

AT A MEETING
- of the -
**CHILDRENS SERVICES AND
LIFELONG LEARNING
SCRUTINY AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**
held at the Council House,
Walsall on **Thursday 30 June
2005** at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Bird (Chairman)
Councillor E. E. Pitt (Vice Chair)
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chambers
Councillor Khan
Councillor Martin
Councillor Walker
Councillor Robertson
Mr A Butterworth (Lichfield Diocesan
Board of Education)
Mrs E. Collins (Parent Governor)
Mrs L. Holford (Parent Governor)
Mr M. Lee (Parent Governor)
Mr R Grainger (Secondary School
Representative)
Mr D J Jones (Primary School
Representative)

Also Present

Councillor Hughes (Portfolio Holder)

Officers Present

Helen Denton
Pauline Pilkington
Jane Evans
Diane Osborne
Pat Warner

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Arif and Mr M. Quinn.

SUBSTITUTIONS

The chairman advised the panel of a change to the membership of the panel for the duration of the meeting: -

- Councillor Ian Robertson to fill vacant place.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest identified at this meeting.

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 April 2005, copy having been previously circulated to each member of the panel be approved and signed by the chairs as a correct record.

WEB MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Web minutes dated 8 March 2005 be received and noted.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

The review document on Teenage Pregnancy was submitted: -

(see annexed).

Councillor Martin introduced the review document and summarised the findings and recommendations.

She said that the report identified specific objectives in nine key areas i.e: -

- 1) Engagement of Young People
- 2) Sex Relationship Education
- 3) The Involvement of Parents
- 4) The Role of Key Workers
- 5) Community Based Services
- 6) Access to Pregnancy Testing Service
- 7) Access to Termination Services
- 8) The Contribution of an Improved Youth Service
- 9) The Role of Voluntary Sector Partners

She said that the recommendations were based on some simple key ideas which was to recognise that this complex issue needs the active involvement of a range of people to really have an impact. Early intervention in the right

way is vital and that school based services are an essential component of an effective approach.

She continued that the report had been prepared following extensive consultations with a number of key organisations who are all stakeholders in the provision of services for young people.

She said that her main resolution was to recommend that this panel refers the report to the cabinet member for Children's Services and to seek his support in ensuring that this issue is a priority in the next strategic choices process.

The panel thanked Councillor Martin for the very comprehensive report and joined Councillor Martin in thanking all the agencies and officers who had contributed to the preparation of the review document.

Members commented that certain agencies such as New Deal should be requested to consider the issues around teenage pregnancy when being approached by young people for housing. Councillor Robertson suggested that there should be a liaison with New Deal to ensure that they understand the findings from this review and will consider the recommendations, particularly those surrounding the involvement of all agencies working together to have a positive impact on the reduction of teenage pregnancy rates in the borough.

Councillor Cassidy said that she was aware of an approach being taken in Holland and other Scandinavian countries which focussed on the girls and their feeling of self worth. The work carried out there had proved that giving girls a sense of self worth helped change their attitudes towards early pregnancy.

Councillor Khan was of the view that the media and communication strategy should be a key issue in promoting the findings of the review document and that these should be communicated as comprehensively as possible.

Councillor Martin said that some work had already commenced with the Express and Star and that they had already undertaken to do a series of reports on this issue.

Councillor Bird said that the success of the reduction in teenage pregnancy will require not just the assistance of schools but parents and associations such as, the housing group who must be encouraged to examine the reasons for offering homes to young people. This review document should be circulated to them for their views.

Councillor Bird went on to say that there should be quarterly monitoring of this issue to see how it is working within the community and how well the scrutiny process is working.

The members were of the view that a range of different action monitoring information could be reported to the next meeting of the panel in order that

members can assess which information would be more useful on a regular basis.

Members were also of the view that an annual report and updated action plan could also be produced.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the review document be endorsed and referred to the cabinet member for Children's Services seeking his support to this as a priority in the next strategic choices process.
- 2) That the report be also circulated to all Head Teachers within the borough seeking their comments and requesting that the report be brought to the attention of school governors.
- 3) That the report be also circulated to New Deal; WHG; Walsall Pregnancy Helpline; Youth Services and to the media for their information.
- 4) That a quarterly monitoring report be submitted to the panel highlighting the progress of the services to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies in the borough.
- 5) That a range of monitoring information be submitted to the next meeting to enable members to make a decision as to which form of monitoring information would be most useful to the panel.
- 6) That officer's investigate the Scandinavian scheme and report that to the next meeting.
- 7) That an annual report setting out an updated action plan on the service also be submitted.

FORWARD PLAN

A copy of the Forward Plan dated 20 June was submitted: -

(see annexed).

Members expressed concern that a number of issues on the Forward Plan were being reported to the panels following their consideration at cabinet. The panel were of the view that the information set out in the Forward Plan did not assist panels towards effective scrutiny. This was due to the lack of information set out in respect of items on the Forward Plan and also the delay in members being provided with a copy of the plan.

Pat Warner; Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that the scrutiny team had recently written to all scrutiny members advising them of the proposal to ensure that a copy of the current Forward Plan is placed in the group rooms to enable members to identify any issues on the plan on which more information is required to enable a decision to be made as to whether further scrutiny was required. This proposal was in recognition of the eight week cycle for scrutiny meetings and the possibility of issues being considered by cabinet prior to scrutiny panels being given the opportunity to raise any concerns on those issues.

The panel was also advised that those voting members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel who were not councillors had also been requested to indicate how they wish to receive a copy of the Forward Plan.

Councillor Hughes said that he would wish to see the information set out on the Forward Plan being more comprehensive to enable members to identify more fully with each issue and be able to make a more informed judgement as to whether the issue warranted further scrutiny.

The panel: -

RESOLVED

- 1) That the cabinet office be advised that the Forward Plan should be expanded to include an additional column which should give a synopsis of the background to each item on the Forward Plan.
- 2) That the next addition of the Forward Plan to be submitted to this scrutiny panel be updated in this fashion.

SCOPING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2005/6

The report of the Executive Director was submitted: -

(see annexed).

Members noted the work of the scrutiny panel during the 2004/5 municipal year and also the reviews which were still ongoing.

Members also considered items for inclusion on the work programme for the 2005/6 municipal year.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the work programme be established to include the following issues:
 - a) School Buildings via the work group previously established to look at school buildings and surplus school places in the borough.
 - b) With that regard that the working group be re-established with the following membership: -
 - Councillor Bird (Lead member);
 - Councillor Cassidy;
 - Councillor Keith Chambers;
 - Mr Alan Butterworth.

- c) That the remit of the group be to use the findings of the School Buildings review in conjunction with the DDA Access audit to formulate a strategy that will respond to identified needs.
- d) To link the consideration of school buildings to the position on surplus places within the Borough

2) Social Inclusion Agenda

- a) That the Social Inclusion Working Group be re-established for 2005/6 with the following membership: -
 - Councillor Arif;
 - Councillor Khan; and
 - Councillor Robertson (lead member)
- b) That the senior management representatives be as previously agreed i.e: -
 - Social Services;
 - Education Walsall;
 - Leisure and Culture;
 - Crime and Disorder Partnership; and
 - Health Partnership.
- c) That the new lead member be contacted by officers to seek his views on the areas within social inclusion which should be a priority for in-depth review.

3) Obesity in Children

- a) That the following representatives be nominated to serve on the Obesity Working Group to be re-established by the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Panel during its consideration of obesity in Children: -
 - Councillor Ian Robertson;
 - One Social Services senior officer representative;
 - One Leisure and Culture senior officer representative

4) Children's Services – date of scrutiny to be agreed.

5) Looked After Children – date of scrutiny to be agreed.

6) That the previous work of the scrutiny panel during the 2004/5 municipal be received and noted.

NOTES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

RESOLVED

That the notes of the School Building Working Group held on 10 May 2005 be received and noted.

CHILDREN'S FOOD BILL – PARLIAMENTARY EARLY DAY MOTION 1256

The panel were advised of the last parliamentary children's food bill which sought to introduce some measures to improve school meals.

The panel expressed their wish to support the early day motion and to lobby the borough's local MPs to also support and vote for this motion.

RESOLVED

That a letter be prepared on behalf of this panel setting out this panel's support for the bill to the borough's local MPs requesting also that they offer their full support for this government bill in order to improve children's diets to benefit their current future health.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6.50 p.m.