

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on 14 July 2009 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.15 pm

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Ann Bonner - in the chair

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan

Councillor Roger Belson

Councillor Anda Fitzgerald -O'Connor

Councillor Janet Godden

Councillor Tony Harbour

Councillor Steve Hayward (in place of Councillor Pete Handley)

Councillor Neil Owen

Councillor Dave Sexon

Councillor Val Smith

Councillor Lawrie Stratford (in place of Councillor Marilyn Badcock)

Mr Chris Bevan

Mrs Sue Matthew

Dr Hojjat Ramzy (Ramezanzadeh)

By Invitation:

Councillors Michael Waine and Louise Chapman, Cabinet Members for Schools Improvement and Children, Young People & Families, respectively (all items).

Officers:

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

Part of meeting:

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

5

Lucy Russell, Reducing Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, Oxfordshire County Council/Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust

6

Paula Tansley, Interim Head of Commissioning, Performance & Quality Assurance, Children, Young People & Families

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

19/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Apology from

Councillor Marilyn Badcock
Councillor Pete Handley

Temporary Appointments

Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Steve Hayward

20/09 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 March 2009 and 16 June 2009 were approved and signed subject to the inclusion of Carole Thomson into the list of attendees at the 18 March meeting.

21/09 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item 5)

Reducing Teenage Conceptions in Oxfordshire

On 18 March, the Scrutiny Committee had received an interim report outlining the findings of the confidential Inquiry into teenage conceptions in Oxfordshire, held in July 2008. The Inquiry was held by Janet Tomlinson, Director of Children, Young People & Families, and Dr Jonathan McWilliam, Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire. It identified a series of recommendations for action to improve the strategy to reduce teenage pregnancies. In April 2009, the confidential Inquiry had reviewed progress made since the original report in 2008.

The Committee had before them a report (CH5) which updated members on the latest position and which outlined action that had been taken since the original review.

The Committee had invited Lucy Russell, Reducing Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, to attend the meeting in order to respond to questions. Members of the Committee asked a number of questions, a selection of which is included below, and received the following summarised responses:

- Q Talks with young people in Children's Centres has revealed that discussion with peer groups is often more meaningful than discussions with professionals. What are you doing about this?
- R We are aware that we need to improve in this area and we are therefore investing a significant amount of time right across the board in Personal, Social & Health (PSE) education, looking at ways to make discussion about various issues more meaningful to

young people. We are also keen to introduce new things out of term time too.

Q What are you doing about reducing and targeting services at second teenage conceptions? Young people like continuity.

R It is recognised that young people do like continuity and this is brought to them in the form of the school health nurses. When possible, they see the same nurse each time.

The Committee noted that there had been a misconception of the texting service on the part of the media. It was not about texting for the contraceptive pill, rather, it was intended as one of the ways for an individual to make contact with an experienced school health nurse with reference to their physical, mental and sexual health. It was not a new service, but an existing school health, nurse service in Oxfordshire's secondary schools which, until now, had not been available over the school holidays.

Q Are you going to clarify the statistics into age groups?

R We will try to introduce it in the future.

Q Have you looked into involving theology in sex education?

R If the facts are presented as facts and in a context which young people can understand, it can result in a useful and positive process. Whoever is presenting it, and in whatever context, it is about making sure that pupils are given the correct information.

Q Are you taking steps to encourage schools and FE colleges to improve their data collection?

R Always, when collecting this type of data, there is a time lag. A pregnancy might not go to full term, for example. Data is collected nationally by the Government so that at least we are able to monitor the impact of what action we are taking. We have the data relating to how many young mothers there are in the county, of which there are 350. Some of these are in education and training establishments, some are not. We are taking positive, speedy action to engage more of the latter group into a variety of different courses as soon as possible.

Q Are you also working with boys? How do you measure effectiveness?

R Yes, we are also working with boys. We have a specialist targeting the needs of boys also. At the moment we carry out evaluation via PSE sexual health training. We also organise focus groups with select groups of girls and boys to ask their views about the training they received and to measure the training they

received. We also measure how many young men have become fathers. We are keen to keep a focus on boys. In addition, the Integrated Youth Support Services are making the education of young mothers a target – we shall be keen to see its impact.

Q Do you make very young mothers aware of the possible impact on their bodies of having babies when so young?

R Yes we do. We must continue to make sure that we are having an effect and that they are receiving the correct information in order that they can make informed decisions.

Q How do you publicise your services?

R An organisation called SHADE will provide health advice in the form of drop in for every young person during school holidays. Business cards will be produced to promote its services. This service will be evaluated and if it is felt that the service is not being publicised sufficiently, we will look at new methods and find the right people to do this.

Q How are you sharing good practice around all the secondary schools?

R There will be a conference to share good practice in relation to Health Education in the autumn.

Views expressed by various members of the Committee included the following:

- Prevention is the key word. The question should be asked if the message to young fathers is firm enough;
- The important thing is for young mothers to continue with their education. Children's Centres are positive about this and do encourage them to undertake courses, as long as they have support.

The Committee noted a report by Councillor Waine who pointed out that the Oxfordshire Youth Parliament had met recently and had discussed sexual health matters. He added that they had very clear messages to put forward and had communicated these in a strong manner. The issues which they had put forward were as follows:

- There was still a requirement for very clear signposting for young people;
- There was also a requirement for clear rules of engagement – amongst these, there was a need to be open and to have clear boundaries;

- If they wished to consult on a 'one-off' issue, then there was a need to be seen speedily and to have access to a person who was qualified in that particular area. If it proved to be an ongoing problem, then there was a need for continuity;
- Extended pastoral support was far stronger in schools and the sixth forms than in FE colleges;
- Oxfordshire was strong on peer support and peer counselling.

At this point members of the Committee thanked Lucy Russell, Reducing Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, for her presentation and for making herself available, together with Councillors Waine and Chapman, to respond to questions.

It was **AGREED** that:

- (a) Councillor Anda Fitzgerald O'Connor and Dr Ramzy would form a joint working group, together with volunteers from the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to take this forward; and
- (b) Councillor David Turner, a former member of this Committee and a member of this Committee and a member of the Teenage Conception Advisory Board would also be invited to take part also

22/09 ANNUAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME JULY 2009 – JULY 2010

(Agenda Item 6)

Lisa Michelson, the Committee's Corporate Performance & Review Officer for the Children, Young People & Families area, introduced this item giving a brief explanation of the scrutiny work processes. She asked the Committee to consider items which they might like to see included within the Committee's Work Programme for 2009 – 2010. She added that any suggestions would then be worked up as proposals during the summer by the Corporate Performance & Review Team, and a report submitted to the 22 September meeting for decision.

The Committee were also asked to:

- (a) reform the Educational Attainment working group, and establish the course for further review.
- (b) consider an offer for a joint review on Youth Services with Oxford City Council .

Following this, and as a preliminary to a discussion by the Committee around its work programme, Paula Tansley, Interim Head of Commissioning, Performance & Quality Assurance, gave a presentation on the key challenges and priorities facing the County Council in this area of work for the period 2009/10, a summary of which is attached to the signed minutes.

The Cabinet members for Children, Young People & Families and Schools Improvement, respectively, were also present at the table in order to respond to any questions from the Committee.

Following a full discussion, members of the Committee thanked Paula Tansley and Councillors Waine and Chapman and **AGREED** to

(a) to bring the following issues for possible review back to the next meeting for discussion and prioritisation:

- SUCCESS Project (Q&A session);
- Operation and outcomes to date of the Oxfordshire Children's Trust;
- Children's Centres;
- Teaching of Religious Education in Schools;
- The effects of the dissolution of the Learning & Skills Council (for possible consideration later in the Council year);
- How to reduce permanent school exclusions within the county;
- Why parents remove children from Oxfordshire's state education system at age 11;
- The impact on the service of more children moving from the private sector to the state sector as a result of the recession;
- The extent of the interface between Oxfordshire schools and the County's science base;
- Implications of the reduction of central service resources on schools in Oxfordshire;
- Entitlement to entry to non faith schools in areas which only offer faith schools;
- Oxfordshire's Anti-Bullying Strategy;
- Are we in Oxfordshire preparing our young people for their transition into employment?

(b) To appoint Councillor Val Smith, Mohammed Altaf-Khan, Janet Godden and Dave Sexon, together with co-opted member Sue Matthew, to a newly formed Educational Attainment Review working group;

(c) Await an upcoming Ofsted report into Oxfordshire's Youth service before furthering discussion on a joint review; .

(d) Request the Cabinet members and the Directorate to bring the 'Directorate Priorities for 2009/10' list to the 23 February 2010 meeting in order to monitor progress.

Councillor Chapman undertook to send to each member of the Committee a copy of the consultation paper in relation to the proposed changes to Oxfordshire's Youth Service.

23/09 LEAD MEMBER/TASK GROUP REPORTS
(Agenda Item 7)

Members noted the following tracking report from 21 April 2009 Cabinet with regard to Educational Attainment – Module 1

Relationship Between Leadership And Improving Attainment In Schools

The Cabinet considered a report by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee (CA8) setting out the findings of a review that considered whether anything specific could be done to raise attainment in Oxfordshire's schools to the level that is expected of them. The report addressed the subject of how the leadership of a school, including the Governing Body, headteacher, deputy head, supporting management team and the Governing Body, could affect attainment levels. The Cabinet also considered the response of the Cabinet Member for School's Improvement.

Councillor Sue Haffenden, Lead Member of the Review introduced the report, setting out the background and referring to the delays in the work due to shortages in staff resources. The Review had been a small focussed review that had sought to avoid duplication with officer work that was underway. She referred to the recommendations and in particular highlighted those in relation to the central list of businesses willing to be involved with schools, the concept of federation.

Councillor Val Smith, Review Member, expressed the hope that the three remaining elements of the review could be undertaken.

Councillor David Turner, Shadow Cabinet Member for School's Improvement referred to a booklet on governorship produced by Martin Pounce and asked that consideration be given to supplying each governing body with a single copy.

The Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement thanked the Lead Member of the Review and fellow review members for their efforts. In response to comments made he noted that federation was being discussed as recommended in recommendation 11; it was not the role of SIP's to interpret their school's performance data; and he would take up the question of the booklet with Governor Services.

24/09 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda Item 8)

The Committee was asked to suggest items from the current Forward Plan on which it might have wished to have an opportunity to offer advice to the Cabinet before any decision was taken.

Councillor Stratford suggested that the report entitled 'The Protection of Children: A progress report' written by Lord Laming, be taken to the 22 September meeting of this Committee for comment prior to consideration by Cabinet.

NB. The above report has since been submitted to the 21 July Cabinet.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing.....2009