

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22 September 2009 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.10 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Ann Bonner – in the Chair

Councillor Neil Owen (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor M. Altaf-Khan
Councillor Marilyn Badcock
Councillor Roger Belson
Councillor Melinda Tilley (In place of Councillor Mrs
Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor)
Councillor Janet Godden
Councillor Steve Hayward (In place of Councillor Tony
Harbour)
Councillor Val Smith
Councillor Lawrie Stratford (in place of Councillor Dave
Sexon)
Mr Chris Bevan
Dr Hajjat Ramzy
Mrs Sue Matthew

By Invitation: Carole Thomson – Oxfordshire Governors Association

Officers:

Whole of meeting J. Dean and L. Michelson (Corporate Core)

Part of meeting J. Tomlinson and Tan Lea (Children, Young People &
Families) (Agenda Item 5);
Councillor Louise Chapman and Councillor Michael
Waine (Agenda Items 5 and 6)

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies for absence and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Apology From

Councillor Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor Pete Handley
Councillor Tony Harbour
Councillor Dave Sexon

Temporary Appointments

Councillor Melinda Tilley
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Councillor Steve Hayward
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

26 MINUTES (Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14 July were approved and signed.

There were no Matters Arising.

27 OXFORDSHIRE YOUTH SERVICES (Agenda No. 5)

Ofsted had carried out a visit to Oxfordshire on 23 – 25 June 2009 to evaluate the impact of integrated youth support, as part of their 2009/10 inspection programme. The Committee had before them a copy of the letter sent by Ofsted to accompany the published report giving a summary of the report's outcomes. It had scored the service as follows:

- The impact of integrated arrangements on the range and quality of young people's learning and development through participation in youth work and positive activities in the community is good;
- The effectiveness of targeted support services, particularly in relation to young people involved in, or at risk of involvement in, crime and social behaviour is good;
- The progress made by the local authority and its partners in developing an integrated approach to youth support is satisfactory;
- Young people's active involvement in shaping decisions at a local level is good;
- The contribution of integrated support arrangements to broader strategic priorities for improving outcomes for young people is satisfactory.

Areas for improvement included the need to:

- Develop a service-wide quality assurance framework which included feedback from young people;
- Ensure targeted youth support played a central role in strategies to reduce teenage conceptions and increased the number of young people in education, training or employment;
- Provide opportunities for staff to share good practice and contribute to service planning;
- Develop and implement a workforce strategy.

Tan Lea, Head of Oxfordshire Youth Service, the Director of Children, Young People & Families and Councillor Chapman were present at the meeting in order to respond

to any questions from the Committee. Tan Lea gave a presentation on the report and its outcomes commenting that it had been a very positive message to staff, partners and volunteers. She added, however, that the Directorate was not complacent and there was a clear strategy in place to address the development plan.

The Committee then asked a number of questions of Tan Lea and Councillor Chapman, some of which are included below:

Q With regard to the recent Mentoring Service consultation document which was circulated recently, is it the aim to reduce this service?

R (Tan Lea) We are looking at a service restructure to ensure that it is more integrated and could be accessed by most clients in need. The consultation document looks at how the services are managed, how the volunteers are used and how the number of volunteers can be expanded. It is proposed that there will be a single point of referral and a reduction in waiting lists, which will produce a more realistic period of receipt. An outcome of this will be that the savings will be re-invested in the Youth Services in line with the other targets identified – in particular with weekend opening. We have also looked at other models of good practice in terms of efficiency and delivery and have tried to apply them.

Q Thank you for the inspirational report. How will the service manifest itself into a good service for young people?

R (Cllr Chapman) in the form of week-end opening. Tan Lea has been the inspiration behind these proposals, having driven much of the work herself.

Q Feedback on the consultation on Youth Mentoring has shown that that some of the workforce are insecure and have concerns. What are your views on this?

R (Cllr Chapman) The staff are concerned about the proposal to re-invest in the service and to utilise more voluntary support. Some of the permanent posts will be affected by this. We are hoping to redeploy those affected back into the wider Youth Service. The consultation has only just finished.

Q Is it exceptional support? Will young people who want to set up their own groups be assisted by the service?

R (Tan Lea) Within the universal provision portfolio we have tried to think through how we can give the widest possible access to support. In the rural districts we work with the parish councils taking an advisory role and offering support and infrastructural support. This will not be a 'one off' support.

Cllr Chapman added that application by voluntary organisations could be made via the 'Chill Out' fund to open a youth group.

(Tan Lea) With regard to our work with schools, the pattern is mixed. Whilst there are excellent examples of this, we need to get back on track ensuring that children and young people can remain on school premises using the facilities, whilst accessing the Youth Service. This has been partly applied already in relation to the work underway with vulnerable children.

Q Are you in a position at present to disseminate good practice – or is this work in progress?

R (Tan Lea) You are right to point this out. I do not currently meet with school Governing Bodies. Your point reinforces the need for the service to take a more systematic relationship with schools.

Q Can religious organisations apply for the Chill Out fund?

R (Cllr Chapman) The 'Chill Out' fund helps many church groups. Ethnicity is not an issue. Another pot is that of the Youth Opportunities Fund where young people can put in bids themselves. Our service would help them to put the bids together, if requested.

Q On the access to public transport in rural areas question, do you continue to pursue discussion with local transport companies?

R (Tan Lea) Attention is being given to this issue. Young people held a conference day last year focussing on transport issues, to which they invited the major bus companies and officers. This is one achievable area that could be taken forward with the possibility of trying to attract external funding. There are plans in place to have another day this year to review progress and to determine the next steps. It is a difficult area to progress.

(Cllr Chapman) The Youth Parliament are putting together a paper with the relevant Transport Cabinet Member. It will ask for concessionary fares for young people. Cllr Chapman invited members of the Committee to come along to a meeting of the Parliament.

We are looking to providing increased access to primary health services and Health Visitor staff in some of the urban youth centres. In addition we shall be helping to increase access to Health provision, working with early intervention teams specialising in drug and substance abuse.

The Director for Children Young People & Families paid tribute to the leadership which Tan Lea had exercised throughout a period of significant change. She added that her work was exceptional when viewed in the context of a national picture that found it unusual for a Youth Service to attain a 'good' status.

Members of the Committee thanked Tan Lea for her attendance and congratulated her for her excellent leadership through a period of significant change. They also congratulated her on the very pleasing outcome of the Ofsted inspection.

Councillor Chapman undertook to circulate the meeting dates for the Youth Parliament to enable members to attend if they so wished.

The officers also undertook, at the request of the Committee, to extend an invitation to the Youth Parliament and 'Sounding Board' to come along to a future meeting to make presentations on their work.

The Committee received an update on the activity of the Reducing Teenage Conceptions Working Group.

The Committee **AGREED** to note the report.

29 **EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT TASK GROUP**

(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee noted that the Educational Attainment Task Group were due to meet with Sally Taylor, Head of Raising Achievement, Northern Area, on 30 September.

The Committee had been advised that, under the Constitution, scrutiny task groups should, wherever possible, reflect the political balance of the Council.

It was **AGREED** to note the report and to add Councillor Ann Bonner and Councillor David Nimmo-Smith to the membership of the Task Group.

30 **PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME**

(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee considered a report (CH8) which briefly set out the Committee's existing commitments and proposals for future work which had been identified at the last meeting during discussion.

Existing commitments comprised two working groups on the following:

- Reducing Teenage Conceptions in Oxfordshire (joint review with the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee);
- To review further work on Educational Attainment.

At the last meeting, the Committee had identified a significant number of proposals for future work. Since then, the officers had prepared proposal forms and these were attached to the Agenda for information. Of these, there were three suggestions that stood out for their relevance to current County Council priorities. In light of this, the Committee were **RECOMMENDED** to hold select committees on the following:

- 'Young people's transition into employment' – with the possibility of combining this with 'Dissolution of the Learning & Skills Council';
- 'Links between Oxfordshire Schools and the Science Community'; and
- 'Anti-Bullying'.

The Committee were further **RECOMMENDED** to decide whether it wished to prioritise the remaining nine ideas, initially for a question and answer session.

Following a full discussion when each suggestion had been taken in turn, the Committee **AGREED** that the following topics be included within the Work Programme for 2009/10 and that they be prioritised at the next meeting:

- 'Dissolution of the Learning & Skills Council, Transitioning Young People into Employment, Reducing NEETS;

- Linking the Science Community to Oxfordshire Schools;
- Anti-Bullying.

Thereafter a matrix be submitted to each meeting, summarising the progression of all projects.

In relation to those topics which were not identified for the Work Programme, it was **AGREED** that briefings be given on the following topics in the first instance to enable decision:

- Permanent Exclusions;
- The outcomes of the SACRE review on religious education in schools;
- The impact on school enrolment of the rising influx of children from the independent sector into state schools and what steps the Council were taking to address it;
- Progress of the Children’s Centres programme.

With regard to the Children’s Trust, the Committee decided to await its formation into strategic commissioning status in March 2010 and to undertake work at that time around this new focus and whether it is equipped to be effective in its new role.

In relation to the invitation to join Oxford City Council’s scrutiny review on the City’s youth services, it was **AGREED** to thank the City Council for their invitation, but to inform them that in light of the favourable outcomes of the Ofsted inspection, as highlighted in Agenda Item 5, not to give this a priority at the moment.

31 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No.)

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

No items were identified.

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Date of signing 200