

DRAFT MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2011 at 7.00pm.

- Present:** Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Mike Revell, Cathy Kent, Diana Hale, Mark Coxshall,
- Additional Members:** Mr S Cray – Parent/Governor Representative
Rev D Rollins – Church of England Representative
Mr A McPherson – Parent/Governor Representative
- Apologies:** Mrs P Wilson – RC Church Representative Councillor
Barbara Rice - Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and Health
- In attendance:** Councillor Oliver Gerrish – Portfolio Holder for Education
Ms B Foster – Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes
Ms C Littleton–Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes
Ms C Pumfrey – Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills
Mr N Stacey – Strategic Leader for Joint Commissioning
Mr J Waud – Youth Offending Service Manager
Mr R Harris – Head of Commissioning
Ms E Sheridan – Electoral & Democratic Services
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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Pat Wilson and the Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and Health, Cllr Barbara Rice, plus Councillor Wendy Curtis.

2. ADDITIONAL ITEMS

The Chair agreed to receive an additional item of urgent business with regard to the Budget proposals. This item was discussed before Item 4.

LUO – Pyramid Scheme, Proposal Number – CHSS2

Members asked for confirmation that the Pyramid Scheme would not close if trading funding is not found.

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes outlined that the proposal had been rewritten to clarify the situation. The current vacancy remains unfilled and it is not a closure of the scheme.

The revised proposal was agreed.

LUO-CHSS7 – Early Years

The proposal has been completed with the appropriate budget figures. The revised proposal was agreed.

Admissions/Assets – CHSS10

The proposal has been completed with the budget figures and the use of acronyms within the proposal explained.

PPS – Policy, Performance and Support

LUO – Learning and Universal Outcomes

DSG – Direct Schools Grant

The revised proposal was agreed.

LUO-CHSS11 – One Stop Shop

The original proposal was written in September and it has now been revised to reflect the current position.

There will be a £55K saving on building maintenance/property costs and a £30K saving from increased renting out to third parties of floor space in the building.

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes outlined that they cannot be specific at this moment as rental contracts have not been signed but assured members that the proposed users will be compatible with existing users. Members also noted that the £30k saving is still secure should the rental scheme not progress.

CHSG4- YOS Changes of Responsibility

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes outlined the developments regarding this budget item in relation to members questions about the need for certainty.

Members noted that the situation has progressed but is now even more complicated. There is no further national information or guidance on remand costs but they have sought information from other Local Authorities including Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Peterborough. No clarity on the situation has been achieved.

Members noted that there has been a decision to maintain the Youth Justice Board. Further information is still unclear but the Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes wished to bring the situation to Member's attention. The Youth Justice Board intend to decrease the grant to every service by between 2% and 19% (£7,300-£69,000 for Thurrock). In the year following they have proposed four potential formulas, each of which will result in an increase for Thurrock.

The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes proposed that due to the number of unknown variables at present, the requested amount is held in the Council's reserve fund and if required, a business case would be made by the service to apply for the funds.

Members noted that a business case will be required to provide an internal audit trail. Other services will not be able to bid against the funds held in reserve for this service.

Members asked for clarification on the timescales and indicators on the government proposals in Breaking the Cycle. The Head of Care and Targeted Outcomes responded that they had not been able to determine timescales at present.

Members clarified the request was for contingency or reserve. Members agreed that £160,555 be placed in reserve.

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 Gaywood further declared a personal interest in Item 6 in that she has a child who has used the service.

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.

Mr A McPherson declared a personal interest as he has a child attending Aveley Primary School and is a Parent Governor at Aveley Primary School.

Reverend D Rollins declared a personal interest as he is a Governor at Corringham 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 11 October 2011, were approved as a correct record subject to amendments by the Chair as follows

Item 5, third paragraph, first sentence to be amended to read:

Councillors Diana Hale and Mark Coxshall outlined their findings from visits to Children's Centres across the borough from the Task and Finish Group.

Item 7, Growth Proposal CEF 4G/LUO, second paragraph to be amended to read:

The Committee welcomed the growth item and the Chair outlined that along with a number of Committee Members, she had visited the Pupil Referral Unit and welcomed the additional support that was much needed.

Item 7, Growth Proposal CEF 4G/LUO, fifth paragraph to be amended to read:

Members of the Committee requested a copy of the Ofsted Monitoring visit and action plan report to be circulated.

5. EARLY OFFER OF HELP STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes introduced this update report on the significant work undertaken towards the development of an Early Offer of Help Strategy.

Members noted that a project board has been established to track progress against the project plan aligned to the Children's Plan. There is a strong emphasis on multi agency working and identifying resources. The future timeline was noted and members further noted a Stakeholder Workshop to be held on 16 December 2011, with the draft strategy due for completion early January 2012. Commissioning of contracts for delivery will take place between March and September 2012 with implementation in January 2013. The Strategy is scheduled to be received at the March 2012 meeting of Cabinet and the Committee requested that they receive a copy of the Early Offer of Help Strategy prior to the Cabinet Meeting.

RESOLVED

- 1) That members note the progress made on the development of the strategy.**

6. CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: PATTERN OF CURRENT SERVICE DELIVERY AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH THE BEST IN CLASS. OPTIONS TO STRENGTHEN PROVISION ACROSS ALL TIERS/NEED GROUPS

The Strategic Leader for Children's Joint Commissioning Unit presented this report which advised members on the pattern of current provision, comparative analysis with provision elsewhere and future planning for 2012/13.

Members heard that the Thurrock CAMHS offer across the tiers of need is comprehensive but embraces the entire spectrum of needs of children. Useful comparison with other Local Authorities has proved difficult as there is little reliable and consistent data. The Tier 3 offer is a core offer but the other Tiers all have local variations.

The Strategic Leader for Children's Joint Commissioning Unit explained the recommendations contained within the report in depth.

Members questioned the issues raised regarding comparison of data and the limitations of self assessment. Officers responded that regular meetings are held with Essex and Southend and enable each Local Authority to compare and contrast their offerings.

Members questioned the commissioning undertaken by schools and identified the increasing number of Academies and how this would affect the service in the future. Officers identified that discussions have taken place with schools but that they are able to purchase services independently. The Strategic Leader for Children's Joint Commissioning Unit identified that they are aware of the service provision within the market and the need to sell their services.

Members queried and officers explained the reference in paragraph 3.4 which states the commissioning of the service will transfer to the 'home' PCT in South Essex.

The Chair of the Committee queried if overview and accountability will sit with the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Head of Commissioning confirmed that the NHS Commissioning Board will be accountable overall. The local partnership arrangement will sit with the health and Wellbeing Board.

Members noted that the current commissioned services are all operating at full capacity and asked officers how they will cope with increased demand for the services. The Strategic Leader for Children's Joint Commissioning Unit confirmed the service is not able to meet all the needs through commissioned services but Universal Services through Children's Centres and Targeted Services pick up on additional needs.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Committee notes and endorses the Early Offer of Help Project as the major strategic and operational vehicle for the transition and improvement of early intervention services which incorporates non-clinical CAMHS services.**
- 2) Committee also notes and endorses the re-specification of the former Primary Mental Health Team to the Thurrock Targeted Therapeutic Service.**
- 3) Committee recognises the difficulty of reliably comparing service provision with other local authorities, recognising the ongoing self assessment and needs analysis activity which is providing better intelligence about needs and service provision in Thurrock.**
- 4) Committee notes that the Tier 3 CAMHS service has a new service specification which has a more explicit outcome focus. The national imperative for clinical CAMHS services to demonstrate the effectiveness of their interventions is gaining momentum.**

7. ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODELS – ‘MOVING FORWARD’

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes presented this report which was brought to update members on the progress of work towards the development of alternative delivery models through the identification of a suitable legal structure.

In January 2011, Cabinet approved the establishment of an Alternative Delivery project group with the remit to explore different options.

Members noted that the appendices outlined the four different models

- a) Unincorporated association
- b) Co-operative / mutual
- c) Social Enterprise
- d) Charitable Trust

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes reported to the Committee that models a) and b) were not recommended to be explored further but they wished to seek permission from the Committee to further explore models c) and d). Members queried why models a) and b) had been discounted and The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes clarified that both option a) and b) did not lock in the assets and they wanted to avoid the risk of losing a considerable amount of assets.

Members queried the delivery of the Grangewaters site and asked whether the assets of the property had been valued. The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes responded that the property would be on a lease to one of the favoured models. Members commented that assets should be valued on a regular basis.

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes was asked and responded that they are reviewing existing successful operating examples and are in contact with authorities operating these models. This will be incorporated within the next stage of work.

Members queried the operating funds of the Grangewaters site and if it was running at a loss. The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes clarified that Grangewaters is largely funded from generating income from service users and is run at cost, apart from back office support. Members were interested in the costs involved and the Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes agreed to provide more detail on the budget provision for Grangewater site. Members requested that a visit to the Grangewater site be arranged in conjunction with the PRU visit when scheduled. Cllr Mike Revell requested that officers provide an income and expenditure account for the Centre.

RESOLVED

That members note the progress made and the continuing development of this project.

8. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE FUNCTION AND PERFORMANCE

The Service Manager for the Youth Offending Service and Targeted Youth Support and Connexions presented this report which updated members of the committee on the Youth Offending Service, its current performance and funding arrangements.

The structure and staffing of the Youth Offending Service was outlined and members noted the successes achieved by the Service on a relatively low budget and noted that this was attributed to the retention of high quality staff.

The Service Manager reported the success of the Triage scheme and members noted that the scheme had been introduced at zero cost due to the diligence of the staff.

Members queried the figures presented in the report for Custodial Sentences as opposed to the figures represented in the budget submission. Members noted that the numbers are not the same and are referenced to different children/offences.

Members of the committee also queried if the funding cut was pro-rata, how funding was allocated and was it based on previous years?

The Service Manager responded that funding was based on a complicated formula which took into account many factors including deprivation and number of children but was based on figures from 2005. The Service Manager confirmed that they made representations regarding the funding provision every year to the Ministry of Justice as they believe, due to the increasing number of children in Thurrock, that Thurrock is not fairly funded.

Members queried that Officers had previously mentioned that although there would be a change in the formula in future Thurrock would still gain from the formula change, whichever formula (4 formulas have been proposed) is implemented. The Service Manager confirmed that there is a gain to be made but this will be offset against the reduction this year.

A member of the committee outlined their surprise that there had been no submission on the consultation to shut Grays Court. Several members and officers responded that several submissions had been made. Members queried if the building (Grays Court) was a council asset and the Service Manager confirmed that it was on a 999 year lease to HM Courts who had yet to hand this back.

Members made reference to the Diversity figures and were pleased to note that the BME population were not over represented in the offending population and despite the increasing numbers of BME population in Thurrock crime was not increasing in this sector.

Members asked what pro-active work was undertaken in schools to promote non-offending. The Service Manager responded outlining a Mentoring Scheme run in conjunction with Victim Support. The scheme had been taken into schools and offenders had presented their experiences of being an offender, to school children who had been identified at high risk of committing an offence and also met with them on a one-to-one basis. Headteachers were very supportive of the scheme and it was noted that it had a great impact. Officers were requested by the Committee to look at running the scheme again.

A member of the Committee queried the categories used to identify young people who are least well equipped to find jobs. The Service Manager outlined the categories and members noted factors such as low attainment at school, chaotic family background and a criminal background were such risk factors. Members then asked Officers how they identify children at risk before they reach the stage of having a criminal background. The Service Manager outlined that this was covered by the Youth Inclusion and Support Programme.

The Chair of the Committee asked about NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and the Service Manager confirmed that referrals were also received sometimes from MAGs (Multi Agency Group) and reflected on concerns that young people in Thurrock may miss out on new opportunities and become users of resource rather than contributors.

A Member of the Committee outlined that the approach to identifying young people did not appear to be a joined up, overall programme showing a determined effort to identify young children at risk of offending. The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes outlined that the case may not have been expressed strongly but that this was not the case and gave the Primary PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) as an example of how Officers identified ways of working together to help children from an early age.

The Chair asked for a vote of thanks from the Committee to be formally recorded for the excellent work of the Youth Offending Service.

RESOLVED

This report was requested by the Committee and was for information only

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was discussed in detail and members confirmed a previous request that the work programme be cross referenced to the Children's and Young People Plan. Officers agreed that this was in progress and could be addressed for the current plan. Members were disappointed that this had not yet been actioned.

The Chair requested that the Outcome column within the programme be completed for all items and members noted the request for an additional column detailing if the item had been brought to the Committee by Officers or Members. This would assist in determining if the item is statutory or for information.

The following items were noted and the work programme will be updated for circulation with the next agenda:-

Early Offer of Help– Agenda item for 15 March 2012

Violence Against Women's Strategy – members confirmed that they had not yet been contacted by Professor Kelly. This item was moved from the February meeting to 15 March 2012.

SEN – agreed to bring back an advice note but communicate with Chair as to the issues within advice note and whether it warrants an agenda item.

Task and finish Group to be reconvened to consider results from Green Paper – moved to May 2012 onwards

Standards Early Years, Primary and Secondary – amended to read briefing note to be circulated in January 2012.

Schools OFSTED gradings – Cllr D Hale requested a copy of the school Tiers before the February committee meeting.

Alternative Models of Delivery – Agenda item for next work programme after Election.

Youth Offending Service – inspection on YOS in January 2012. Briefing note to March 2012 meeting.

PRU and Alternative Provision – visit by Committee members to be co-ordinated by Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes, requested time between January and March.

Admissions

The Admissions Forum met last week and Cllr C Kent briefed members of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on issues raised by the Head of St Cleres and the Head of the Convent School regarding children with no catchment school. There was confusion on the progress made by Colin Stewart and the Admissions Forum and a request for a piece of work to be undertaken co-ordinated by Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

The Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes responded that officers are aware of issues and welcome the opportunity to undertake this piece of work and recommended a Task and Finish Group planned for March 2012.

Members requested detail from the Admissions Forum regarding the precise problems and feedback from Admissions Independent Panel Members.

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 exempt report and outlined the progress made in relation to the Governance Strategy and the impact of school improvement activity related to school governance.

Members noted that the appointment of the Government Development Officer had been delayed due to an HR issue but was still progressing and should be in post by January 2012.

The Governor Training Programme was discussed and the take up by schools, by Tiers, was discussed. Members were pleased to note the review of charging which has led to a small charge to Tier 4 schools of £25 per training event but no charge to schools in Tiers 1,2 and 3.

The Governors on the Committee were asked about their experiences of training and responded positively and were complimentary about the Conference. Members noted that in the past, sessions had been cancelled if there was a low number of attendees but this has now been reviewed and training will be honoured even if numbers are low. In some instances, training takes place at the school if numbers are low. Issues were raised by members who outlined that some Governors had trouble receiving information and the Strategic Lead for School Improvement, Learning and Skills promised to take action regarding this, including writing to clerks requesting updated information.

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
Elaine Sheridan, telephone (01375) 652580,
or alternatively e-mail esh Sheridan@thurrock.gov.uk**