

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

TUESDAY 20 JULY 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present	Councillor E. Hughes (Chair) Councillor L. Beeley Councillor O. Bennett Councillor K. Chambers Councillor A. Paul Councillor R. Thomas
Non elected voting members present	A. McDevitt K. Yeates
Non-elected non-voting members present	R. Bragger
Portfolio Holder Present	Councillor R. Andrew
Officers Present	Louise Hughes- Assistant Director, Children's Services Michelle Whiting – Assistant Director, Specialist Services Graham Talbot– Interim Managing Director, Serco Avril Walton – Assistant Managing Director, Serco Frank Barnes – Assistant Managing Director, Serco Kevin Reader - Interim Building Schools for the Future Project Director Stephen Read – Head of ICT, Serco Dan Mortiboys – Service Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer
Witnesses Present	Helen Keenan – Headteacher, Brownhills School Ben Cook – Pupil, Brownhills School Scott Tennant – Pupil, Brownhills School

09/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors B. Cassidy, R. Martin and D. Shires.

10/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

11/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

12/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2010, copies having been previously circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

13/10 SNEYD SCHOOL

The Panel received a report on the context and process for closing Sneyd School. The Panel also discussed the school closure with two former pupils.

Members discussed the transfer of pupils from Sneyd School to other local schools with Helen Keenan (Head teacher Brownhills School), Ben Cook (Brownhills School) and Scott Tennant (Brownhills School). Ben and Scott were former pupils at Sneyd. The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- The former pupils were happy at Brownhills School. They had tried to gain places at other nearby schools but had not been able to secure places.
- It was approximately an hour's journey on two buses to Brownhills School.
- The transition to the new school had been hard at first but got easier as time passed. Many friends now attended other schools.
- 45 former Sneyd pupils now attend Brownhills School.
- Year 9 families had received £50 help with new school uniforms. This support had not been available for Year 7 and 8 pupils.
- The Head teacher suggested that in future the Council should be more assertive and close a school quickly and provide financial help to all parents and children affected for articles such as school uniforms.

The invited guests left the meeting. The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion by the Panel:

- Members were pleased with the successful transition experienced by the pupils to Brownhills School. The Panel noted the excellent work that had been undertaken by school staff to assist with integration of the new pupils.
- Some Members were disappointed that help with new uniform costs had only been provided to Year 9 pupils and was not available to mid-year admissions. It was not possible to claim the available financial assistance retrospectively.
- Transportation costs were covered for all former Sneyd pupils whose new school was over 3 miles away from their home address.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel review the outcome of the Ben Cook and Scott Tennant's transfer to Brownhills School in a year.

14/10 **BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Panel were updated on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

The Interim BSF Project Director reported that the Government had ceased the BSF programme nationally for all Councils that had not reached financial close; this included Walsall. He explained that a new school building programme was expected to be launched later this year and that Walsall had already expressed an interest in being involved in any new programme. The work undertaken as part of the BSF programme was currently being completed and would assist in the development of any future projects.

With regard to the funding provided by schools towards the project it was explained that all unspent money (approximately £3m) from the BSF budget would be redistributed to its original source. This included any accumulated interest. The Schools Forum would agree the formula for redistribution.

It was noted that work to proceed with the establishment of the Grace and Sheffield Academies and the University Technical College had stopped whilst they were reviewed by the Department for Education.

A Member of the Panel reported that he had met with the three local Members of Parliament to lobby for investment in local schools.

Following a question it was confirmed that the planned increases in capacity at Frank F. Harrison and Pool Hayes were going to go ahead. Funding needed to be identified by 2012.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome of the Building Schools for the Future funding redistribution be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

15/10 **CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD**

Members were advised of the requirement to establish a Children's Trust Board (CTB) by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Assistant Director (Universal Services) explained that this new body was designed to provide strategic leadership for Children's Services within the Walsall Partnership governance structures. It was explained that key strategic leaders from local partners would sit on the CTB and co-ordinate work and decision making across their respective organisations for the benefit of local priorities.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- The CTB was accountable to Walsall Partnership and external inspection from Ofsted.
- The Chair read an extract from the Children's and Young Peoples Plan that

was written using complex language. He suggested that future plans should be written using plain English.

- The Chair asked for clarification of the role of West Midlands Police Authority and the local Diocese on the CTB.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

1. the report be noted;

2. Members be informed of the role of West Midlands Police Authority and the local Diocese and Children's Trust Board.

and;

3. future Children's and Young Peoples Plans be more user friendly and use accessible language.

16/10 PERFORMANCE OF SERCO EDUCATION CONTRACT

The Panel were informed about theme 4 'services supporting and providing ICT' from the Serco contract with the Council.

The Head of ICT (Serco) gave a presentation setting out the key priorities within the ICT theme (annexed).

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- The 'Funding Technology Grant' had been cut by 50%. This has affected progress with the project to procure a broadband provider for all Walsall Schools.
- The Serco ICT Team was meeting its targets regarding responding to problems.
- 'The Well' was a portal currently being developed which would allow all schools to access essential documentation as it was required rather than have to make individual requests.
- Serco were fully accredited to deliver ICT safeguarding advice.
- The Assistant Director (Universal Services) explained that she oversaw the performance of the Serco contract which was managed on a day-to-day basis by the Strategy, Planning and Contracts Manager.
- A Member asked a series of questions regarding Serco and its performance and reward grant targets that were due to be met in August 2010. It was agreed that Panel members would be provided with a contract board monitoring report for information.
- More detailed performance information on achievements within themes was requested for future meetings. It was also agreed to consider a 'performance dashboard' report on overall Serco performance every 6 months.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- 1. performance data be included in future Serco theme monitoring reports;**
 - 2. the Panel consider a 'performance dashboard' report on overall Serco performance every 6 months;**
 - 3. Serco Contract Monitoring Board reports be circulated to Panel Members for information;**
- and;**
- 4. the Head of ICT (Serco) to contact Alan McDevitt to discuss e-safeguarding.**

17/10 FINANCIAL OUTTURN FOR 2009/2010

The Panel considered the outturn revenue and capital position for the year ended 2009/10 for services within the remit of the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

The Service Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager explained that there was a revenue overspend of just under £2.1m and a capital overspend of £5,000. The revenue overspend was primarily caused by an increase in looked after children.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel be advised of the underspend in catering.

18/10 IMPACT OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS ON SERVICES

Members were provided with an overview of budget reductions within the Panels remit that had been approved at Council the previous evening.

It was explained that area based grant element of the funding towards the music service had been withdrawn. This was a reduction of approximately 4% on the overall budget and would mean a reduction in 1.5 fulltime equivalent posts. The Standards Grant which provides the majority of funding for the service was unaffected.

It was explained that the £91,000 reduction in Youth Capital Fund+ could be managed as it had not been allocated. All previous Youth Capital Fund+ money had been invested within the strict criteria.

RESOLVED:

That a report detailing Youth Capital Fund spending be circulated to the Panel.

19/10 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The Panel reviewed the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy (CPS) which set the vision for Corporate Parenting in Walsall.

The Assistant Director (Serco) outlined the principles contained within the CPS and handed around a summary sheet for information (annexed).

The Portfolio Holder explained that all Members were corporate parents and as such it was important that Members engaged with looked after children and acted as champions.

A Member of the Panel complained that looked after children were too often criminalised for minor offences. This created additional barriers for them when it came to leaving care and gaining employment. In response it was explained that this approach was now discouraged in favour of 'restorative justice'.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor K. Chambers be provided with suitable training to act as a Corporate Parenting Champion.

20/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND FORWARD PLAN

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

21/10 WORKING GROUPS

RESOLVED:

THAT:

1. Councillors E. Hughes, R. Martin, D. Shires, B. Cassidy and A. Paul be appointed to the Safeguarding Working Group;

2. Councillors L. Beeley, O. Bennett, K. Chambers, I. Robertson and Mr A. McDevitt be appointed to the Childhood Obesity Working Group;

and;

3. the Childhood Obesity Working Group be deferred until the Safeguarding Working Group has made its final report and recommendations.

22/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The time and date of the next meeting was noted as 27 September 2010.

Chair:

Date

DRAFT