

## **CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor E. Hughes (Chair)  
Councillor B. Cassidy (Vice Chair)  
Councillor L. Beeley  
Councillor O. Bennett  
Councillor K. Chambers  
Councillor R. Martin  
Councillor D. Shires  
Councillor R. Thomas

### **Other Members Present**

Councillor M. Yasin  
Councillor M. Longhi

### **Non elected voting members present**

A. McDevitt  
K. Yeates  
E. Chawira

### **Non-elected non-voting members present**

D. Jones  
R. Bragger

### **Portfolio Holder Present**

Councillor R. Andrew

### **Officers Present**

Louise Hughes- Assistant Director, Children's Services  
Michelle Whiting – Assistant Director, Specialist Services  
Sue Wedgwood – Assistant Managing Director, Serco –  
Improvement and Effectiveness  
Avril Walton – Assistant Managing Director, Serco –  
Management and Effectiveness  
Stella Forsdike - Chair, Interim Executive Board, Sneyd  
School  
Alan Michell – Integrated Young People's Support  
Service, Head of Service  
Cath Boneham – Head of Children and Young People's  
Partnership Commissioning, tPCT  
Heather Maybury – Complaints Investigation Officer  
Jane Woodall – Project Manager, Serco  
Michael Gillard – 14 -19 Curriculum Development Adviser,  
Serco  
Dan Mortiboys – Service Accounting and Financial  
Reporting Manager  
John Garner – Constitutional Services Manager  
Matt Underhill – Scrutiny Officer

### **Invitees Present**

Dame Maureen Brennan – Executive Head Teacher, Barr  
Beacon and Sneyd Schools  
Lesley Clarke – Associate Head teacher, Sneyd School &  
pupils from Sneyd School  
David Mountney – Head teacher, Aldridge School

Greg Chapman – Midlands Healthwise  
Chris Craddock – Midlands Healthwise  
Andrew Milner – Midlands Healthwise

### **35/10 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Paul Williams.

### **36/10 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **37/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **38/10 MINUTES**

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2010 copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

### **39/10 SNEYD SCHOOL**

The Assistant Managing Director, Serco – Management and Effectiveness introduced the report (annexed). The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion with the Executive Head Teacher, Barr Beacon and Sneyd Schools and the Associate Headteacher, Sneyd School and pupils from Sneyd School:

- The number of pupils at Sneyd School has stabilised with no additional departures to other schools. However, as a consequence of the small size of the cohort a report is due to be received by Cabinet seeking permission to close the school early in August 2011 as it is no longer in the best interests of the remaining pupils to keep it open. If the early closure is approved those pupils will transfer to other schools in September 2011;
- The Associate Head teacher Sneyd School explained that support provided for those pupils due to take their Maths GCSE included a Maths starter at the beginning of every subject class. Pupils aim to achieve 75 marks which would equate to a grade C in the exam. A number of other programmes are also currently operating to support students. Students in year 8 and 9 also undertake creative learning at school which is combined with core subjects. The range of subjects had also increased with the association with Barr Beacon School enabling pupils to access language classes;
- A post-16 options event was also recently held. Representatives from other schools attended as well as 6<sup>th</sup> forms and Walsall College. The event provided the opportunity for pupils and parents to understand the range of choices available and associated entry requirements;
- The pupils explained that they were permitted to be outside during break

times although not during lunch time. However, some in fact preferred this given that the weather is much colder at this time of year;

- One of the pupil's commented that she felt that behaviour had improved since the arrival of the Associate Head teacher and this had also helped improve lessons, while the standard of teaching had also increased over recent months. The pupils explained that the strong sense of direction and targets established by the Associate Head teacher had made for a better learning environment. The pupils also commented that they were anxious about the travel requirements of their new schools, in one case this would involve three bus journeys;
- The Associate Head teacher explained that as a result of the smaller cohort it had proved difficult to put out full competitive sports teams from year 8 and 9. However, work had been undertaken with other schools to produce combined teams. She also pointed out that many sporting activities, including swimming, did not suffer these kind of problems and pupils were able to continue making full use of the facilities available;
- The Chair of the Interim Executive Board explained that a clear focus to support pupils in achieving the best outcomes had created a positive atmosphere, as the school seeks to maximise achievement during what may prove to be its final year;
- The Chair thanked the pupils and Headteachers for their contribution.

#### **40/10 PERFORMANCE OF SERCO CONTRACT**

The Assistant Managing Director, Serco – Improvement and Effectiveness introduced the report (annexed). The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion, including with the Headteacher of Aldridge School, David Mountney:

- There was range of post-16 education and training provision which around 3,500 young people were able to access in the borough;
- A study of the travel patterns of young people indicated that while the majority of students who are resident in Walsall study within the borough, some travel out of the borough for education or training. At the same time a number of students from outside Walsall travel to the borough for this purpose. Information explaining all forms of education and training are available to all young people and their families, this includes an online prospectus;
- If pupils achieve higher grade GCSE passes (A\*-C) they can access a level 3 programme which could include A Level or BTEC. Where pupils have achieved lower GCSE passes they have the option of a level 2 programme which could be a BTEC or NVQ. Young people with learning difficulties can access a Foundation Learning programme including Maths, English and ICT;
- In relation to financial support the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is no longer available. There was agreement that the loss of this allowance, without any indication that it will be replaced, will have a negative impact in trying to motivate young people to remain in education or training. Further concerns were expressed regarding the impact this might have on the

number of young people in the borough who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Officers explained that these difficulties might be intensified with the likely loss of funding of the NEET Target Action Plan (TAP);

- Officers explained that Walsall was slightly behind the other Black Country Authorities in terms of the percentage of resident 16-19 year olds who succeed in obtaining qualifications. However, work-based training level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships had witnessed marked success over the last three years when compared with the borough's local peer group. In relation to A-Level officers explained that it was difficult to provide an absolute percentage difference between performance in Walsall and the national average, particularly given the lag time before validated results were received. However, A-Level point scores in Walsall were likely to be about 12% below the national average, placing the borough in the bottom quartile nationally. Officers acknowledged that there had been a major dip in performance in 2007, although subsequently there had been year on year improvement; however Walsall will remain in the bottom quartile on the performance of 2010;
- The Head of Aldridge School explained that he was the lead for the Strengthening Walsall's Achievement at Post Sixteen (SWAPS) initiative in which with ten schools and the college will participate. The planned scheme would for example, enable a pupil at Aldridge School to pick from a menu of forty-six courses offered across the various educational establishments. A key benefit of this approach is that a subject that might not be economically viable to run in one school, due to small numbers of pupils, can become feasible if a number of young people from various schools opt to take the course. At the same time it is often preferable to have larger class sizes as this can prove to be a more effective learning environment. Supporting the scheme demands inter-school timetable coordination and the need to overcome the associated travel issues. Planning for the scheme is underway for full introduction in September 2011;
- The introduction of this scheme will support schools in their gate keeper role in being able to sign post young people to the most appropriate courses within the borough. This would be instead of a student potentially opting for an unsuitable course for example, A-Level rather than BTEC, in order to remain at the same school;
- The Head of Aldridge School agreed with the Panel that this type of schemes will encourage students to remain within the education system. However, it would be important that political clarity was provided regarding the types of choices students should be making i.e. the circumstances in which they should/ should not opt for university.

#### **41/10 TRANSFORMING LEARNING IN WALSALL**

##### **Resolved:**

**That the update report (annexed) be noted.**

## **42/10 ANNUALS COMPLAINTS REPORT**

The Complaints Investigation Officer introduced the report (annexed). The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received relating to Children's services, rising from 86 complaints in 2008/09 compared to 130 in 2009/10. This equates to a large increase in the number of complaints received relating to Looked After Children, although there has been a reduction in the number of complaints regarding the vulnerable children's service;
- There has been a focus on learning from complaints. This includes two stage 2 investigations. In one case this prompted the introduction of a traffic light system to ensure that all statutory visits for care leavers take place within the necessary timescales to ensure that their preferences regarding placements are accurately reflected. The other complaint prompted the introduction of a system of oversight and sign off of court reports by a social worker to ensure the accuracy of statements related to assessments and reports. Learning from complaints has also supported improvements in risk assessment and planning;
- 17% of statutory complaints were received from young people against the target of 20%, with the challenge being how to encourage more complaints. For example, work has been undertaken with children with disabilities in residential care to ensure that the most effective methods for making complaints are available. This has included using signing language and symbols in leaflets. Other activity has included visiting all Looked After Children as well as foster care staff to highlight the complaints system;
- The Assistant Director, Specialist Services explained that the 20% target was a standard proxy measure. However, the complaints process was important as LAC are often a passive audience and it can provide an important element of understanding their views and requirements in relation to the services they receive.

## **43/10 TEENAGE PREGNANCY REDUCTION**

The teenage pregnancy reduction Member Champion introduced the item, with the presentation (annexed) provided by the Head of the Integrated Young People's Support Service (IYPSS) and a manager from Children's commissioning arrangements, tPCT. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- Based on comparative performance information Walsall achieved an 18% reduction in the teenage pregnancy rate between the baseline year of 1998 and 2008. However, the rate of success slowed between 2005 and 2008, and an increase has been noted for the first two quarters of 2009, with the Walsall rate at 63% for the end of second quarter against a West Midlands

average of 44.7%;

- Officers explained that there is a direct correlation between the teenage pregnancy rate and the level of lack of ambition and expectation of young women, with the current economic climate likely to further reduce aspiration. Services have focused resources and efforts on conception hot spot areas which are typically within the most deprived wards;
- Next steps include work to improve the aspirations and self-esteem of the 9-14 age group using all available data to identify those areas with the most vulnerable residents. It will be important that measured outcomes are achieved;
- Officers recognise that a key stakeholder in tackling teenage pregnancy is the “virtual” workforce of parents and encouraging them to discuss this subject openly with their children. Further resources will be committed to support this key element of activity. While it will also be important for the range of partners to fully understand the roles they play in addressing this problem;
- Targeted interventions will also be critical with schools identifying those pupils who are most likely to become teenage mothers and fathers. At the same time effective relationship and sexual health advice to young people is also required;
- The Teenage Pregnancy Unit is a specific resource which together with elements of a further ninety services are contributing to tackling this issue, with strong links to the IYPSS and our NEETs agendas. A key element of activity is education and health working together, including Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) forming part of the curriculum within schools. This will assist young people in making informed choices;
- Officers explained that to encourage more responsible behaviour from those who were sexually active free condoms were available from Children’s Centres, to mitigate against the difficulty of some young people feeling unable to visit Family Planning clinics due to the associated stigma. However, effective education remained the key aspect in addressing the issue;
- While further work was required to better understand why the problem of teenage pregnancy appeared to be greater in Walsall than elsewhere, officers were seeking to introduce a scheme based on a successful programme used in Stoke.

#### **44/10 IMPACT OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS ON SERVICES**

The Service Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager introduced the report (annexed). The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- It was announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) that council’s will face a 28% reduction in funding over the next four years. However, schools funding is protected with a 0.1% real terms increase for the 5-16 age range. However, guidance is due to be received from the Department of Education (DfE) regarding the £2.2bn Pupil Premium (for teaching the most disadvantaged children) in December;
- Other highlights include the extension fifteen hours a week of early years education and care to all two years from 2012-13 and the maintenance of

universal entitlement of the same for three and four year olds. As a consequence the DfE have indicated that education establishments will have to make costs in 16-19 participation budgets. While Sure Start is protected in cash terms but without any indication as to whether this will be in real terms. There will also be a reduction in non-education grants although there will be a focus on seeking to support an increase in the participation age to 18 of the most disadvantaged children. Elsewhere, the overall capital budget has been reduced by over 50%, principally as a consequence of decisions made in relation to the BSF programme;

- In terms of the impact in Walsall, the overall budget has increased but details regarding allocations and the effect on individual schools will also be provided by the DfE in December.

#### 45/10 **SPECIALIST SERVICES UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Specialist Services introduced the item. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- Significant additional resources are now being applied to LAC, with the majority now allocated. Further challenge to the numbers of LAC is being addressed through the development of the intensive support team rolling out the Think Family Model and reshaping of the Spurgeons contract;
- One issue being tackled is the high sickness levels amongst staff with rigorous management and monitoring through a challenge board. At present there are four members of staff on sick leave compared to thirteen in the year. It is likely that going forward where as a consequence of the illness of the social worker, there had been no contact for a number of weeks, a LAC would be reclassified as unallocated;
- Individual supervision is part of the activity aimed at driving up the quality of work and the level of performance. The RAG system is applied at every statutory review by independent reviewing officers, with the Outcomes and Improvement Panel providing rigorous management oversight. Performance is also being scrutinised by the Specialist Performance Board and Corporate Parenting Board. While support for staff includes fortnightly "surgeries" held by adoption and independent reviewing officers and a programme of training in the key aspects of the role rolled out during November;
- The working smarter programme has also been introduced into the service to enable identification of more effective ways of operating. This has included using staff who aren't qualified social workers, but who have a different set of relevant skills, and training as the allocated worker with a protocol in place to enable them to request a qualified social worker if required. This approach has both provided social workers with greater time for priority activity will enabled many LAC access to a variety of different types of support workers many of whom have relevant qualifications such as art therapy;
- The use of agency social workers is being reduced and significant effort taken in seeking to retain the existing work force and attract external candidates. This includes honourarium payments for existing staff with more

than two years service, the development of career pathways, while it is hoped that single status will put the pay grade of social workers equivalent to that of our neighbouring authorities.

#### **46/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel reviewed their work programme and latest version of Cabinets forward plan of key decisions.

#### **47/10 URGENT ITEM: ENCOURAGING HEALTHY LIFE STYLES IN SCHOOLS**

The Chair introduced the item explaining that it was important for the Panel to seek a range of views, including those from outside the council and its local partners, when addressing key issues, he had therefore invited Midlands Healthwise to appear as expert witnesses to inform the Panel on ways to tackle obesity in young people within our community. He highlighted that one of the roles of the Panel to investigate issues that fall within its remit and were appropriate raise these issues with Cabinet together with its view on possible ways forward. The Panel did not have any executive decision making powers and neither would any Members of the Panel be involved in any decisions which might be subsequently taken by Cabinet in committing the council to any course of action.

The following is a summary of the presentation (annexed) and subsequent discussion, including with Midlands Healthwise:

- The Assistant Managing Director, Serco – Improvement and Effectiveness explained that encouraging healthy life styles was an important aspect of the curriculum in Walsall schools. It formed part of Ofsted inspections and all schools in the borough were engaged in the healthy schools programme. Establishing healthy life styles was a key focus for schools, young people, families and the local community;
- Greg Chapman explained that the objective of Midlands Healthwise was to support the development of a healthy future for Walsall. The organisation provides a wide range of health and wellbeing courses within primary and secondary schools in the borough. Its activities also assist in addressing issues relating to NEETs and the costs to public services of increasing levels obesity. For example, the estimated cost of obesity to the NHS in Walsall for 2011 is £48m;
- The type of activity that is undertaken by Healthwise includes alternative and extra curriculum courses, for example, the provision of three qualifications up to NVQ level three in fitness and gym instruction. In some instances may will lead to young people becoming gym instructors;
- Healthwise explained that their development model (annexed) set out a number of longer term outcomes and objectives which would be used to determine if targets had been met. Shorter term activity includes ensuring that the learning is shared between secondary and infant schools. A ten week programme of activity highlighted success with strong commitment being demonstrated by the young people participating;
- John Garner explained to the Panel that the scrapping of the Schools



Sports Partnership (SPP) would have a negative impact in establishing healthy life styles, as well as impact on developing sporting excellence. For example, SPP funding will be terminated prior to the commencement of a national schools sports competition next summer. The Chair concluded the item by explaining that a working group to examine the issue of obesity would commence in the new year.

#### 48/10 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The time and date of the next meeting was noted as 3 December 2010.

The meeting terminated at 8:35pm

Chair:

Date:

DRAFT