

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 November 2010 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.50 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Ann Bonner – in the Chair

Councillor Dave Sexon (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Janet Godden
Councillor Neil Owen
Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor M. Altaf-Khan
Councillor Marilyn Badcock
Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor Don Seale
Councillor Val Smith
Councillor Nicholas P. Turner

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Louise Chapman

Co-opted Members: Mr Chris Bevan
Mrs Sue Matthew

By Invitation: Mrs Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Governors' Association)
Ms Brenda Williams (COTO)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Mr Roger Edwards and Mrs Deborah Miller (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of meeting Mr Jim Leivers , Ms Karen Palmer, Ms Penny Browne (Children, Young People & Families)

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

94/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 2)

Councillor Nick Turner declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 6 by virtue of his position as the person responsible for safeguarding of children at his place of employment (Drayton Leisure).

95/10 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 November 2010 were approved and signed.

96/10 SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING
(Agenda No. 5)

The Director for Children, Young People & Families reported that she had attended the National Children and Adult Services; shaping the present, building the future Conference held in Manchester in November. The National Children and Adult Services Conference was an established event that saw an audience of approximately 1200 high-level attendees coming together for three days to discuss and debate the latest issues affecting children and adult services. The 2010 conference was held in Manchester at the newly revamped Manchester Central.

This year's programme included a mix of keynote/ministerial addresses and other significant plenary sessions by key players in adult and children's services. There was also the opportunity to take part in a variety of participatory breakouts and networking sessions. Key speakers at the conference included Sarah Teather MP, Tim Loughton MP, Andrew Lansley, Michael Gove, Sir David Nicholson and Professor Eileen Munro.

She reported on the Key messages coming out of the conference as follows:

DfE Vision

- We are committed to transforming our education system so all children, regardless of their background, thrive and prosper.
- For parents to have more high quality schools to choose from, more opportunities to open new schools, and more opportunities to get involved in the running of existing schools.
- To replace top-down targets and a culture of inspection with more transparent arrangement and a focus on underperformance.
- To support those who work in our schools and children's services.
- Where government has a role to play, we will empower families and ensure that all children are protected from harm and neglect.

Schools

- The process for identifying underperforming schools to convert to academy status and the process for allowing all schools to convert are scheduled to begin in Dec 2010;
- Guaranteed Unit of Funding for Schools will be introduced in 2011
- New floor standards - these will apply from January 2011;
- Education Endowment Fund to which Schools and LAs can apply to support Schools to improve both their levels of attainment and the progress they make with their pupils;
- Proposals for University Technical Colleges will be progressed by March 2011, with the aim of opening the first such technical college in Sept 2011;

- Future revenue funding arrangements for schools will be contained in the Schools White Paper and are likely to include a National Schools single formula;
- Reading tests at age 6 will be piloted from June 2011;
- Plans to improve apprenticeships will be published by March 2011 to begin by Sept 2011;
- Reform to inspection of schools by Dec 2011;
- Proposals to improve teacher training and CPD will be published by Dec 2010;
- Proposals on teachers' pay and performance management relations will be presented in 2011-12.

Social Care & Social Work

- New standards for the employers of social workers will be developed for May 2011, and for social workers by Sept 2011.
- Reform to inspection of local authorities is expected to be implemented by May 2012.
- Details of the early intervention grant will be included in the local government settlement in December 2010.
- The number of families "going through" evidence based early intervention programmes (to be identified through Allen Review) will be published in Dec 2011.
- Streamlined regs, guidance and min standards for fostering, children's homes and adoption will be published in April 2011.
- There will be support for LAs to roll out evidence based practice for foster care in 20 sites.

Youth Work

- DfE takes responsibility for the National Citizenship Service from 2013. In Oxfordshire we are a partner in the successful bid by V the National Youth Volunteers Service for the NCS pilot.
- There will be an independent review on commercialization and sexualisation of childhood from Dec 2010 until May 2011.

Early years

- Pilots for extending the entitlement to free child care to two year olds will begin in April 2011.

As you will know, however, it isn't just the DfE that we need to look for to understand holistically the needs of children and policy initiatives from Central Government. Here are some of the other Departments and some key items from their Business Plans:

Department of Health

- The first NHS outcome framework is due to be published in Dec 2010 and implemented by 2012;
- Proposals for pilots of new dentistry contracts with emphasis on children to begin in Dec 2010;

CH3a

- There will be a cross government strategy on mental health and public mental health published in Dec 2010;
- A stand alone programme to increase access to talking therapies for CYP will be established in Sept 2011;
- The LA's role in public health will be described in the Public Health White Paper to be published in December. The Health Bill which will give LAs a role in public health is due to be published in Dec 2010;
- Shadow public health arrangements will be in place by April 2012, with budgets and powers being devolved from April 2013;
- Develop full implementation plan for additional health visitors, including details of:
 - numbers of health visitors needed to achieve a net increase of 4,200 above 2010 levels;
 - initiatives and incentives to drive return to practice;
 - plans to increase health visitor training places;
 - a new module for health visitors in practice and those in education to refresh/provide skills in building community capacity by November 2010- to be launched Jan 2011.

Department of Business, Innovation & Skills

- Jointly with DfE (John Hayes) have announced an 'All age careers service' - "building on the best of Connexions and Next Steps".
- The government aims for the all age careers service to be in place by April 2012.

These are just a few and other departments like the Home Office have plans around ending detention of children for immigration purposes, the Ministry of Justice is taking forward the review of the Public Law outline commissioned as part of The Lord Laming Report and the Department of Communities and Local Government has announced a review of Local Authority funding to take place from January to July 2011.

We are expecting the White paper on Schools to be published on or by 26th November and that will have in it more about the role of our Local Authority.

Michael Gove when he spoke to directors went through how he saw our role:

- As Strategic Delivery Partners
- Champions of educational excellence – challenging individual schools to improve, encouraging great schools to share their expertise, putting underperforming schools on notice if they are not improving.
- Greater autonomy on for those leading both schools and local authorities.
- Able to develop their own plans to improve the quality of Early Years provision.
- A central role as guardians of social justice, ensuring admissions are fair.
- Essential role as providers of support for children with special educational needs.
- Ensure there is sufficient high-quality alternative provision.
- Along with the DfE focus shared attention on how to improve schools where:

- Attainment is low and pupils progress poorly;
- the most recent Ofsted judgment is that the school is eligible for intervention or is merely satisfactory (the latter is included to reflect wider issues in the school such as its capacity to improve, or in key areas such as leadership and governance) ;
- there is a record of low attainment over time – whether or not the most recent results have crossed a minimum threshold, we should be looking at whether the previous results indicate those increases are sustainable ;
- and pupils in secondary schools achieve poorly compared to schools with similar intakes.

The Director then gave a presentation to the Committee (a copy of the presentation is appended to these Minutes and to the signed copy of the Minutes) which provided further information on the financial challenges faced by the Directorate and in particular:

- existing savings in MTFP this year of £7.8m
- In year reductions £2.3 (Revenue) £3m (Capital – so far)
- Service & Resource Planning assumptions - £52m over next four years
- Protection of DSG will influence proportion of savings required

This would be met by reviewing statutory responsibilities and how they were met; the removal of ring fences and grants finishing; multi disciplinary: Multi-agency working together – sharing assets & integrated teams whilst supporting most vulnerable children.

Following the presentation, members made the following points:

- The Committee hoped that new arrangements would provide more transparency of very complex funding.
- The Committee hoped that grants would be “frozen” rather than stopped until better times.
- Director for Children, Young People & Families to send a copy of the Business Strategy once released.
- Director for Children, Young People & Families to send Mr Bevan further information regarding endowment fund in relation to voluntary schools.

The Committee thanked the Director for Children, Young People & Families for her presentation and requested a further briefing (to follow the Local Government Spending Review outcome) prior to the Budget Meeting on 20 December 2010.

97/10 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee received a detailed presentation from Mr Jim Leivers, Head of Children’s Services, Ms Penny Browne, Assessment & Family support and Ms Karen Palmer, Area Service Manager C&F North on current safeguarding issues in

Oxfordshire. A copy of the presentation is appended to these Minutes and to the signed copy of the Minutes.

Following debate, the Chairman encouraged Members to take up the offer to spend time with assessment teams within their areas.

The Committee thanked the officers for their presentations and AGREED to ask officers to report back to the Committee at its May Meeting once budget implications were known.

98/10 SELECT COMMITTEE OUTCOME ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee had before them a report (CH7) which presented the findings of the Educational Attainment Working Group on primary educational attainment.

Following debate, Members of the committee made a number of minor suggestions which the Working Group agreed to take into account when finalising the report prior to the recommendations being sent to the Cabinet Member for School Improvement and the Director of Children, Young People & Families. Members further agreed to request an update on progress in November 2011.

99/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11
(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee AGREED the work programme attached at CH8, subject to adding the following item "Special schools and admission at nursery age" to a summer meeting.

100/10 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee identified no items from the current Forward Plan on which it wished to have an opportunity to offer advice to the Cabinet before any decision was taken.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing