

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

22 November 2007 at 6 p.m.

Panel Members present E. Hughes (Chair)
 Cassidy,
 Khan,
 Martin,
 Micklewright,
 Mushtaq

Non-Elected Voting Members

D. Harborne-Smith	Parent Governor Representative
E. Chawira	Parent Governor Representative

Non-Elected Non-voting Members

B. Grainger	Secondary School Teacher Representative
D. Jones	Primary School Teacher Representative

Officers present

Louise Hughes	Assistant Director Children's Universal Services
Tom McNeil	Interim Assistant Director Procurement
Melanie Harmitt	Head of Finance for Children & Young People
Darrell Harman	Strategy & Organisation Manager
David Brown	Executive Director – Children's Services
Pauline Pilkington	Assistant Director
Dan Mortiboys	Finance Service Manager
Nikki Ehlen	Scrutiny Officer

32/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors E.E.Pitt, Chambers.

33/07 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

34/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

35/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The private minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2007 were tabled to members of the panel. Education Walsall representatives were not present for private session on 18 October 2007. The public minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2007 were tabled (annexed).

The Chair informed the panel of a change to the agenda, this was to receive item 8 prior to item 5.

36/07 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.

37/07 EDUCATION CONTRACT

David Brown gave an update on the position on the progress of the education contract.

Louise Hughes reminded members that head teacher colleagues had been involved in the process and seemed to be in agreement with officers about the way forward. Officers stated that the Council needed to be confident that the correct process had been followed.

Councillor Cassidy stated that she did not have any significant concerns that the model followed was not thorough or that the correct process had not been followed.

Members were asked if they had any queries about the reference to the procurement item (education contract) contained within the budget proposals.

Louise Hughes stated that a briefing note detailing the process to date will be distributed to members.

38/07 PRINT AND DESIGN OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Members were informed that it was hoped that the print and design item would go to Cabinet in December.

Darrell Harman informed the panel that market testing had been done on the pricing, and work had been done with the National Federation of Printers. Darrell Harman drew members attention to the 5 options contained within page 4 of the report, and explained that a challenge would be to reduce the number of staff by 10 and maintain current levels of activity. Members were informed that staff realised that this was a potential option available to them and it was hoped that it would be delivered by May 2008.

Councillor Hughes explained that the panel were concerned that the Council were losing money through this service and had requested that the scrutiny panel received it prior to submission to Cabinet.

Councillor Martin asked if leases for equipment could be transferred to a new provider if the service was contracted out. Darrell Harman explained that this was possible but potentially a complex process. Councillor Martin asked if officers had done an age

profile of employees. Darrell Harman explained that this had been completed. Melanie Harmitt stated that it was still quite expensive, but that the Council were looking to make as few redundancies as possible, and where possible voluntary redundancies rather than compulsory redundancies.

Councillor Martin asked why this had not happened previously. Darrell Harman explained that costs had been reduced in the past but not adequately enough. Councillor Martin asked if the contractor could choose to go through TUPE. Darrell Harman explained that TUPE was compulsory, but that legal advice suggested that TUPE would not apply.

Councillor Martin asked what the percentage levels of sickness were in the team. Darrell Harman stated that one member of staff was currently on long term sick leave, which was not high compared to the rest of the authority. Councillor Martin asked why print and design were not being used internally. Darrell Harman explained that £95,000 worth of print jobs were purchased outside of the Council, although some print work could not be done inside the Council due to machine requirements.

Councillor Micklewright raised issues about the size of printing and posting costs, emphasising that appropriate size envelopes should be used by officers to save money. Councillor Micklewright requested larger print sizes.

Councillor Khan asked for trading account and forecast information, stating that he considered it an important part to the paper. Councillor Khan asked why the process would take until May 2008. Darrell Harman stated that this was the statutory redeployment timescale. Councillor Khan raised further points of clarity relating to the income targets presented in the report. Melanie Harmitt explained that the service had to pick up these costs to contribute to the running costs of the Council (as if it operated outside of the Council). Melanie Harmitt explained that the unions didn't agree with the figures, but that these income figures were achieved 4 years ago, indicating that these income figures were achievable. Darrell Harman stated that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had agreed to review the income target. Councillor Hughes stated that if the income target was set lower, this would potentially have an impact on viability. Councillor Cassidy asked how much money had been lost on this service, and expressed disappointment that scrutiny had not been involved earlier. Melanie Harmitt stated that £300,00 a year had been lost for three years, totalling £900,00.

Councillor Martin asked if the number of staff were reduced by 10 people if this meant that leased machines would be left redundant. Darrell Harman stated that even if the number of staff was reduced, the same level of activity would still be required.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Khan is provided with trading account and forecast information.

39/07 CORPORATE FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Dan Mortiboys introduced himself to the panel stated that his presentation would put the service specific presentation in context (annexed). Dan Mortiboys discussed some of the corporate pressures and stated that Walsall was a high spending, high council tax authority. In response to the slide containing resident's opinions about how Council

budget should be spent, Councillor Micklewright stated that play equipment was needed for children within her ward.

Councillor Hughes asked officers why there was only one investment option, Pauline Pilkington explained that the directorate needed to make lots of savings, so they had decided not to propose investments, as this would simply mean making additional savings. Pauline Pilkington explained that the investment option that had been put forward would save the Council money if the investment was made and that significant savings had been made in previous years in this way.

The panel discussed improvements that had taken place such as a reduction in the number of looked after children and that it was important that the programme of change was stable.

Councillor Martin asked if the voluntary sector was used, Pauline Pilkington informed the panel that local groups were used in early intervention and gave the example of home start.

Pauline Pilkington clarified that the cost of transporting children and that there were now guidelines about car sharing and where this was appropriate.

Grant funding was discussed and how it can be used differently to support mainstream work.

Officers discussed procurement and the track record of achieving savings in this area. David Brown stated that he could share the detail of procurement savings with Councillor Khan. Councillor Khan confirmed that he would like this information.

Councillor Micklewright thanked David Brown and his officers for their hard work.

Bob Grainger stated that schools were working independently to market schools and spending money on things that don't improve education. David Brown agreed with Bob Grainger's comments.

Councillor Martin stated that a lot of money had been spent on the youth offending service and questioned whether realignment was targeted at prevention. Louise Hughes stated that the youth offending service would be looking at prevention.

Councillor Hughes asked members if they had any concerns about the proposals put forward. Councillor Hughes agreed that the investment was appropriate and the efficiencies were achievable.

Nikki Ehlen reminded members that they had the opportunity to present the panel's recommendations at the Corporate Scrutiny Panel, and at Cabinet on 19 December 2007, where the panels recommendations would be included in a report on the budget.

RESOLVED

1. David Brown stated that he could share the detail of procurement savings with Councillor Khan

2. That cabinet consider the resolution as stated below;

Based on the information available at the meeting of the children and young people scrutiny and performance panel on 22 November 2007, the panel did not express any significant concerns or objections to the budget options contained within the savings options (**appendix 1**) and welcomed the proposed investment option (**appendix 2**) for additional child concern workers to support the development of localised integrated working.

36/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 20 December 2007.

The meeting terminated at 7.25pm.

Chair:

Date: