

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 14 May 2014 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 10 July 2014.

Elected Members:

- * Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
- * Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- * Mr Robert Evans
- * Mr David Goodwin
- * Mr Ken Gulati
- * Mrs Margaret Hicks
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- * Mrs Mary Lewis
- * Mrs Marsha Moseley
- Mr Chris Townsend
- A Cecile White
- A Derek Holbird
- A Mary Reynolds

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council
Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council

Substitute Members:

Michael Hall
Mr Ernest Mallett MBE
Simon Parr

In attendance

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Clare Curran, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools & Families
Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning

24/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Cecile White, Derek Holbird, Mary Reynolds and Chris Townsend.

Michael Hall substituted for Derek Holbird, Simon Parr substituted for Mary Reynolds and Ernest Mallett substituted for Chris Townsend.

The Chairman welcomed David Goodwin and Margaret Hicks, who had been appointed to the Committee at the County Council Annual Meeting on 6 May 2014.

25/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 27 MARCH 2014 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.

26/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

No Members declared any pecuniary interests. However, it was requested that the following points were noted:

- Robert Evans advised that he currently is a teacher at a special needs school, however, it did not come under the Council's jurisdiction.
- Liz Bowes declared a non-pecuniary interest as she is currently employed by Tribal who are contracted to carry out Ofsted inspections.

27/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were none.

28/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Committee had made a series of recommendations to Cabinet concerning Home to School Transport at its meeting on 27 March 2014.

The Cabinet provided a response at its meeting on 22 April 2014. Members noted the response.

29/14 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE SERVICE [Item 6]**Declarations of interest:**

- Liz Bowes declared a non-pecuniary interest as she is currently employed by Tribal who are contracted to carry out Ofsted inspections.

Witnesses:

- Caroline Budden, Deputy Director – Children's, Schools & Families
- Phil Osborne, Early Years & Childcare Service Manager
- PJ Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools & Learning
- Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families
- Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager briefly introduced his report to Committee. He emphasised the importance of high quality services for children under the age of 5 in improving outcomes in later life. Overall, the outcomes for children in Surrey were good, however, there continued to be a need to provide focussed support for those with special educational needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds.
2. An update was provided on the Government's recent announcement that it intends to extend Pupil Premium to children in early year's education; however, there were currently no clear dates or information about what age group this would cover.
3. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager advised that a recent Ofsted Annual Report on the early year sector had raised concerns about the quality of provision in areas of disadvantage. In Surrey, 86% early years childcare settings in disadvantaged areas were rated 'outstanding' or 'good'.
4. During the discussion, Members queried whether staff turnover was a problem. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager advised that generally there was sufficient staffing to manage and fulfil roles within the sector. He was more concerned about increasing qualification levels within the sector and had a Recruitment & Retention Team in place to manage this within settings.
5. Members queried whether schools had the budget available to provide additional 15 hour per week places for 2 year olds whose parental income was equivalent to the eligibility for free school meals. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager informed the Committee that schools were provided with a proportion of budget to support the funding of nursery staff which should support a qualified teacher leading a nursery.
6. The Committee queried whether there were outreach teams in place to ensure that those children in disadvantaged areas, not attending a Children's Centre, were able to have a good start in life. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager advised that his service had agreed with Babcock 4S to offer additional support to those schools with maintained nurseries, as data showed that outcomes were often poorer in the maintained sector. As there had been a small amount of take up on the offer, a follow up letter would be sent to the head teachers of the 60+ maintained nurseries in Surrey.
7. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager went on to explain that promoting registration with Children's Centres was difficult as there was no immediate transfer of birth information from the health service. However, arrangements had been made with Job Centre Plus to exchange information with families on benefits or workless families and Children's Services with regards to Early Help, with children's centres. There were Outreach workers based in all children's centres to make contact with families less ready to refer themselves.
8. Members queried the service aspirations with regards to performance. The Early Years & Childcare Service Manager explained that Surrey performed generally very well against other authorities, but aspired to continue improving. A specialist team was set up immediately upon any setting getting an 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted and a Quality Improvement Team was working specifically on bringing to 'Outstanding' those rated 'Good'.
9. Members questioned whether there were adequate resources in place to deliver services to level of quality required. Officers explained that

comparatively, less was invested in early years education, however were satisfied that the level of funding received was appropriate. The budget was currently approximately £18m, with £11m of that dedicated to children's centres. In addition, £35m from the Direct Schools Grant is made available to fund early education places for two, three and four year old children.

10. The Committee asked what work was being done to increase the percentage of children achieving a 'good level of development', as set out in Table 6 of the officer report. The Deputy Director for Children's, Schools & Families stressed the importance of early help and family support services working with early education settings. However, it was important for Members to note that financial pressures would continue in the coming years. The Service continued to work with maintained schools and would be asking them to submit data earlier in the future to check how they are assessing their standards.
11. Members queried whether any school's performance was disadvantaged by the poor quality of its local early year's provider. The Assistant Director for Schools & Learning advised that it was important to measure progress for the full school journey – he was confident that there was a fair and reasonable regime and that even those from disadvantaged backgrounds could succeed in the school system. It was also noted that there was now provision for more children from lower income families to access 15 hours per week of early years education, which was helping to improve outcomes for those children early on.

Recommendations:

The Committee noted the report and recommends:

- That the Directorate continues to explore how the Early Years and Childcare Service can work collaboratively with Babcock 4S, and other stakeholders, to deliver focussed support and better outcomes for disadvantaged children and those on Free School Meals.
- That the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning considers how schools with maintained nursery provision can be further encouraged to engage with the Early Years and Childcare Service in order to improve outcomes for children accessing these provisions.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

30/14 DIRECTORATE PRIORITIES 2014-15 [Item 7]

Declarations of Interest:

None

Witnesses:

- Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children & Families
- Clare Curran, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools & Families
- Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Cabinet Member for Children & Families provided the Committee with an overview of her key priorities for 2014/15. As the lead statutory Member for Children's Services there were a number of priorities that were non-negotiable. A summary of her priorities is listed below:
 - Safeguarding including against child exploitation, serious case reviews and the integration between the Safeguarding Board and schools – the Cabinet Member recommended that the Committee continue to scrutinise safeguarding arrangements in 2014/15.
 - Multiple Agency Safeguarding Hub – now live and very successful, however there was a need to streamline and consider how it would be resourced.
 - Corporate Parenting including integration with of Health colleagues' work and monitoring outcomes
 - Attainment and school attendance for Looked After Children
 - Safe and suitable accommodation, including services for care leavers
 - Employment and education for care leavers
 - Restorative approaches to youth justice
 - Fostering services (the Stay Put Policy)
 - Early Help, Children's Health and complex needs – coordinated approach with the Health & Wellbeing Board and Health Scrutiny Committee
 - Fostering/Adoption services – adoption breakdowns are increasing and therefore it would be important to compare to the previous years
 - Staff recruitment and retention – supporting and retaining social workers and the social work academy.
 - Budget - £56m savings in the last 5 years with a need to find another £24m in the next 4 years.
2. The Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning introduced her key priorities to the Committee and explained she had been visiting education settings and would continue to do so. A summary of her priorities is listed below:
 - Tracking pupils – how schools are tracking pupils and how pupil premium is being used.
 - School place delivery in September
 - New primary school plans
 - School improvement – every school should be rated 'good' by 2017. It was noted that 90% of secondary schools were already rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
 - How Surrey provides special needs services including personalised budgets, education health and care plans and provision, particularly for children on the autistic spectrum.

- Apprenticeships remained a priority along with reducing the number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), Early Help and youth justice.
3. The Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools & Families outlined her key priorities, explaining that she shared the priorities of her Cabinet Member colleagues, as well as having lead responsibility for Post-16 services for young people, the Family Support Programme and the Council's relationship with the Districts and Boroughs. A summary of her priorities is listed below:
 - Re-commissioning Services for Young People
 - Increasing the number of apprenticeships
 - Looked After young people
 - Reducing homelessness of young people
 - Working with partners of the County Council to increase employability of young people
 - Surrey Family Support Programme – now working in every district and borough in the county to help families with complex and multiple needs, unemployed adults and tackle anti social behaviour.
 - Future Skills programme
 4. The Chairman invited Members to question the Cabinet Members on their priorities.
 5. During the discussion Members queried whether the number of partners involved in the Transformation Programme was diminishing. The Cabinet Associate explained that she had recently met with Surrey Youth Focus and the Principal behind the Surrey Youth Consortium – she offered to discuss this concern with Members directly outside of the formal meeting.
 6. Members asked whether there was adequate resource to meet all statutory obligations. The Cabinet Member for Children & Families explained that the priority list she had given was just a snapshot of all the work that would be done within the year. The Service always met its statutory obligations and achieved a great deal besides. It was, however, important to note that demand for services continued to increase, while budget reduced.
 7. The Committee questioned whether Cabinet Members were prepared for changes that would be brought about by the Children & Families Act, particularly in relation to transition (of young people when they leave Children Social Care and enter the Adult Social Care system). The Cabinet Member for Children & Education explained that there was a large amount of work ongoing to ensure that the Council was ready for the obligations it needed to meet. Officers had some concerns that the additional obligations for Local Authorities had not been thoroughly considered by the legislator.

Recommendations:

The Committee endorse the principles behind the Directorate priorities for 2014/15.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

The Cabinet Associate and Vice Chairman would liaise outside of the meeting regarding the Transformation Programme

Committee next steps

None.

31/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]

10 July 2014.

32/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER [Item 8]**Declarations of interest:**

None.

Witnesses: None.

1. The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker.

Recommendaitons:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

Meeting ended at: 11.45 am

Chairman

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