

DRAFT MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 October 2011 at 7.00pm.

- Present:** Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Mike Revell, Cathy Kent, Diana Hale, Mark Coxshall, Danny Nicklen (Substituting for Cllr S MacPherson)
- Additional Members:** Mr S Cray – Parent/Governor Representative
Mrs P Wilson – RC Church Representative
- Apologies:** Rev D Rollins – Church of England Representative
Mr A McPherson – Parent/Governor Representative
- In attendance:** Councillor Oliver Gerrish – Portfolio Holder for Education
Councillor Barbara Rice - Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and Health
Ms B Foster – Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes
Ms C Littleton–Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes
Mr M Taylor – Strategic Lead, Learner Support
Ms S Green - Strategic Lead, Early Years, Families & Communities
Ms C Pumfrey – Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills
Ms J Clark – Strategic Resources Manager
Mr R Harris – Adult Services
Ms E Sheridan – Electoral & Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue MacPherson, plus Reverend D Rollins and Mr A McPherson.

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. She is a parent member of Workstream Forum.

Councillor Cathy Kent declared a personal interest as she has children attending St Thomas Primary School, Grays Convent School and Grays Media & Arts School. She is a Parent Governor at Grays Convent 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.

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

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 5 July 2011, were approved as a correct record.

5. CHILDREN'S CENTRES

The Chair of the Committee introduced this item and introduced the rationale for the Task and Finish Group to investigate moving from a universal service to a more targeted service. Members of the committee were directed to the relevant funding details, capital costs and clawback information on page 41 of the agenda. The second meeting of the Group reviewed the consultation feedback, footfall in the centres and discussed the various models.

A list of Children's Centres and the services they provided were tabled at the meeting.

Councillors Diana Hale and Mark Coxshall outlined their findings from the Task and Finish Group. The Committee heard about the visits to the Centres at Stanford, Aveley, East Tilbury, Ockendon, Purfleet and West Thurrock and the mix of provisions available at each centre and the positive and negative aspects of the Centres. In particular the ownership of the buildings was discussed and how a tenancy as opposed to ownership may influence the quality of service provision. Members agreed that clarity of service agreements maybe required to rectify issues at such Centres.

Members questioned the service provision and the provider. The Strategic Lead, Early Years, Families & Communities outlined the provision in place and the services offered by health and other providers.

Members also questioned the provision of paid for activities and how parents coped if they were unable to pay. The Committee heard that if the child was referred to the activity by the Council then funding was provided. The Committee agreed that this would need adequate budgeting and publication.

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes cautioned the need to not build up expectations too early as many of the Centres were awaiting the outcome of the findings of the Consultation.

Model A was discussed and members of the Committee heard that this represented the delivery of services from a main hub or satellites. The recommendations in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Early Offer of Help Strategy is developed to provide support through Children's Centres including to ensure some universal services are retained to support access to targeted services in a non-stigmatising way but to note not all of these will be funded by the Local Authority Early Intervention Grant.**
- 2) That Model A is agreed to support the delivery and resourcing of the Early Offer of help Strategy, borough wide, including**

2.2.1 Agreement for the following Centres to be run by the local authority:

- **Tilbury**
- **Thameside**
- **Aveley**
- **Ockendon**
- **Stanford**

2.2.2 Agreement for service delivery in the following Centres to be commissioned out:

- **Chadwell**
- **West Thurrock (to cover delivery across West Thurrock & South Stifford ward)**
- **Chafford Hundred**
- **East Tilbury**

2.3 Recommendation three: That the following Centres are changed to early education and childcare/information delivery only (subject to zero capital claw-back agreement from Department for Education):

- **South Stifford**
- **Abbots Hall**
- **Horndon**
- **Purfleet**

2.4 Recommendation four: That alternative use is agreed for the following Centres:

- **Little Thurrock (Deneholm)- early education or schools development**
- **Grays Thurrock (Quarry Hill) – school development**

2.5 That members note that the maximum capital claw-back is £300,000 but that officers will negotiate with the Department for Education with the aim of reducing / removing this cost.

6. REPORT ON THE MUNRO REVIEW OF CHILD PROTECTION

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes presented this report, which informed members of the Government's latest recommendation on Child Protection and Early Help.

The report was outlined in detail to the Committee and Members heard an evaluation of Thurrock in respect of Professor Munro's recommendations. The Committee heard that there is a very strong Workforce Development Team in Thurrock which brings in funds from grants and a strong framework of training and planning. The Social Work team was discussed and members hear that there is a good team with an increased number of staff being retained. There is also a strong team of data interpreters who are able to analyse the data and interpret the needs of the local area.

The Committee heard that an inspection will be carried out before the end of May 2012 and will be based on the old style inspection. However, the authority will also be scrutinised to determine the readiness to implement Professor Munro's findings.

Members of the Committee queried the availability of additional funding. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes clarified that this will need to be implemented within existing resources but £30,000 had been received for staff training.

Members of the Committee asked for clarity on the reasons for providing early help as outlined in paragraph 3.2 of the report. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes [explained this is central to Professor Munro's report and other national reports on child poverty and early childhood. The argument is that investment in dealing with initial problems as they present is more effective than waiting until peoples problems worsen and cost much more to try to solve.](#)

Members questioned the number of interventions and how many children were looked after per social worker. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes clarified that on average this was 20, at any one time by each social worker. Members further questioned the number of social workers within Thurrock and heard that there was 124 children social workers. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes agreed to provide a Summary Sheet outlining the relevant information to members.

RESOLVED

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

7. BUDGET

The Strategic Resources Manager presented this report which advised members of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny of growth proposals for Children's Services which had been endorsed through the 2011 Star Chamber process. The Star Chamber process was clarified for the benefit of Co-opted Members of the Committee. Two of the growth proposals related to statutory functions. Each of the four growth proposals was discussed in turn.

Growth Proposal CEF 1G/ CATO

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes outlined this growth proposal in relation to the report of Professor Munro on Child Protection. Members heard that by July 2012 every local authority must have a new Principal Child and Family Worker in post. The growth proposal is in response to this requirement.

Growth Proposal CEF 2G/CATO

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes outlined this growth proposal. Members heard that a Government proposal will intend that all young people on remand in secure accommodation will acquire Looked After status. This would mean that the full costs of their custody placement will be met by the Local Authority. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes outlined the projected costs of the change in ruling based on historical data from 2010/11. The change in funding will mean a projected increase in costs from £8k to £160k.

Members asked for clarification as to when a child would acquire Looked After status and were informed that this would occur when they were remanded or sentenced. They were further informed that social workers considered all options to keep a child out of custody or to release them from custody when appropriate.

The Committee heard that this had been recommended in a Government Green Paper and is [considered in anticipation](#) a certainty for implementation in April 2012.

Members asked that this item be discussed in April 2012 alongside the Youth Offending Service item already on the work programme.

Growth Proposal CEF 3G/LUO

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes introduced this item. Members heard that funding had been requested to provide a targeted programme of support for school improvement.

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills gave an example of support for schools and what the funding would enable. An example was given of mentor colleagues working in classrooms and modelling teaching and learning. The funding would look to facilitate employment of advisory teachers for early years and key stage 1. Lansdowne Primary and East Tilbury Primary schools were listed as examples of schools that had made significant improvement through such programmes.

Members heard that having substantive heads in post had allowed a significant improvement in attainment in primary schools.

Members of the Committee also heard that Academies were keen to work with the local authority to support school improvement and are examining whether to enter into trading agreements with the Local Authority.

Growth Proposal CEF 4G/LUO

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes introduced this item on Alternative Education Provision. Members heard that the Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide education for any child or young person who is unable to take up their statutory right to education in school. Historically Thurrock has not provided a strong offer in this area and an Ombudsman report out this week has reported that bespoke packages can be very desirable as part of the continuum of possible offers of education.. The growth budget item was proposed to address the performance and the outcomes of the Ombudsman report. Members heard that packages such as Online Tuition at home and [specialist programmes](#) would be [further](#) explored. Members also heard that this item targeted a very small number of children but those who were very vulnerable.

The Committee welcomed the growth item and the Chair outlined that she had visited the Pupil Referral Unit and seen some of the specialist packages on offer.

Members questioned the performance of the Pupil Referral Unit and heard that although currently in special measures it has been making satisfactory progress in recent OFSTED monitoring visits.

Members queried the situation of funding when an Academy permanently excludes a pupil and subsequent referral to the PRU. Members heard that the Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide education and that there are mechanisms available to reclaim the Age Weighted Pupil Unit funding and any additional Special Educational Needs funding from schools and academies where pupils are excluded.

Members of the Committee requested a copy of the Ombudsmen report to be circulated.

RESOLVED

That members explore the proposals, test the underlying assumptions and make recommendations to portfolio holders and cabinet.

8. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Strategic Lead for Learner Support presented this report which advised members of the Committee on the development of a Special Education Needs Strategy following the publication of the Government Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education needs and disability.

The Strategic Lead for Learner Support outlined a series of key developments in line with the themes in the Green Paper and a framework for further review and development of special educational needs support.

The key themes in the report were outlined in detail and in particular the Services working together for families were discussed with the Head of Strategic Commissioning and Resources. Members heard that part of the new People Services Directorate remit was a recognition that transition services were very important and the need to address the funding concerns during the transition period.

Members of the committee questioned the role of the Parent School Partnership and how this was to be expanded. Members heard that individual voluntary workers would support the Partnership but it was not clear from the Green Paper what the model would look like.

The Chair indicated that she was pleased to hear of the increase in specialist mainstream places and questioned whether the provision would be up to 25 and include outreach. Members heard that it was early days to know how mainstream provision would work but there would be close liaison and links between programs.

The Chair also questioned the key changes in personalised budgets and whether the key offer of services would include statutory services as a basic with other services on top. Members heard that the current understanding is that there will be a local offer setting out a range of options but there will not be an unlimited budget offer from the local authority. Parents will still be able to challenge the decisions resulting from this process through the Tribunal Process.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) That members endorse the intention of the Local Authority to develop its strategic framework or the support of children and young people in line with the 5 key themes of the Green Paper including the development of new unified systems of assessment and access to resources, and reviews its current services and facilities to ensure that they are best suited to meet the needs of the local population.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was discussed in detail and members confirmed a previous request that the work programme be cross reference to the Childrens and Young People Plan. Officers agreed to address this issue. The following items were note:-

Admissions – this item was not discussed at the last Admissions Forum. The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes agreed to discuss with the Chair of the Admissions Forum and seek clarity.

Violence Against Women’s Strategy – the local strategy has not yet commenced due to Professor Liz Kelly’s illness and the finish will be delayed. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes agreed to notify SERICC of the reason for the delay. The item will be moved to the February agenda.

CAMHS – it was agreed this item would be discussed at the December meeting and an invitation would be given to a Commissioning Manager from the PCT and a Commissioning Manager from Children’s Services.

Special Educational Needs – this item would move to the February agenda.

Standards Early Years, Primary and Secondary – national data would be available in October 22nd and will be circulated.

Alternative Models of Delivery and Early Intervention Strategy – still scheduled for December agenda.

Officers agreed to arrange a visit to the primary Pupil Referral Unit and a follow up visit to the secondary Pupil Referral Unit.

10. RESOLVED that the committee decided to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of Item 11.

11. PROGRESS REPORT ON OFSTED OUTCOMES AND SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills presented this report and outlined that the current Ofsted framework would be replaced in January 2012.

Members of the Committee were presented with an outline of the key data and results for schools and discussed the findings.

Members requested and officers agreed to provide benchmarking information in relation to the national averages and relevant neighbouring authorities.

The Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills agreed with the Chair the need to develop and utilise the skills of shared Governors.

The recommendations as listed in the report were agreed.

The meeting finished at 9.30 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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