

DRAFT MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 July 2011 at 7.00pm.

- Present:** Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Wendy Curtis (Substituting for Cathy Kent), Diana Hale, Mark Coxshall, Danny Nicklen (Substituting for Cllr M Revell)
- Additional Members:** Mr S Cray – Parent/Governor Representative
Mr A McPherson – Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs P Wilson – RC Church Representative
- Apologies:** Cllr Mike Revell, Cathy Kent and Sue MacPherson
Rev D Rollins – Church of England Representative
- In attendance:** Councillor Oliver Gerrish – Portfolio Holder for Education
Councillor Barbara Rice - Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and Health
Mr C Stewart – Head of Service
Ms B Foster – Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes
Ms C Littleton – Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes
Ms L Magill – Head of Public Protection
Ms E Sheridan – Electoral Services Manager
Ms Lee Eggleston OBE - SERICC
Ms Sheila Coates MBE - SERICC
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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Revell, Sue MacPherson and Cathy Kent plus Reverend D Rollins.

2. ADDITIONAL ITEMS

No additional items were received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

Councillor Gaywood declared a personal interest as she has children attending Arthur Bugler Junior School, St. Clere's School. She is a Governor at Arthur Bugler Infant School; she has a disabled son in receipt of special care and is the Chair of the East Tilbury and St. Clere's Schools Collaboration Group. She is an SEN Parent Governor at St. Clere's School and a stakeholder member of Thurrock CVS. She

is a member of the Corporate Parenting Group and a parent member of Thurrock Family Voice.

Councillor Hale declared a personal interest as a member of the Corporation of South Essex College and Vice Chair of Thurrock CVS

Councillor Barbara Rice declared a personal interest as she has grandchildren attending Grays Convent and Holy Cross Primary School.

Councillor Wendy Curtis declared a personal interest as she has grandchildren attending Bulphan Primary School.

Mr S Cray declared a personal interest as he is a Parent Governor at St Clere's. He has a child attending St Clere's School and is a member of the East Tilbury School Collaboration Committee.

Mr A McPherson declared a personal interest as he is a Parent Governor at Aveley Primary.

Mrs P Wilson declared a personal interest as the Chair of Governors at St Thomas's Primary.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 28 April 2011, were approved as a correct record.

5. CHILDREN'S CENTRES CONSULTATION

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes presented this report, which updated members of Overview and Scrutiny on the consultation on changes to Children's Centre delivery across Thurrock. A range of options had previously been presented to Cabinet and a statutory period of consultation is now underway.

Members of the Committee questioned the remit of the consultation, including the effect on Oaktree Resource Centre. Officers confirmed that Oaktree was not part of the consultation as this was part of the Looked After Children Service.

Representatives from SERICC were keen to ensure that the views of their service users were included in the consultation on Children's Centres. Officers assured SERICC they would action this request.

Members of the Committee were keen to ensure that the results and outcomes were influenced by areas of most need and were reassured that the Early Intervention Strategy would help determine this.

RESOLVED

- 1) That members consider and advise on options as a key part of the consultation; and**
- 2) That members promote the consultation and**
- 3) That a task and finish group is established and a meeting planned for August to make recommendations to Cabinet in October, when the responses to the consultation will have been received.**

6. STRATEGY TO COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes presented this report, which informed members of Overview and Scrutiny of the National Action Plan to end violence against women and girls and the aims of local work. The report is a synopsis of the National Action Plan and Professor Kelly has been commissioned to draw up a local strategy for Thurrock. Work will commence in September 2011. The Head of Public Protection reported that there was a strong awareness of the importance of cross council and partnership working in the development of a local strategy.

SERICC commented that they welcomed the strategy and reported that Government Ministers want to visit Thurrock to view the work being undertaken. SERICC requested that they are an equal partner in the work on the strategy and volunteered assistance due to their experience in working in this area.

Members of the Committee commented that there was a need for the Action Plan to be sectioned into manageable areas with a clear lead on responsibility for each area.

Members also questioned how Professor Kelly was being funded. Officers confirmed that there is no cost to Thurrock as this is grant funded. Officers further confirmed that the Action Plan is ongoing and Professor Kelly will provide a gap analysis and bring existing work together into an agreed document.

Members of the Committee agreed that the strategy was welcome and looked forward to the Action Plan.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

7. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Head of Policy and Performance presented this report which updated members of Overview and Scrutiny on plans to improve the quality of asset management planning support to schools and to clarify respective roles and responsibilities between the Council and schools for asset management and maintenance.

The provision of asset management plans for schools was identified as a priority for improvement and the head of Policy and Performance confirmed that the existing system would be overhauled and a radical approach implemented going forward. Taking into account the James Review a changed approach to asset management was required and Thurrock will move away from a cyclical approach.

Officers confirmed that each survey is undertaken by an external surveyor and the local authority then has to liaise with the school to determine the accuracy. Members of the committee questioned the responsibility and duty of academies in asset management. Officers confirmed that the Academy is required to have an asset management plan but they will fund the work.

Members of the Committee were pleased to note that the strategy will require up to date plans of each school to be produced and assessment of the conditions. Members also noted that there was a threshold applicable to schools. Projects above this threshold would be the responsibility of the Local Authority. The threshold was a combination of factors including the schools budget. In response to a query from Mr Cray, Mr Stewart confirmed that these thresholds also apply to schools which acquire Trust status.

RESOLVED

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the proposed improvements in the Asset Management Service to schools.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussed the Work Programme at length and a revised programme will be produced to inform members at the next meeting.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Elaine Sheridan, telephone (01375) 652580,
or alternatively e-mail esheridan@thurrock.gov.uk**

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