

**MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 February 2011 at 7.00pm.**

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**Present:** Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Cathy Kent, Wendy Curtis (Substituting for Sue Gray), Lynn Carr and Sue MacPherson

**Apologies:** Cllr Sue Gray, Revd. David Rollins, Steve Cray and Alistair MacPherson  
Cllr Charles Curtis – Portfolio Holder for Children's Safeguarding

**In attendance:** Councillor Diana Hale – Portfolio Holder for Education  
Ms J Olsson – Corporate Director, Children, Education and Families (CEF)  
M. Taylor – Strategic Lead, Learning Support & Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms C Littleton – Interim Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes  
C. Pumphrey - Strategic Lead - School Improvement, Learning and Skills  
Ms J Mayer - Democratic Services Officer  
Mrs L Pritchford – Schools Forum  
Mrs P Wilson – Roman Catholic Church representative

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**32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

a) Interests

Councillor Kent declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children who attend St. Thomas of Canterbury School, Grays Convent School and Grays Media Art College. She is also a Governor at Grays Convent School and is a member of the Fire Authority.

Councillor Gaywood declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children at Arthur Bugler Junior School, St. Clere's School and Palmer's College; that she is a Governor at Arthur Bugler Infant School; she has a disabled son in receipt of special care and she is the Chair of the East Tilbury schools and St. Clere's school Collaboration Group; she is an SEN Parent Governor at St. Clere's School; she is a member of Thurrock CVS and a member of the Corporate Parenting Group.

Councillors Curtis declared a personal interest by virtue that she has grandchildren at Bulphan School.

Councillor MacPherson declared a personal interest by virtue that she has children at Chafford Hundred Campus and Tudor Court; she hires facilities to William Edward's School and she is a member of the Fire Authority.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

**33. MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 15 December 2010, were approved as a correct record.

**34. PROGRESS REPORT ON PRIMARY SCHOOL STANDARDS**

Ms Pumphrey presented this report, which provided an update on progress in primary school standards. In responding to members' questions, the officer explained how reading assistance was very much encouraged in schools and the new Head Teacher at Benyon School had set up a Parent Council.

In order to sustain these improvements; training was being provided for Head teachers who are new in post and the National College was supporting Thurrock in developing a Leadership Strategy. The Corporate Director was extremely positive about the recent reorganisation within the CEF Directorate, which had focussed on succession planning. Members were pleased to note that the work of the newly appointed Early Years Training and Development Manager had attracted LA Award Grant.

The Officer then reported on the school plan for gifted and talented children; which had included a visit to the CEME Centre in Dagenham for those students who excelled at maths and science. An Intensive Support Team had been set up; where experts could be seconded into schools or schools could act as host.

The Chair acknowledged that changes in the OFSTED framework had resulted in lower ratings for some previously outstanding schools. The Director agreed but stressed the importance of reputation management and league table position in attracting the best candidates to work in Thurrock. The Corporate Director had been working with the Head of Communications on a strategy to manage reputation and change perceptions. Members agreed to take a report on this to the April meeting.

The Schools Forum representative felt that members should view strong leadership as a package and include the school governing bodies.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the progress made in respect of Primary School Standards be noted and officers be recommended to consider the following:**
  - 1.1 The refreshed Children and Young people's Plan maintains the priority and support to ensure that primary school standards improve and reach national averages within two years.**
  - 1.2 Support for key schools be continued and further increased.**
  - 1.3 A Strategy to ensure Quality First Teaching be developed, to improve outcomes for all children.**
  - 1.4 Strengthening leadership and governance remain priority areas of activity.**

## **35. REVIEW AND REFRESH, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN (CYPP) 2010 - 2013**

The Corporate Director presented this report, which sought to consult members on the review and refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan 2010–2013. As there had been some progress since the publication of the agenda, the Chair agreed to the submission of tabled, updated appendices. Members noted that these documents had been to Directors' Board and the revisions had followed further analysis and adjustment to targets. Each plan could be drilled down into service and team plans and individual PDR's; all of which would be available on the Children and Partners website by the end of March.

In respect of Academies and the impact on LA funding, the Director stressed it was essential that all partners work together to build a culture of shared responsibilities.

In response to questions about the possible stigma attached to claiming free school meals, members noted that many schools managed this with great sensitivity. However, it was in their best interests to do so, as there is an impact on funding if full entitlement is not taken up.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the review of year 1 of the CYPP 2010 – 13 be confirmed, with any amendments to be fed back to the**

**Corporate Director, Children, Education and Families by 1 March 2011.**

- 2. That the proposed priority aims and objectives for 2011/12 be confirmed, with any amendments to be fed back to the Corporate Director, Children, Education and Families by 1 March 2011.**
- 3. That the tremendous achievements of all partners be noted and their firm commitment to achieving excellence for the Children and young people of Thurrock.**

### **36. PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT**

Mr Taylor delivered this presentation, which detailed the Unit's journey out of special measures. *A copy of Mr Taylor's slides can be viewed at Appendix A to these minutes.*

Members were pleased to note that the last HMI Monitoring Visit (25 January 2011) had recognised significant improvement in the Local Authority's response to Leadership and Management issues.

In responding to questions, the officer advised that children educated at home are visited regularly. There was some discussion about the importance of recognising problems early and engaging the Educational Welfare and Educational Psychology services. Members noted how the majority of problems at secondary school age occur at times of crises, often connected to crime, gangs and substance abuse.

Members were concerned that those pupils living in Tilbury have to catch a bus at 7.15 am to travel to the Unit at South Ockendon. The Officer explained that the issue of transport, in the current financial climate, was challenging but felt that routine was essential in giving the pupils a structure (along with break times and lunchtimes). This expectation and behaviour would promote a positive attitude back into mainstream schooling.

Members noted that there had recently been 2 re-integrations to mainstream schools. However, the Secondary PRU was different due to the range of alternative packages available and therefore, pupils would be less likely to return to mainstream secondary schools. In respect of Academies, the officer advised that the Local Authority would be able to charge for the PRU, as a service, but permanent exclusions would remain the responsibility of the Local Authority.

Members had recently visited the PRU and were advised that the ICT equipment was being refurbished. They had been disappointed to note that the hair dressing training salon had been closed due to lack of funding. Members suggested that this could be remedied through partnerships with local businesses and the college.

At 9.20pm, members agreed to suspend standing orders in order to finish the business on the agenda

### **37. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members agreed to the following amendments to the workplan:

- A further report on Primary School Improvement, after the KS2 results in the autumn.
- A report on the closure of Grays Magistrates Court (and its impact on youth offending) in September and then at twice yearly intervals. Members noted that the Leader had lobbied Ministers to seek a reconsideration of the decision to close the Court.
- Defer the Performance Report in April to post election.
- Take a report on Health Funding to April and report on Communications and Reputation Management.

**The meeting finished at 9.40 pm.**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIRMAN**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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or alternatively e-mail [jmayer@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:jmayer@thurrock.gov.uk)**