

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

TUESDAY 01 MARCH 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

**Panel Members Present**            Councillor E. Hughes (Chair)  
   Councillor A. Paul  
   Councillor L. Beeley  
   Councillor O. Bennett  
   Councillor K. Chambers  
   Councillor R. Martin  
   Councillor D. Shires  
   Councillor R. Thomas

**Non elected voting members  
present**                            K. Yeates  
   E. Chawira

**Non-elected non-voting  
members present**                R. Bragger

**Officers Present**                Michelle Whiting - Assistant Director, Specialist Services  
   Graham Talbot – Interim Managing Director, Serco  
   Avril Walton – Assistant Managing Director, Serco –  
   Management and Development  
   Sue Wedgwood - Assistant Managing Director, Serco –  
   Quality & Effectiveness  
   Dan Mortiboys – Service Accounting and Financial  
   Reporting Manager  
   Darrell Harman – Strategy, Planning & Education  
   Contracts Manager  
   Earl Richards – Head of Learning Support & Innovations  
   Rena Saggiu – Creative Arts/ Gifted & Talented Manager  
   Matt Underhill – Scrutiny Officer

### **75/10 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillor Cassidy, Mr D. Jones & Louise Hughes

### **76/10 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **77/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **78/10 MINUTES**

## **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2011, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

### **79/10 SNEYD SCHOOL**

The Assistant Managing Director, Serco – Management and Development introduced the report (annexed). The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- The arrangements for the transfer of pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 have been completed. In relation to the thirty children currently in Year 8, places have been offered at various schools within and outside the borough, with eight places currently accepted. In respect of the twenty-five pupils in Year 9, again places have been offered at various schools within and outside the borough, with six places currently accepted. In addition, Serco are providing assistance with the cost of uniforms for transferring pupils and travel costs where appropriate;
- There are thirty-nine permanent and twelve temporary staff. These staffing levels have ensured stability for the remaining pupils at the school prior to its closure. However, support is being provided to assist these staff in finding alternative posts;
- It is also anticipated that early closure of the school will enable the school to be free of debt and in budget through to 31 August 2011. The impact of grant funding changes will be off-set by carry forward of reserves to support the school during its final period of operation. Efforts will be made to ensure the school meets the needs of remaining pupils within its resources. This includes undertaking a full search and assessment of equipment owned by the school;
- Year 11 pupils are preparing for examinations this summer. Support is being provided by staff from Barr Beacon College and current projections are that 45% of students could achieve 5+ A\*-C including English and mathematics. A successful funding bid for a further £7,000 from Black Country Challenge will support an Easter Revision programme and Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 transition;
- Following a Member query, the Assistant Managing Director, Serco explained that she had no information regarding when construction of the UTC would begin.
- Following a Member query, the Assistant Managing Director, Serco explained that a request for additional funding by the Head teacher of Brownhills School had been to the Schools Forum to reflect the costs of receiving pupils from Sneyd School. However, the number of children on the January roll had remained unchanged from 2010 to 2011, as a result the request for additional funding had been declined. Following a further query in relation to transport provision of pupils transferring to Brownhills School, Serco officers explained that transport costs were part of the

education contract and provision was made based on individual need. However, negotiations had been undertaken with each transferring pupil and many had chosen to trade their free bus passes in order to fund a specific bus for transport to and from the school;

- Members agreed that the Head teacher of Brownhills School should be invited to the next Panel meeting in relation to her request for further funding. This would enable the Panel to better understand the issues including the Head teachers concern regarding the “emotional and social impact on pupils” transferring to Brownhills School. The Interim Managing Director – Serco also agreed to circulate the funding request letter made by the Head teacher of Brownhills to the Schools Forum to Members;
- A Member expressed support for whg construction work that was underway on fifty new dwellings in Brownhills, which it was anticipated would increase local school pupil numbers.

**Resolved:**

**That**

- 1. the Head teacher of Brownhills School be invited to the next Panel meeting;**
- 2. the letter sent to the Schools Forum by the Head teacher of Brownhills School be circulated to Panel members;**

**and**

- 3. that the report be noted.**

**80/10 SERCO CONTRACT REVIEW**

The Strategy, Planning and Education Contracts Manager introduced the briefing. The following is a summary of the briefing and subsequent discussion:

- The contract review process commenced in October 2010 in anticipation of funding reductions. This process involved the review of four hundred contract output specifications followed by a Change Request to Serco. Serco subsequently undertook an impact assessment and clarifications meetings were then held early in 2011;
- Total agreed savings from the contract were £7.7m, reflecting a loss of £5.6m of education funding from government. However, this would be offset to some extent by £3.9m pupil premium which will be received by schools and £1m of funding from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF). In addition, £1.1m of grants will be received as Dedicated Schools Grants (DSGs). However, this will be committed at the discretion of the Schools Forum;
- Officers explained that significant effort is being made to minimise the impact on front line services and all statutory services will be maintained.

The Interim Managing Director- Serco, explained that while the funding changes represented reductions of 25%, this would not impact on key services including support for children with disabilities and their families, as well as Children's Centres. However, there were implications for a number of areas including strategic and corporate leadership and guidance services for schools and governors. As a consequence there were staffing implications, with two hundred staff informed they are at risk and a ninety-day consultation process now underway. The likely reduction in staff would be between 110 – 120;

- Following a query from the Chair in relation to traded services, the Interim Managing Director- Serco, explained that as there would be no funding from April 2011 these services would cease at the end of the current academic year. The difficulty for schools is that the complete funding position for the next academic year was not yet known and therefore this will delay them in determining which traded services they would like to purchase. At the same time other financial pressures exist for schools including equal pay. The Assistant Managing Director, Serco - Quality & Effectiveness also explained that going forward schools are likely to seek bespoke traded services which meet specific needs.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**81/10 PERFORMANCE OF SERCO EDUCATION CONTRACT**

The Creative Arts/ Gifted and Talented Manager introduced the presentation (attached) in relation to Theme 5 – Services supporting education beyond the classroom for Walsall schools/ Enhancement, Enrichment and Creativity. The following is a summary of the briefing and subsequent discussion:

- Theme 5 focused on forms of learning that were not necessarily within a classroom setting. A key objective of this activity was to help pupils become critical and creative thinkers in preparation for the types of jobs that might be created in the future. There were four strands to Theme 5: teaching and learning; learning beyond the classroom, raising the profile of the visual arts and inclusion;
- Children spend one hundred and ninety days in school each year, while they spend seventy-five percent of each day outside school. It was therefore important to make use of the opportunities to promote learning outside of the classroom. The projects that have been undertaken include the Garden of Earthly Delights which involved creating a picture by stencilling around household items. Local artists have also participated in events, while use is also made of local attractions including the Leather Museum. Other activities include a string drawing where children hang objects representing their aspirations, as well as an achievement trees;
- Following a Panel query, the Creative Arts/ Gifted and Talented Manager explained that schools identify pupils to participate in these activities. Officers pointed out that the programme provided the opportunity to share

good practice and demonstrate how to engage with pupils, with activities that are replicable and self-sustaining. There was also evidence of a strong correlation between pupil's self-esteem and academic performance;

- In response to a Panel query, the Portfolio Holder observed that participation in arts-based activities was more successful as it was more democratic with the quality of what was produced open to interpretation, than participation in sport which tended to demand more immediate and apparent skill.

**Resolved:**

**That the presentation be noted.**

### 82/10 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2010/11

The Service Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager introduced the report (attached) in relation to the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- The forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's and Young People Panel is a net revenue overspend of £1.9m, after the use of approved reserves, carry forwards and action planning. The capital forecast is an underspend of £23m;
- The net revenue overspend is a consequence of challenges experienced in a number of services. Within Vulnerable Children there was an overspend of £0.447m as a result of high numbers of agency staff covering vacancies and sickness. An increase in demand for services for Children with Disabilities was due to high numbers of children with complex needs and resulted in a forecast overspend of £0.154m. In Corporate Parenting an overspend on LAC placements of £1.616m was predicted. Other cost pressures were as a consequence of a significant increase in demands on services, including high levels of agency staff within the LAC team to cover high levels of sickness;
- Financial Risk Assessment work has also been carried out. This has identified a high risk of financial exposure due to a possible increase in the number of LAC, while inter-agency adoption fees were also likely to increase as the strategy of buying adoptive families reduces the number of LAC. Other potential cost pressures include education redundancies which are outside the council's control but for which it is required to meet the cost;
- Following a Panel query, the Assistant Director, Specialist Services explained that long term foster placements are often very beneficial to the child and are cost effective for the council as the level of support required is significantly lower than that required by LAC. However, the council still does not have enough available placements. The Assistant Director pointed out that where long term fostering is used it would be important to ensure that foster parents are provided with appropriate social worker support and legal advice and are not in any way disadvantaged. These new arrangements would also mean that the council reduced the level of fees it pays to foster agencies.

**Resolved:**

**That**

**the Panel noted that the 2010/11 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel is a net revenue overspend of £1.862m, after the use of approved reserves, carry forwards and action planning. The capital forecast is an underspend of £23.022m;**

**and**

**that the report be noted.**

### **83/10 LOCAL SCHOOL PARTICIPATION IN SEEKING ACADEMY STATUS**

The Assistant Managing Director, Serco – Management and Development introduced the briefing. The following is a summary of the briefing and subsequent discussion:

- There are a number of academies already in the borough, including Walsall and Shelfield. In November 2011 the Government invited schools to apply for academy status with the first phase open to school's rated outstanding by Ofsted. This prompted applications from a number of schools including Leamore Park Infant School. The criteria for a successful application included the identification of a poorly performing school which they will work with to raise standards. There is also the option of a joint application from schools which operate as a confederation;
- A further phase of the process now enables schools which have at least one outstanding feature according to Ofsted to apply for academy status. Applications have been made by schools including Alumwell Business College, Blue Coats Performing Arts College and Frank F Harrison Engineering College;
- Officers explained that although there was no obligation each school seeking academy status had advised Serco of their application. In each case they had also made it clear that they wanted to remain within the Walsall family of schools and did not wish to become isolated. It was anticipated that the outcome of applications would be known either by September 2011 or January 2012;
- A Panel member highlighted concerns expressed by teaching staff at a number of schools which are applying for academy status. There are fears that both pay and conditions might be affected by the development of a market place and if schools fail to meet floor targets;
- The Portfolio Holder explained that significant work had been undertaken to establish co-operative arrangements between schools to assist in the cost effective purchase of traded services and to maintain support across

schools.

**Resolved:**

**That the briefing be noted.**

#### **84/10 IMPACT OF BUDGET REDUCTION ON SERVICES**

The Service Accounting and Financial Reporting Manager explained that the budget for 2011/12 had been approved by Cabinet. However, he highlighted that £2.1m had been received to support Specialist Services during the next financial year.

**Resolved:**

**That the briefing be noted.**

#### **85/10 SPECIALIST SERVICES**

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

- Specialist Services continue to ensure that 100% of LAC are allocated appropriate support. A recent away day highlighted that officers within the service are very positive about the changes that have been made and have expressed confidence that the service is now very forward looking;
- It was important to concentrate on the position of those children that were entering the system and significant efforts were being made to ensure that where possible children remained with their families.

**Resolved:**

**That the briefing be noted.**

#### **86/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel reviewed their Work Programme and latest version of Cabinet's Forward Plan of key decisions. A Panel Member highlighted that item **8/11 Leighswood School** would need to be amended to reflect the correct Portfolio Holder.

**Resolved:**

**That**

**the Scrutiny Officer would advise Constitutional Services of the required revision to the Forward Plan set out above;**

**and**

**that the Work Programme 2010/11 and Forward Plan be noted.**

**87/10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The time and date of the next meeting was noted as 28 April 2011.

The meeting terminated at 7:52pm

Chair:

Date:

**DRAFT**