

AT A MEETING
- of the -
**CHILDRENS SERVICES AND
LIFELONG LEARNING
SCRUTINY AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

held at the Council House,
Walsall on **12 April 2005** at
6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Bird (Chairman)
Councillor E. E. Pitt (Vice Chair)
Councillor Arif
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Khan
Councillor Martin
Councillor Walker
Councillor Withnall

Non elected voting members

Mr A Butterworth
Mrs L Holford
Mr Lee
Mr M Quinn

Non elected non voting members

Mrs E Collins
Mr R Grainger
Mr D J Jones

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Rowley.

RECEIPT OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest. The members of political groups represented on the panel indicated there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of the items on the agenda.

MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2005, a copy having previously been circulated to all members be approved and signed as a correct record.

WEB MINUTES

Resolved

That the Web minutes for meeting 8th February 2005 be received.

WORK GROUP UPDATES

OBESITY WORK GROUP

The minutes of the meeting 1st March 2005 were submitted: - see annexed.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting be received.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS WORK GROUP

The minutes of the meeting 5th April 2005 were tabled at the meeting (see annexed).

Councillor Bird referred to the working group notes outlining the key priorities discussed at the first meeting of the work group. He stressed the need for the property audit to be completed and any recommendation to be referred to cabinet as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Bird referred to the robust discussion relating to Mary Elliott School and advised that Three Crowns Special School had also been discussed. He said that the work group would be monitoring and scrutinising any reports or information relating to these schools and they want to make recommendations to cabinet based on discussions and findings of the work group.

David McNulty said that the work group meeting had been a very valuable meeting and had ensured panel members would be properly informed on school buildings. He said a significant amount of money was going to be submitted in school buildings and that this work group would be carrying out a very valuable piece of work. Members noted the update report and notes of the work group.

SOCIAL INCLUSION WORK GROUP

Members were advised the first meeting to scope the remit of the group would take place on 27th April.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Jane Evans, Assistant Director, PCT was in attendance at the meeting. The following reports were submitted: - see annexed

- 1) Report on teenage pregnancy workshop 10th February 2005.
- 2) A response to Councillor Martin's questions following the workshop on 10th February 2005.
- 3) The new teenage pregnancy figures (2003).

Jane Evans thanked members for inviting her to attend the scrutiny panel; she welcomed Councillors involvement in teenage pregnancy and welcomed the opportunity to discuss some of the proposals with members at the meeting tonight.

Councillor Rose Martin welcomed Jane Evans to the meeting and introduced the item relating to questions she had previously submitted to the PCT relating to the teenage pregnancy unit. She thanked her for the response and passed further questions to Jane Evans for discussion at a future meeting. Jane Evans received the questions and said that she would ensure the questions were answered fully. Councillor Martin said that the questions related to the cost of teenage pregnancy since 1998 and that she was trying to establish a trend for the five years before the 2003 figures were submitted. She confirmed that the questions were trying to determine how much money had been ploughed into teenage pregnancy and the effect on overall teenage pregnancy.

David McNulty clarified that the issue on all policies should be tested against the extent to which it had been successful and explained that Councillor Martin was trying to establish the value for money assessment of the investment in teenage pregnancy. Jane Evans advised that the PCT have evidence of seeing change in the quality of lives, in educational attainment and can start to bring information back to this panel about the effectiveness of the teenage pregnancy strategy. Members held a discussion about government target for teenage pregnancy being attainable and noted that it looks like there is a downward trend but doubted whether that downward trend would be enough to meet government targets. Jane Evans advised that she had not got the figures for local trends with her this evening and agreed to bring them to a future meeting. She did say that Walsall's figures were still high, but were comparable with Coventry and Sandwell. David McNulty suggested three areas for the group to focus: -

- 1) The care of young women who become pregnant to complete education; in this Walsall does really well.
- 2) The reduction in U16 pregnancies.

3) Longer term changes to cultural attitudes to young pregnancies.

It is vital for Walsall to make progress here.

Bob Grainger referred to item 7c in the report submitted that the abortion rates going up again. Jane Evans advised that this is a choice issue and that access around abortion is an issue for the group to scrutinise strategies and procedures and where they are lacking. She advised that the PCT have worked to develop and provide improved strategies and procedures and referred to the great success rate of sure start plus encouraging 100% of young mothers back in education. She welcomed working with the scrutiny panel to develop strategies and procedures and agreed to bring further information to scrutiny. Councillor Mike Bird felt it important to get the message across to young people.

Jane Evans advised that she had met and had discussions on how the Walsall Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Group can be strengthened and tabled a document to all members: - see annexed.

David McNulty informed members that the ideas for this new structure had come directly from the scrutiny work done by this scrutiny panel. He identified the stakeholder's forum (TPWP) multi agency group (consisting of 48 members, teachers, church and leisure) complemented by a strategy group for project implementation which is a much smaller focussed group involving young people. He identified the new teenage pregnancy co-ordinator post; he said that the structure was a positive step forward.

Councillor Arif suggested that in addition to the representative shown the wards sporting highest rates for teenage pregnancy should have a representative from a comprehensive school. Jane Evans advised that the pregnancy rates in WS1 and WS3 were of the highest but it was not just these areas with high pregnancy figures. Councillor Eileen Pitt suggested that head teachers had enough to do and this would be an additional call on their time. Councillor Bird suggested that teacher's representatives in the stakeholder forum would be able to put forward any points. In response to questions David McNulty said that young people on the strategy group may feel uncomfortable in adult company and that it may be better if the strategy group visit the young people groups to ensure that the strategy that they come up with is user friendly. Following a further discussion about the implementation group and membership of the strategy group, Councillor Bird said that the structure circulated was an excellent place to start.

David McNulty said that there were three major outcomes of this work: -

- 1) Changes to strategy and approach to scrutiny;
- 2) Pauline Pilkington and David McNulty have met with Lindsey Hunt from the Express and Star and in recognising that the Express and Star is a key outlet of information to parents and grandparents have arranged an intensive week of teenage pregnancy coverage. Six days of articles

with clip outs for parents and grandparents to keep. He recognised this as a key output of the work of this scrutiny panel.

- 3) As a result of Councillor Martin's questions the PCT have delved more deeply into the work of their strategy group and found that they needed a wider audience to look and know about teenage pregnancy.

Councillor Bird welcomed the support of the Express and Star Newspaper in promoting information about teenage pregnancy. He thanked Jane Evans for attending the meeting and for the informative papers and documents she had brought with her.

Resolved

- 1) That the report on teenage pregnancy workshop 10th February 2005 be received.
- 2) That the response to questions by Councillor Martin be noted.
- 3) That the new teenage pregnancy figures be noted.
- 4) That further information be received at the next meeting of Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel.
- 5) That Jane Evans be thanked for attendance and invited to attend the next meeting of the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

BICHARD REPORT – UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Bird advised that the report had been withdrawn and that it would be included in a future meeting.

REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL 2004-2005.

Councillor Bird said that he felt there had been improvements in scrutiny during the year and invited members to contribute to a general discussion about scrutiny. Mr Quinn said that he felt it was too early to come to a conclusion or to have had an effect. He did however feel that scrutiny had influenced decisions, however, still felt that scrutiny may not sufficiently be scrutinising and wasn't really challenging. He said that the agendas sometimes contain very little on the educational front and that the work programme should even out over the course of the year; educational issues should be more carefully scrutinised.

Councillor Bird noted the comments and said that the way we tackle scrutiny should be more challenging; he said the scrutiny panel should look more carefully at the forward plan of cabinet. He felt it important to prioritise and for scrutiny to have input into the policies of this council. Members had several further comments and generally the feeling was positive about the progress of scrutiny but that there was a long way to go.

Councillor Bird informed the scrutiny panel that David McNulty would be leaving Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council to become Chief Executive at

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. He said it had been a great pleasure working with David McNulty who was a great supporter of the scrutiny panel and that Walsall's loss was Trafford's gain. Councillor Eileen Pitt supported everything that Councillor Bird had said; she said David had been an outstanding director who had pursued his work quietly without fanfare and that she felt the authority owed a great debt to David for the tremendous work that he had carried out as director of education and for helping to restore the faith of head teachers. The panel thanked David McNulty and wished him good luck in his new post.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 6.50 p.m.