2009/10; and

- (ii) an Article Four Plan Working Group be established to assist in the development of the Article Four Plans within the Committee's remit. The Working Group to comprise 4 to 5 Members of the Committee with expressions of interest to be submitted to Karen Brown, Review Co-ordinator by 1st July, 2009.

Progress Report on Hylton Red House

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) on activity and progress following the second Ofsted monitoring visit to Hylton Red House Primary School which had been in Special Measures since September 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Sue Morgan, Senior School Improvement Officer together with Margaret Ferrie, Chief Inspector presented the report advising of the measures at the disposal of the Local Authority to address issues in the school and to lead it out of the category of Special Measures.

Members were informed that given two monitoring visits by Ofsted had judged that the school's progress in making the necessary improvements was inadequate and it was not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements, the Local Authority was seeking consent from the Secretary of State to create an Interim Executive Board (IEB) in order to secure the provision of a sound basis for the future improvement in the conduct of the school through the use of a specially appointed governing body for a temporary period.

Ms. Ferrie and Ms. Morgan addressed questions and comments from Members in relation to the following issues:-

- (i) the efficacy of the proposed IEB;
- (ii) the need to react to lessons learned. Did it take too long to get a stabilising force in the school?;
- (iii) the amount of parental support for the school, it was noted that despite being in special measures the school was oversubscribed for the Autumn term;
- (iv) the capability of the supply staff and the effect on the continuity of the Children's education;
- (v) the review of the Concerns Policy and the need to inform the Committee at the earliest stage possible if a school was giving cause for concern;
- (vi) the view that it was professional staff that had let the school down and that decisive action must be taken with regard to staffing issues;

- (vii) the arrangements for the Summer School to be held at Hylton Red House.

Members having requested that a copy of the Job Description for the IEB members together with how they were to be remunerated, be circulated to the Committee, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be received and noted;
- (ii) a further progress report be submitted to the Committee's September meeting; and
- (iii) details of the IEB Job Description and remuneration package be circulated to all members of the Committee.

Ofsted Inspections 12 Months Progress

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which invited Members to consider progress in the following schools following Ofsted Inspection Reports carried out 12 months previously:-

- (i) St. Patrick's Primary School;
- (ii) St. Joseph's (Washington);
- (iii) Oxclose Secondary School;
- (iv) Mill Hill Nursery School;
- (v) Easington Lane School.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the progress made be noted.

Ofsted Inspections

The Chief Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) inviting Members to consider the following recently published Ofsted Inspection Reports for educational establishments in Sunderland:-

- Pennywell Early Years
- Plains Farm Primary
- East Rainton
- Maplewood Special School

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Morgan and Ms. Ferrie having addressed issues raised by Councillor Oliver in respect of Plains Farm Primary, the Chairman referred to previous concerns raised

by Members in respect of Pennywell Early Years and asked that a presentation in respect of measures taken be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

7. RESOLVED that the Ofsted Inspection Reports be received and noted.

Annual Work Programme and Policy Review 2009-10

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which sought Members consideration of the Committee's Work Programme for 2009-10 together with their option for a detailed policy review.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Consideration having been given to the matter, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Annual Work Programme for 2009-2010 be approved; and
- (ii) commissioning arrangements within the Children and Young Peoples Plan be approved as the Committee's Policy Review topic for 2009-2010.

Family and Parenting Strategy 2008-2012 Update

The Executive Director of Children's Services submitted a report in respect of the above matter for the information of Members.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

9. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Ofsted Reports 2009

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on outcomes and recommendations from the recent Ofsted reports in respect of the following children's homes:-

- (i) Sea View Road Children's Home;
- (ii) Grasswell House Children's Home;
- (iii) Monument View Children's Home;
- (iv) Williamson Terrace Children's Home.

(For copy reports – see original minutes).

10. RESOLVED that the reports be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) G. HALL,
Chairman.