

CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2011 AT 6. 00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

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

Non elected voting members present Alan McDevitt

Non elected non-voting members present R. Bragger
D. Jones

Officers Present Michelle Whiting - Assistant Director, Specialist Services
Graham Talbot - Interim Managing Director, Serco
Frank Barnes - Assistant Managing Director, Participation, Serco
Darrell Harman - Strategy, Planning and Education Contracts Manager
Barbara Watt - Consultant in Public Health, NHS Walsall
Matt Underhill - Scrutiny Officer

88/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillor Cassidy, Councillor Thomas, Sue Wedgwood, Louise Hughes and Paul Williams.

89/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

90/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

91/10 MINUTES

The Scrutiny Officer reported that there had been a minor editorial change to the minutes printed in the agenda.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

92/10 SNEYD SCHOOL

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

- Inspectors recently determined that the school was no longer in special measures. The successful partnership with Barr Beacon School had contributed to this outcome. The school was set to close at the end of the academic year but would continue to receive comprehensive support until closure;
- Helen Keenan, Head Teacher of Brownhills School, explained that her school had played a successful part in the winding down of Sneyd School with a number of children transferring and successfully integrating at Brownhills school;
- At present, 63 pupils have transferred from Sneyd to Brownhills school at various stages between April 2009 and 2011 with the majority of students in year 9. The Head Teacher of Brownhills school expressed frustration that her school was not more involved in the management of the transition, particularly as a number of academically capable students transferred to schools elsewhere. Following a member query, the Head Teacher of Brownhills School explained that she believed more successful governance arrangements might have included a seat for her on Sneyd's Interim Executive Board (IEB);
- Brownhills School also had also undertake significant work with the transferred pupils to ensure that they met the required key stage standards;
- A significant issue for transferring pupils was transport and the lengths of journey undertaken. Brownhills school currently meets the cost of a bus for pupils.

- However, the Head Teacher expressed frustration that while no additional monies had been made available for the school, it still provided this transport;
- Further support for transferring pupils was provided via a member of staff who had previously worked at Sneyd and was now employed at Brownhills school. Following a member query, it was explained that no other former Sneyd staff were employed at Brownhills. However, this was a consequence of there not being suitable posts for which they could apply. Other issues which Brownhills school had to manage included the permanent exclusion of one transferring pupil who had caused significant disruption;
 - Following a member query, the Head Teacher of Brownhills explained that she believed future best practice should include help towards the cost of transport for transferring pupils. A role for the recipient school in the governance of the closing school, guidance regarding numbers of transferring pupils, including sixth formers, she emphasised the need for transparency in the process.
 - The Interim Managing Director, Serco, explained that in terms of the likely surplus in Sneyd school's closing accounts, it will be the decision of the Schools Forum to determine how it was allocated. The Head Teacher of Brownhills expressed concern regarding the decision to allocate this funding equally across all schools, rather than to her school which had received the majority of transferring pupils;
 - The Interim Managing Director, Serco, explained that he was not aware that there had been difficulties in terms of determining the future destinations of current Sneyd Year 11 pupils. However, he agreed to provide guidance to members on this matter. He also accepted the importance of careful planning for similar schemes in the future;
 - A member expressed concern regarding the lack of guidance available in respect of how the Schools Forum operated. It was agreed that a briefing would be provided to members. A further member expressed his frustration at the absence of funding to Brownhills school, including in respect of transport.

Resolved:

That

- (1) Guidance will be provided to Members regarding the plans for transferring current Year 11 Sneyd pupils;**
 - (2) Guidance will be provided to the members regarding the Schools Forum;**
- and**
- (3) That the report be noted.**

93/10 SERCO CONTRACT REVIEW PROCESS

- A report was presented to Cabinet regarding the likely impact of the review. Final contract agreement and sign-off was imminent, close with the impact of the decisions taken would be likely to be felt over the next ten months as schools decide their individual budgets and determine which services they wish to use;
- In response to a query from the Chair, the Interim Managing Director, Serco, explained that in respect of traded services, it was likely that a certain number of redundancies was likely as it had not been possible for a clear picture of what schools will purchase to emerge at this stage;
- A member observed that the contract review process had proved to be an excellent piece of procurement;
- Officers explained that specific contract theme areas, including health and safety and support for disabled children had not been subject to negotiation and remained unaffected following the review process.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

94/10 PERFORMANCE OF SERCO EDUCATION CONTRACT

The Assistant Managing Director, Serco introduced the report in relation to Theme 2 – those services supporting the special educational needs and inclusion framework in Walsall schools and with families in the borough. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- The decision about whether or not a statement is required is made by carrying out a “statutory assessment of special educational needs”. It is produced in consultation with a number of education experts. The panel heard that the percentage of children who are statemented in Walsall is 2.2%, this compares to the national average of 2.7%. There are currently 1,494 children at School Action + in Walsall schools which represented 3.2% of the total school population;
- All decisions to make a statutory assessment are subject to the advice of a statutory assessment panel that comprises a range of education professionals, this collaborative process has resulted in a low number of appeals;
- In relation to the issuing of statements, Walsall has achieved 100% of statements being completed within statutory timescales during 2009/10;
- In terms of future developments it was anticipated that a Green Paper “Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability” might lead to significant changes to the SEN process;
- A member observed that it would be important to promote the success of this activity. Following a member query, the Assistant Managing Director - Serco explained that the majority of appeals were as a result of a failure to accommodate a child’s needs. Following a further member query, officers explained that problems can be experienced in ensuring that a receiving school has a comprehensive picture of a child’s needs, as it is often difficult to establish what has happened previously if a child’s arrival at the school is in difficult circumstances.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

95/10 SPECIALIST SERVICES

The Assistant Director introduced the report. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- In respect of Member participation in specialist services visits, a number of Members had agreed to be key links with council children homes;
- Members have also been identified from each of the main political parties to sit on the Corporate Parenting Board;
- In terms of working smarter, reshaping of services continues. This includes reductions in workload and 100% of looked after children and children with a protection plan allocated;
- Managers are also being trained in the Tony Morrison supervision model as part of efforts to strengthen the risk assessment process;
- The Members participating in this activity commented on the degree of positive buy-in that had been achieved.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

96/10 CHILDREN'S OBESITY WORKING GROUP

Councillor Ian Robertson introduced the Working Group report. The following is a summary of the report and subsequent discussion:

- Councillor Robertson explained that there had been long-held concerns in Walsall regarding levels of obesity and the increase in Type 2 Diabetes. As a result, the Working Group decided to consider activity undertaken locally and elsewhere to tackle obesity;
- Barbara Watt, Consultant in Public Health, explained that obesity was now a global epidemic;

- Councillor Robertson highlighted the activity of food dudes which Barbara Watt explained was a programme based on twenty teams of education research and evidence and was now being used in a number of areas within England and throughout Southern Ireland. The PCT was about to fund a pilot programme which included 10 schools within the borough commencing in September, 2011;
- There was general agreement that the increase in obesity would be difficult to reverse. However, it was critical that changes in eating habits were linked with home lifestyle.

Resolved:

- (1) That the panel approves recommendations of the Obesity Working Group as follows:
 1. to tackle childhood obesity and ensure collective local resources are focused on those areas within the borough with the greatest inequalities using Public Health intelligence including the Children's Healthy Weight Needs Assessment;
 2. funding is identified through key partners e.g. Local Authority, to enable full participation in the Food Dudes programme in all 86 Primary Schools in Walsall;
 3. Walsall special schools participate in the Food Dudes pilot; this group is identified through Walsall's Healthy Weight Strategy as a high risk group;
 4. best practice and shared learning from the A* STAR Active School Travel and Road Safety scheme is implemented in schools throughout the borough, including the establishment of a network of schools;
 5. best practice and shared learning from the Bikeability scheme is implemented in schools throughout the borough, including the development of a central training site;

6. commercial sponsors are sought to support the promotion and maintenance of cycle and tow paths for recreation and exercise;
7. the consultation zone for planning applications for take-aways would be 100m radius for residents/business and is extended to schools within a 400m radius;
8. schools, Serco and NHS Walsall should be alerted if a planning application is received for a take-away within 400m of a school;
9. the upper floors of existing take-aways should not be approved as locations for Free Schools or Academies;
10. a Health Impact section be included in all council reports, led by Public Health;
11. consideration is given to the use of new social media to help in the promotion of healthy lifestyles to young people;
12. the Council and school's require there to be effective communication between kitchen and lunchtime staff to help promote healthy food options;
13. each school has a governor nominated for health;
14. a Walsall Healthy School Awards standard is introduced to engage schools to increase physical activity and improve diet, championed by a Councillor;
15. parents receive a letter at the commencement of their child's primary and secondary school education setting out the school's policy to obesity;

16. nominated points of contact are established and updated where necessary to maintain effective communication between schools and NHS Walsall and other statutory partners in relation to obesity;
17. school dinner portion sizes are appropriate for children at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2;
18. the Childhood Obesity Working Group be re-established in the new Municipal Year;

(2) That the report be noted.

97/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND FORWARD PLAN

The Panel reviewed their Work Programme and latest version of Cabinet's Forward Plan of key decisions.

Resolved

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

98/10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair explained that the time and date of the next meeting would be determined by Annual Council on 25 May, 2011.

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chair:

Date:

