



Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 12 November 2014

Attendance

Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss (Chair)
Cllr Mark Evans (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lorna McGregor
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Daniel Warren
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cyril Randles

Church of England – Diocese of Lichfield

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Daphne Atkinson	Senior Consultant Social Worker, Community Directorate
Emma Bennett	Assistant Director - Children, Young People and Families
Alexandra Chilcott	Head of Standards and Vulnerable Pupils
Colin Parr	Licensing Manager
Adam Hadley	Scrutiny and Transparency Manager
Alison Hinds	Head of Looked After Children
Alison Shannon	Finance Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies were received from the following members of the panel

Cllr Susan Constable
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Mrs Rosalie Watkins
Portia Tsvangirai
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest recorded

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting 24.9.14**

The minutes of the meeting of 24.9.14 were approved

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5 **Budget Review - 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 - 2018/19**

Cllr Val Gibson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, gave a brief overview of the background to the budget savings proposals. Cllr Gibson commented on the further savings target of £15 million to be achieved by 2016/17. Cllr Gibson commented that if any of the savings proposals are not accepted that savings would have to be sought from elsewhere.

Cllr Gibson commented that the biggest budget cost was expenditure on looked after children service, but explained that the work of the Families R First programme is expected to deliver savings in the future. Cllr Gibson commented on the learning from the changes introduced by Essex County Council in the looked after children and the work being done to implement them locally.

Cllr Gibson confirmed the Council's commitment to Wolverhampton Youth Zone. Cllr Gibson commented on discussions with representatives of Steve Morgan Foundation about future plans.

The panel comments on the saving proposals are attached at **appendix 1**.

Appendix 1

Updated June Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
Children and Families		
Children's Short Breaks administration	Community	No comments
Wolverhampton Youth Zone	Community	Kasmie Hawker was disappointed at the further savings cuts aimed at the youth service. Kasmie wanted reassurance that the impact of the savings will be effectively monitored after they have been made.
Special Educational Needs Reform Grant Efficiencies	Community	No comments
Looked After Children	Community	<p>There was concern about the size of the budget and its needs to be watched. Cllr Gibson accepted this and explained that the number of looked after children had stabilised at around 800 and was confident that the savings target could be achieved.</p> <p>The proposals were welcomed as an alternative to care homes and there was support for the Council taking this approach.</p>
Commissioning – Bring forward 18/19 savings	Community	No comments
Additional Savings - The Haven	Community	The service is highly regarded and provides important support to vulnerable groups. The support given by the Council to help Haven secure alternative sources of funding was queried. Cllr Gibson explained that the Council works closely with Haven to make the savings

		<p>and how they could become self-sustaining. Cllr Gibson commented on the work being done to provide different types of support, for example helping people to move through the system quickly.</p> <p>There is a risk that the savings cuts will represent a false economy and issue for the people concerned will not be resolved and lead to problems in the future. A comment was made about whether the Council was confident that there was not going to be gaps in the care provided.</p>
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October Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
Children and Families		
Children, Young People and Families Voluntary Redundancies.	Community	A comment was made about whether the Council has got the skills and experience to continue to deliver the service. There was concern that about the numbers of staff who could qualify for voluntary redundancy and the impact that this could have on the service. Cllr Gibson responded that she was confident that the service has the skills. Cllr Gibson commented on the changes in workforce as a result of the introduction of the new operating model that would support the delivery of the service in the future.
Review Workforce Need and Capabilities within the Safeguarding and Quality Service	Community	No Comments

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CYP Scrutiny Budget Report Appendix A 12.11.14 (Ofsted) Inspection Outcomes (April - October 2014)

Alexandra Chilcott explained that 19 schools had been fully inspected and the report provides a summary of the judgements of Ofsted. As a result of the Ofsted inspections Wolverhampton is expected to move up the league table.

The panel commented that the performance of secondary schools was much better than primary schools. The panel commented about concerns from expressed by primary schools that they had not been properly supported by school improvement team. Further there was surprise about the lack of support to help schools prepare for the inspection.

Alexandra explained that due to budgetary pressures and changes in the service there is strong focus on challenging schools to prepare for the inspection and improve their service. Alexandra explained that there are two primary school advisers that cover 80 primary schools, which makes it difficult to provide the kind of support that schools would like. There is no secondary school adviser.

In addition, schools can buy in additional support in preparation for an Ofsted inspection.

The panel commented on the results for Deansfield Secondary School which was now in special measures and queried the reasons for change. Alexandra explained that the result for Deansfield was a surprise. The Ofsted report had previously been

subject to light touch inspection due its previous performance at GSCE. The effectiveness of school leadership was highlighted in the report.

A key factor in Deansfield school results was a national change which meant that vocational qualifications were no included in the calculation of the GCSE scores. This change had a massive difference to schools teaching a large number of vocational schools. Deansfield School is currently looking for an academy sponsor.

The progress of the school is being reviewed every six weeks by the school improvement board. The school have been advised to make changes to their action plan. The school are also receiving support from inspection services.

Youth Council criticised the support given to Deansfield School and was concerned about the GSCE rate falling from 78% to 48%. Alexandra explained that the results are unvalidated and do not take account the work done with the school to improve its performance. Alexandra commented on the support given to schools before an inspection by the school improvement service. Alexandra commented that schools can commission support services to help them prepare for an inspection.

The panel commented on the 'warning signs' in respect of light touch schools and whether they the school inspectors could have picked up that there was an issue. Alexandra commented that the changes such as the appointment of a new Headteacher or changes in the membership of school governing bodies are situations where inspectors will look at a school.

Alexandra explained that all schools get a visit from the school improvement service and inspectors will consider risk factors and where there are concerns extra visits are arranged.

The panel welcomed the report and the improvements in the performance of schools that were inspected. The panel commented on whether the approach adopted by the service was too heavy handed and affecting the relationship with schools. Alexandra commented on efforts to rebuild relationships with head teachers and the support offered to schools, for example, the weekly newsletter sent to schools.

Resolved

The panel welcomed the report. The panel agreed to receive a further update report in June 2015 on school inspection reports.

8 **Fostering recruitment strategy report**

Daphne Atkinson and Alison Hinds introduced the report. Daphne outlined the range of work being done to recruit new foster carers and promote the service. Daphne explained that Wolverhampton is part of the DFEE network and the work being done using social media to engage with potential foster carers and also to explain what is involved in the process and what they should expect.

Daphne commented that Wolverhampton is on target to meets its aims to approving an agreed number of foster care applications.

Daphne commented that the service had received nine referrals contacts last week, which will be followed up. Daphne commented on the use of MOSAIC system to help to profiling potential foster carers. The information provided is used to target foster carers in a different way than before.

Daphne commented that the foster care service is looking at the fees policy as part of wider efforts to both support existing foster carers and also recruit new foster carers.

Cllr Gibson commented on the work being done with City Direct who responded to advertisement and have expressed an interest in being a foster carer. Cllr Gibson commented that there was not enough follow up during the early stages of the recruitment process. Daphne commented on the work being done with City Direct when they receive calls to check that the caller meets the basic criteria before referring them. For example, that the caller has a spare bedroom. Daphne explained that work is being done on the revised script for City Direct which will help to improve the situation and ensure that calls are dealt with correctly. This work will be supported by publishing information on share point.

Daphne wanted to record her thanks to staff who given up their time to attend public fostering events and show a level of enthusiasm that engaged members of the public.

The panel expressed surprise that the report did not include references to Wolverhampton College and the fostering courses they offer. Daphne explained that work done with Wolverhampton College. Wolverhampton College delivers mandatory NVQ courses to foster carers. The college also provide online courses for foster carers.

The panel commented on the checks done on the suitability of potential foster carers. Cllr Gibson commented on the reasons for people may not go through the whole process. Cllr Gibson explained that people can start the process again at a future date. Daphne explained that it is important that people are clear about what is expected from them as future foster carers and it fits with their family circumstances and home situation.

Alison commented on the importance of looking at the reasons why people have dropped and continuing to talk to them and the work done to support existing foster carers.

Daphne commented on the importance of keeping in touch with people who have expressed an interest in wanting to be a foster carer.

The panel commented on the advertising work done to recruit foster carers and the profile of people who apply. Daphne commented on the reasons that people and that are typically very ordinary people who want to do something for their local community.

The panel queried the reason for the increase in the number of telephone enquiries in May 2013. Daphne explained that during this period there are lot of local and national promotional work linked to national fostering week. Emma Bennett that the

Council website has lots of links to information on the internet, including videos aimed at encouraging people to consider becoming a foster carer

Resolved

The panel welcomed the report

9 **The Licensing Authority and Safeguarding Children**

Colin Parr gave a brief summary of the report headlines and the reasons for presenting the report to the panel. Colin explained that there have been regular meetings between employees from licensing services and safeguarding. The findings of the Jay Report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham had highlighted the role played by the taxi drivers in the abuse.

Colin commented on the value of the regular contact between the services and how information sharing agreements had been used as to support investigations into concerns about private hire driver's licenses. Colin commented on the establishment of the Regulatory and Safeguarding Forum and that this was the only such forum in the West Midlands region.

The panel endorsed the report and the reassurance that the issue of child safeguarding is being tackled together by the key agencies. The panel queried the opportunity for councillor involvement in the process.

Colin explained that regular reports are presented to the licensing committee, but there was limited Councillor involvement in the process. The licensing committee get updates on progress. The work is also within the remit of the Childrens Board.

Colin commented that an update report will be presented to the panel in 12 months detailing the work of the forum. The report will provide the opportunity to see the impact of the new work detailed in the report. Colin commented that in addition to the issue of taxi drivers, there was also concern about young children working in off-licences and selling alcohol to other children. Colin explained that a report could be presented to the panel in December 2015.

Resolved

The panel welcomed the report and agreed to receive an update report detailing the work of regulatory services and safeguarding forum at meeting in December 2015.

The meeting closed at 7:35pm