

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

20 December 2007 at 6 p.m.

Panel Members present      E. Hughes (Chair)  
   Bird,  
   Cassidy,  
   Chambers

Non-Elected Non-voting Members  
   B. Grainger                      Secondary School Teacher  
                                        Representative

Officers present  
   David Brown                      Executive Director – Children's  
                                        Services  
   Pauline Pilkington              Assistant Director

### **37/07 CHANGE TO THE AGENDA**

The Chair informed the panel of a change to the agenda, this was to receive item 10 prior to item 5.

### **38/07 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Paul Williams.

### **39/07 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **40/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **41/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The private minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2007 were tabled to members of the panel. The public minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2007 were tabled (annexed).

Members expressed concern that following the panels consideration of the 'reconfiguration of the print and design service' report at the meeting of the panel on 22 November 2007, the service had produced and sent out Christmas cards to all members. David Brown stated that he had investigated this, and had discovered that these cards were designed in a member of staff's own time and costs of production had been minimal. He stated that he had explained to the service that the perception associated with this was not good.

### **41/07 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

The Panel considered that the item for consideration under item 26/07 below was exempt information by virtue of the paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and accordingly resolved to consider that item in private.

#### **42/07 EDUCATION CONTRACT**

David Brown gave an update on the position on the progress of the education contract, following this process a Cabinet paper would be submitted 6 February 2008 identifying the preferred bidder.

Councillor Chambers stated that Councillor Cassidy had expressed confidence in the process and in his opinion it was seen as excellent.

#### **43/07 ESTABLISHMENT OF 'POSITIVE ACTIVITIES WORKING GROUP'**

Members discussed the positive activities agenda, Pauline Pilkington explained that it was hoped that the service could engage members in this subject. Councillor Chambers reminded members of the resolution from Council relating to Positive activities and explained that he would be meeting with Louise Hughes to discuss the remit of this group. Members agreed that the Safeguarding Children Working Group would continue with the same membership, but change its remit to consider positive activities.

#### **44/07 FORWARD PLAN**

After consideration members noted the forward plan.

#### **45/07 6 MONTHLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

Pauline Pilkington explained to members that this report gave a detailed picture of the performance of areas within the Children's and Young People Scrutiny Panel. Members were provided with an explanation of selected areas.

Councillor Cassidy congratulated officers on the good work, but expressed frustration that a football club in her ward could no longer operate due to a problem with land on which they trained. Councillor Cassidy stated that whilst good work was happening, it seemed that to her areas of the Council were not 'joined up'. Pauline Pilkington offered to meet with Councillor Cassidy and Education Walsall to resolve the situation.

Councillor Chambers asked for further detail on the following;

- How much Key Stage 1 Bangladeshi girls reading and writing attainment had fallen (page 4 of the report)
- Whether all 37 activity providers referred to on page 37 had been CRB checked
- How much 'Ready Steady Summer had cost'

Officers responded stating that 'Ready, Steady, Summer' had cost £150,000, which was much less than in previous years.

Councillor Chambers requested that officers wrote to residential units to request data on the restorative justice approach referred to on page 7, for the safeguarding working group to consider as evidence towards their review.

Sue Wedgwood confirmed that the percentage drop in attainment for Bangladeshi girls in reading and writing was as follows;

- Writing – 92% to 79%
- Reading –87% to 75%

Councillor Hughes stated that the appointment of a virtual head should make a massive difference to Looked After Children in Walsall. Pauline Pilkington explained that it was being encouraged that the children in the virtual school would have access to leisure activities as they would at a normal school. Sue Wedgwood added that the virtual school would also mean that provision was consistent across the borough for all children.

Pauline Pilkington stated that she would be happy to answer questions on the performance report outside of the meeting.

Bob Grainger expressed the opinion that children were losing the enjoyment of reading and that the curriculum had become more about 'ticking' certain boxes rather than enjoying the stories. Sue Wedgwood agreed and stated that work was being done outside of schools in an attempt to overcome this.

#### **46/07 PROGRESS OF CHILDREN WHO HAD MOVED SCHOOLS DUE TO CLOSURES**

Sue Wedgwood recapped on the situation that had occurred at Beechdale Primary School and the process that had led to the closure of the school. Members were informed that the majority of children (91) were moved from Beechdale School to Hatherton Primary School. Members were informed that consideration was given to how the curriculum's at the two schools compared, how the pupils at Hatherton would be affected by the move, and which members of staff needed to be involved. Members attention was drawn to the briefing note and informed that the children were performing ahead of those at Beechdale School.

Sue Wedgwood explained that challenges at Beechdale School were high, and although Hatherton School was given a notice to improve, the progress of the pupils was good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching.

Councillor Chambers suggested that the panel sent its thanks to head teachers and staff at the school.

Councillor Bird expressed his disappointment that as the chair of the School Organisation Committee (SOC) he was told that the school was not in difficulty following parents concern that their children were moving to a failing school.

Sue Wedgwood stated that Education Walsall were keen to emphasise that they the school was failing, although it was in a challenging area, with difficulties it was making good progress and Hatherton was receiving support form Education Walsall.

Councillor Bird reiterated that he was disappointed that he was not given the correct information, although he was sure that it was not intentional and that it would not happen again.

Bob Grainger stated that it should be remembered that schools in challenging areas would have statistics that would fall below the average but that does not mean that the panel could not aspire to achieve more. Bob Grainger stated that schools in disadvantaged areas needed extra resources.

Councillor Hughes concluded that a letter of thanks to the school should be sent to Hatherton Primary School thanking the head teacher and staff for their hard work and commitment.

#### **47/07 CRB CHECK UPDATE**

Pauline Pilkington informed the panel that 31 checks had been completed, leaving 29 members remaining who had not had a CRB check completed.

Members agreed that the leaders of each political group should be sent a letter urging them to encourage their members to complete their CRB forms.

#### **48/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 24 January 2008.

The meeting terminated at 7.00pm.

Chair:

Date: