

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

6 September 2007 at 6 p.m.

Panel Members present

E. Hughes (Chair)
E.E. Pitt (Vice Chair)
Bird,
Cassidy,
Khan,
Martin,
Micklewright,
Barton

Non-Elected Voting Members

D. Harborne-Smith
E. Chawira

Parent Governor Representative
Parent Governor Representative

Non-Elected Non-voting Members

B. Grainger
D. Jones

Secondary School Teacher
Representative
Primary School Teacher
Representative

Officers present

Louise Hughes
Karen Adderley
Bill Henwood
Tom McNeil
Melanie Harmitt
Helen Dudson
Sue Wedgewood

Assistant Director
Children's Universal Services
Head of Partnership Support and
Development
Major Projects Manager
Interim Assistant Director
Procurement
Head of Finance for
Children & Young People
Corporate Performance and
Scrutiny Manager
Education Walsall

11/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Chambers and Ahmed.

12/07 SUBSTITUTIONS

The following substitution to the panel was submitted for the duration of the meeting: -

- Delete: Councillor Chambers
- Substitute: Councillor Barton

13/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

14/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2007, copies having previously been circulated, are approved as a true and accurate record.

15/07 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The panel noted the training opportunities as previously circulated.

16/07 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 9 August 2007, having been previously circulated was reviewed.

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

17/07 Presentation on JAR (Joint Area Review)

Bill Henwood provided the panel with a presentation that outlined the JAR process. Copies of the presentation were provided to those present (annexed).

During the course of the presentation the project management of the preparations for the JAR were reviewed together with the time scale for completion. The good partnership working with Education Walsall, the tPCT and other partners was recognised.

Members commented positively regarding the process and the way it appeared to address the findings of Lord Laming's report. There was also consensus that the learning from the JAR should, recognising that children services were already 'good' having scored a 3 during the most recent assessment, only secure better outcomes for children.

18/07 Council motion on Youth Service (23rd April 2007)

Louise Hughes presented the report that had previously been circulated that outlined the requirements of Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act and the action that was being taken to meet them. The report was in response to a motion at Council requesting that scrutiny consider the duty under section 6 and investigate the provision for positive activities for different age groups.

Whilst recognising the positive actions that were in place members were keen to ensure that all available funds for the service were utilised in the fullest and in a way that addresses the needs of the borough. Concerns were expressed regarding the availability of activities for children and young people across the borough and whether the activities being provided were what children and young people wanted. The panel expressed the view that it was important to know when, where and how young people wanted to access activities and that they were fairly distributed across the borough and

completely accessible to all potential user groups. Also the panel recognised the need to consider strategic issues that may impact on the delivery of activities.

During discussion relating to the types of activities offered or desired it was agreed that it was important to build on current successes e.g. number of young people helping ready, steady, summer programme and positive impact such activities have on general development of those involved. All agreed that the service needs to tap in to this resource and utilise this as well as increase provision. It was agreed that the need to, on occasion, focus on anti-social behaviour issues meant there was a risk of losing sight of the majority of children and young people who make a positive contribution and engaging in activities regularly regardless of funding.

Members agreed that it was important to encourage young people to live in harmony with their neighbours and society in general and that it was important to provide enough provision for young children so to break patterns of behaviour between siblings. It was felt surveying school staff may provide an opportunity to learn from what they felt was successful and that it was important to work with schools and other partners. Sue Wedgewood expressed the total support of Education Walsall for the actions detailed within the next steps section of the report.

Resolved

The panel approved the recommendations contained within the report. Given there was already 2 active working groups, progression regarding the next steps outlined within the report will be reported back to the safeguarding children working group following completion of their work on the JAR. This is estimated to be in December.

A report is to be prepared for Council to update them on the work completed and the plan to do a more detailed consideration of the actions being taken so Council can be provided with a full response. This report will present the report received at this meeting as an update. The report will also explain that the original time scale for responding suggested in the motion to Council cannot be met and the reasons why.

19/07 School Standards Summary Table

Sue Wedgewood circulated information, which detailed the overarching results for each curriculum stage from foundation stage through to A-levels and presented the 2003-07 picture. In the information provided there was a summary of some key achievements during the year. It was recognised that as the information was only circulated at the meeting members would need more time to be able to fully digest the detail and if they had any further queries they could contact officers.

Members, whilst appreciating the timing of the meeting may have made it difficult to produce and circulate the information in advance, expressed a preference for future information to be circulated prior to the meeting.

Resolved

A more detailed analysis of the attainment information will be presented at a future meeting of the panel including the breakdown of performance in terms of ethnicity etc.

20/07 Update on Education Contract

Tom McNeil joined meeting and with Louise Hughes presented an update on progress regarding the education contract and provided a handout detailing the timeline for the process. They informed the panel that the project was progressing to schedule and there had been 4 expressions of interest received. Officers explained that the evaluation process was being developed and would be brought to the panel meeting on 18 October 2007. When questioned they confirmed that a matrix was used in the evaluation process.

The panel expressed their pleasure in seeing a move away from an intervention model and eagerness to ensure that under the new contract the contractor appreciates they are serving the Council. It was acknowledged that 2 members of the panel (Councillors Pitt and Chambers) were members of the project board and as such were involved in every stage of the process. Councillor Pitt expressed confidence in how the process was currently progressing. It was acknowledged that the tendering documents (contract) and process used had received external verification by KPMG LLP.

Officers confirmed that responsibility for health and safety had been built into the new contract and that interim arrangements had now been put in place for the remainder of the current contract. Officers also informed the panel that a 'transfer' working group was being established to oversee the stage in procurement referred to the lead out and lead in period. This was to ensure a smooth hand over between different service providers as it was recognised the new contract may be with a different provider to the current provider.

The panel were informed that given the size of the contract officers were not intending to circulate it to all panel members but assured the members that copies would be made available upon request.

21/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 18 October 2007.

The meeting terminated at 7.36 pm.

Chair:

Date: