

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 23 February 2010 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.20 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Ann Bonner – in the Chair

Councillor M. Altaf-Khan
Councillor Neil Owen (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor M. Altaf-Khan
Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor Janet Godden
Councillor Pete Handley
Councillor Dave Sexon
Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik (Saj) (In place of
Councillor Val Smith)
Councillor Don Seale
Councillor Dave Sexton

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Louise Chapman and Councillor Michael Waine.

Co-opted Members: Mr Chris Bevan, Mrs Sue Matthew and Mrs Galina Kildyushova.

By Invitation: Ms Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Governors' Association) and Ms B Williams (COTO).

Officers:

Whole of meeting L. Michelson and D. Miller (Corporate Core).

Part of meeting

| Agenda Item | Officer Attending |
|--------------------|--|
| 5 | J. Brown and K McGraw (Children, Young People & Families). |
| 6 | R. Leach (Children, Young People & Families). |
| 8 | C.Abolins (Children, Young People & Families). |

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with the following additional documents:

- An additional briefing paper in relation to Agenda Item 5;*
- A proposed agenda in relation to Agenda Item 7 and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and additional documents are attached to the signed Minutes.*

51/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies for absence and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Apology from

Temporary Appointments

Councillor Val Smith
Cllr Marilyn Badcock
Cllr Roger Belson
Mr Mark Forder

Councillor Sajjad Hussain Malik
-
-
Ms Brenda Williams

52/10 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 December 2009 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising

SERVICE AND RESOURCE PLANNING 2010/11 - 2014/15

The Chairman reported that she had been delighted to see that the comments of the Scrutiny Committee had been taken on board when the Cabinet had considered the budget, particularly in relation to Youth Services.

53/10 BULLYING

(Agenda No. 5)

Members of the Committee received a presentation (a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes), together with briefing papers (**CH5**) prepared by Jo Brown, Anti-Bullying Coordinator, Rennie Thompson, Service Manager and Katie McGraw, National Management Trainee on the forthcoming review of the anti-bullying strategy with multi-agency partners. This item had been one of the three principle topics earmarked at the 22 September meeting for review.

Chief Inspector Lindsey Finch and Dave Parry, Youth Justice Manager, Thames Valley Police also attended to contribute to the debate.

Following the presentation, the Committee conducted a question and answer session. The key some points arising from the debate are set out below:

The Committee recognised that there were a number of multi-agency partners working hard in this area. They recommended that the following points be incorporated into the service strategy in order to promote effective joint working:

- The Committee recommends that the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator should be involved in the establishment and development of Safer Schools Partnerships, and that the Co-ordinator considers becoming involved in Safer Schools Partnerships Steering Group;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator further develop their links with Thames Valley Police, especially with regard to joint training;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator considers signposting schools to the support which other agencies can provide in order to tackle the underlying problems of children who bully.

Much of the Committee's debate centred around the crucial role which schools must play in tackling bullying. As such, the Committee recommended that the following points related to the Co-ordinator's work with schools were reflected in the strategy:

- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator should have due regard to the existing pressures on school staff time whilst developing its programme of work;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator should, where possible, pursue links with school councils;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator should encourage governing bodies to actively monitor both the bullying situation and the implementation of an anti-bullying strategy in their schools;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator examine alternative means of communicating with schools and teaching staff, so as to reduce reliance on its website.

The Committee further welcomed the contribution made on behalf of Thames Valley Police and urged that the two points related to the collection and reporting of data be addressed as follows:

- The Committee suggests that the Co-ordinator should consider setting minimum standards for data sharing;
- The Committee suggests that the service should consider the issue of serial bullying and whether this can be tracked.

The following specific issues were also put forward for consideration:

- The Co-ordinator should consider developing clear guidance on bullying, focussing particularly on resilience to bullying, for circulation to parents. The service should consider ways they can encourage pupils to have empathy for others;
- The Co-ordinator should think about what sanctions schools can take against bullies, and advise schools on potential effectiveness;
- The Committee recommends that the Co-ordinator should recognise that the bullying of teachers remains an issue.

Finally, the Committee was of the opinion that working to tackle cyber-bullying should remain a priority.

Following debate, officers undertook to give consideration to the Committee's points when reviewing the Anti-Bullying Strategy.

The Committee AGREED to:

- (a) Write to all Local Authority Governing Bodies in Oxfordshire, with a copy to all Head Teachers, outlining the services and initiatives that the County Council offer in relation to Anti-Bullying;
- (b) ask officers for a report back to the Committee in six months time.

54/10 SCHOOL ENROLMENT

(Agenda No. 6)

In October this Committee had agreed its future work programme including the wish to conduct further investigation into the area of school enrolment.

The Committee considered a briefing paper (**CH6**) on the impact on school enrolment of the rising influx of children from the independent sector into state schools and what steps the Authority was taking to address it.

Mr Roy Leach, Strategic Lead, School Organisation & Planning was available to answer any questions the Committee may have wished to ask on the briefing.

The Committee thanked Mr Leach for his report and concluded that no further investigation into this area was needed at this time.

55/10 CHILDREN'S SERVICES SEMINAR

(Agenda No. 7)

Ms Michelson circulated a copy of a proposed agenda for the forthcoming Seminar on Raising the Age of Participation. She urged members to send any suggestions for the day to herself or the Chairman.

The Committee noted the date for Seminar and made the following suggestions for inclusion to the Agenda for the day:

- Invite a high level representative from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) who will be able to comment on funding arrangements following the demise of the LSC;
- Invite the Head of Adult Learning (Jane Dixon) or representative from Thames Valley IOD.

56/10 CHILDREN'S CENTRES PROGRAMME

(Agenda No. 8)

In October this Committee had agreed its future work programme including the wish to monitor the progress of the Children's Centres Programme. The Committee was invited to consider a briefing paper on the current progress of the programme. Ms

Claire Abolins attended to answer any questions the Committee may have wished to ask on the briefing.

The Committee was invited to consider whether this is an area that requires further investigation.

The Committee thanked Ms Abolins for her report and noted that Oxfordshire had been recognised by the Government Development Agency as having made very good progress in its development of Children's centres and undertook to ask officers to report back to the Committee following the completion of phase 3 of the project.

57/10 FORWARD PLAN

(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee was asked to suggest items from the current Forward Plan on which it may wish to have an opportunity to offer advice to the Cabinet before any decision was taken, together with details of what it thought could be achieved by looking at the item.

No items were identified.

58/10 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

(Agenda No. 10)

Ms Michelson updated the Committee on progress made on the Educational Attainment Scrutiny Review. She reported that the working Group had identified 16 schools to visit and that 13 visits had now been completed. A report on their findings was being drafted. The arrangements for the select committee to happen in April/early May were still on schedule.

The Committee noted the update.

59/10 CLOSE OF MEETING

(Agenda No. 11)

The Meeting Closed at 12.20 pm.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing