

Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

20 June 2018 – At a meeting of the Committee held at 12.30 pm at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Cloake, arrived at 1.15pm (Chairman)

Mr High	Mrs Jones, left at 2.50pm	Mr Wickremaratchi
Mr Baldwin, left at 2.50pm	Ms Lord, left at 4.00pm	Canon Dr Holt
Mrs Bennett	Mrs Mullins, left at 2.50pm	Mr Lozzi
Mrs Dennis	Mr Marshall	
Mrs Hall, left at 3.45pm	Mrs Pendleton, left at 3.50pm	

Apologies were received from Mr Arnold and Mrs Ryan. Mr Cloake gave apologies for the beginning of the meeting.

Also in attendance: Mr Burrett (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills [and Deputy Leader]), and Mr Hillier (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People).

Part I

1. Introduction of new Parent Governors

Mr High in the Chair

1.1 Mr High advised the Committee that two new Parent Governor's had been appointed as co-opted members onto the Committee, Mr Giovanni Lozzi and Mr Mark Arnold.

2. Declarations of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

3.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the last meeting held on 14 March 2018 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. School Effectiveness Strategy

4.1 The Committee heard that a new School Effectiveness Strategy would outline how the County Council works with education providers over the next four years, to ensure that all West Sussex children and young people get the best start in life. It would replace the current and existing strategy for School Improvement 2016-2019. Deborah Myers, Director of

Education and Skills, advised the Committee that a consultation was underway which invited stakeholders to comment on the draft strategy (copy appended to the signed minutes). The results of the consultation would help to shape the new School Effectiveness Strategy so that it better reflects the current landscape and context of education.

4.2 The Director of Education took the Committee through a presentation about the consultation approach, and provided some interim response data (copy appended to the signed minutes). A summary of the key points included:

- The consultation and future strategy aims to take account of the changing landscape of education, such as the increase in academies and major funding challenges faced by both schools and the County Council.
- The County Council is responsible for strategically organising schools to ensure that they work in the most sustainable and effective way to support pupil outcomes. The consultation proposes aims and objectives for School Organisation and Improvement. These two areas of work (organisation and improvement) provide the framework for the education system in West Sussex.
- For School Organisation, the aim is to establish one model of robust and sustainable education for all schools and key stages. This includes an eventual objective of all through Primary Schools in West Sussex for children from 4 – 11 years old, securing sufficient places at schools which are of a viable size and readily accessible, and ensuring the needs of all pupils are met.
- For School Improvement, the aim is for effective challenge and support in order to secure long-term financial sustainability. Resources would be closely monitored to ensure their use is targeted in the best way, an enhanced level of support for schools that require help or improvement would be available, and strong leadership would be brokered.
- The consultation was launched on 15 May and would close on 25 June 2018. A number of engagement events had been undertaken with stakeholders to promote a healthy response rate. Additional means of contact and comments were also being considered during the consultation period to inform the strategy. The results will be available in early July 2018.

4.3 A summary of the main points raised in discussion included:

- Members were concerned about what the strategy meant for small, rural schools and noted the figure of 210 pupils had concerned some schools. The Director of Education and Skills, and Mark Jenner, Head of School Effectiveness, confirmed that Primary head-teachers were briefed on such details at the beginning of the School Effectiveness Strategy process. The Director of Education and Skills advised that the County Council would support the contextual rurality of West Sussex where possible, and confirmed the strategy sought for possible ways in which informal collaborations could be made for efficiency and sustainability, such as the sharing of facilities, admin staff or head-teachers.

- The Local authority is cognisant of longer-term consequences for smaller schools, and their viability remains a complicated issue. The Head of School Effectiveness stressed the need to consider the future, in terms of neighbourhood plans, migration, housebuilding and so on. A pragmatic approach would need to be taken, as learning inevitably suffers when funding is lowered. Members agreed that smaller schools could be vulnerable if they don't work together; properly structured partnerships could prevent school closures whilst maintaining a good quality level of education, leadership and prospects.
- Members were interested to know what the benefits of an all through Primary model were. The Director of Education and Skills advised that the Primary and Secondary model yielded better outcomes for pupils, including improved levels of progress and attainment, by removing the unnecessary multiple transition points. Members agreed that a consistency of approach was sensible, and appreciated the shift from infant to junior school had the potential to be destabilising for some children.
- Members questioned if the transition to a single model of school organisation was achievable in the given 4 year time scale, considering the likely amount of upheaval alongside daily learning. The Director of Education and Skills advised that the principles as laid out in the draft strategy were acutely realistic by 2022.
- Members noted that the draft strategy did not report in detail plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Director of Education and Skills responded that the draft strategy would address education as a whole, driving towards a culture of greater inclusivity. She advised that capacity would be built into Special Support Centres (SSC's) to improve provision for children with SEND who are taught in mainstream schools. She added that an inclusive approach better prepares children for later life. Members also heard that the final School Effectiveness Strategy document would contain a high level of detail and clarity.

4.4 Resolved –

- i. That the Committee endorses the recommendation to progress the development of a new West Sussex School Effectiveness Strategy 2018 – 2022. This will incorporate a refreshed School Improvement Policy that will enable the County Council to challenge and support schools to raise standards.
- ii. The Committee recommended that sufficient resources are made available for the Education and Skills directorate to achieve the outcomes as proposed by the draft School Effectiveness Strategy.
- iii. The Committee requested that the Business Planning Group considers how best to work with schools who have received a double 'Requires Improvement' judgement from Ofsted, in order to support School Improvement.

5. Business Planning Group Report

Mr Cloake in the Chair

5.1 The Chairman took members through the report of the Business Planning Group. In view of the recent and proposed cuts to Thomas Bennett Community College, and the County Council's limited ability to intervene, the BPG recommended that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills write to the Secretary of State to request that government review the powers of Local Authorities to intervene in academies where they are facing difficulty.

5.2 Members heard from the Director of Education and Skills that the top priority for the National Schools Commissioner was to improve outcomes for failing academies. Members noted that this national situation could be used for influence when writing to the Secretary of State. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed this was a sound recommendation and that he was happy to write to the Secretary of State, expressing the regret that the County Council is not able to do more to help and support those academies facing challenge.

5.3 Resolved –

- i. That the Committee endorses the contents of the Business Planning Group report.
- ii. That the Committee recommends the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills write to the Secretary of State to request that government review the powers of Local Authorities to intervene in academies where they are in difficulties in order to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties and champion their children and young people to ensure they get the best start in life.

6. Business Planning Group Appointments

6.1 Resolved - the Committee agreed that the membership of the Business Planning Group would continue to comprise Mr Cloake (Chairman), Mr High (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Mullins, Mrs Hall and Ms Lord.

7. West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report

7.1 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2016/17 (copy appended to the signed minutes). He explained that there had since been some considerable changes to the board, and therefore it should be noted for contextual purposes this was now a historical document. The 2017/18 annual report is expected to be published this autumn, capturing the recent changes, successes and ongoing challenges. Annie MacIver, Director of Children and Family Services, and Jonathan Brydon, Head of Safeguarding, discussed the report with members. A summary of the key points raised included:

- The WSSCB consists of approximately 53 members. The purpose of the board is to hold the safeguarding partnership to account for the effective delivery of services to safeguard children and promote

their wellbeing. A collaborative approach with partners is vital for the effective safeguarding of children.

- Safeguarding partners include the police, health, education, housing, Districts and Boroughs and other key partners.
- 2016/17 saw successes in the following main areas: The introduction of the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) model, the development and improvement of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and the effective service management of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). These areas continue to be a priority for 2017/18.
- Improvements to be made in 2017/18 specifically included:
 - The development of additional partner agency resources within the MASH.
 - To simplify MASH processes.
 - To undertake more wide reaching work in terms of Child Exploitation (CE), criminalisation and missing, as opposed to CSE alone.
 - To develop and implement learning from serious case reviews.
 - To ensure more equitable safeguarding resource allocation between the County Council and partners.
- Members asked how the Board were going to engage with the Night Time Economy to identify vulnerable children who present as potential safeguarding risks. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that a Charity had recently been commissioned to deliver a programme to explore this.
- Members noted the challenges faced by the board, and welcomed the successes already achieved. It was agreed by members and officers that the 2017/18 Annual Report had potential to be more dynamic and user friendly, as the 2016/17 version was very dense.

7.2 Resolved –

- i. That the Committee considered the successes and areas for improvement for the WSSCB in 2016/17.
- ii. That the Committee considered the WSSCB's key messages for partner agencies and West Sussex County Council.
- iii. The Committee recommended that they would like a progress summary in 2017/18's annual report, in terms of actions achieved, and objectives still to be met. Members also requested an overview on how District and Borough colleagues were dealing with Night Time Economy.

8. Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help Update

8.1 Stephen Hillier, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the item on the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) service update. He thanked Hayley Connor, Head of Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help, for making this unique service model a success.

8.2 The Head of IPEH delivered a presentation which updated members on progress made so far, the impact of the new service, perspectives of staff, strengths and weaknesses, and the next steps for further development (copy appended to the signed minutes). A summary of the key points arising from the presentation included:

- The IPEH model was the product of bringing together a collection of assorted services in order to create a safe and connected early help system.
- Support is offered through four main areas of focus: A Flying Start (0-5years), In School, Ready to learn, YourSpace Youth and Skills for Life.
- A recent survey identified that IPEH staff felt strongly that they are making a positive difference to the lives of families and young people.
- IPEH as a frontline service has significantly reduced the strain on Children's social care. The system of support prevents the needs of children and families from escalating.
- There are 3 main areas for development in 2018/19: to improve the performance and integration of the Healthy Child Programme, to improve the consistency of performance across hub areas, and to engage staff in finding solutions to the concerns identified in the staff survey.

8.3 In discussion after the presentation, the following points were considered by members and answered by the Head of IPEH:

- Members were keen to understand if and how the outcomes of families were considered post engagement with the IPEH service. The Head of IPEH explained that exit surveys were issued, and further efforts to record those families reached by IPEH would be made.
- Members were keen to understand further the consistency of performance across hub areas, and if there were particular locations or patterns indicating a lower level of engagement. The Head of IPEH explained there was not one, or a group, of particular hubs underperforming and their work was influenced more by local themes and issues.
- The Head of IPEH added that in areas of deprivation results may take longer, or be harder to achieve. Hub-by-hub plans are created; the focus determined by the local need. The Director of Children and Family services added that these geographical differences in priorities were supported through effective management and distribution of budgets and expertise.

8.4 Members noted the achievements of IPEH and joined the Cabinet Member in thanking the Head of IPEH and wider team for the successes so far.

8.5 Resolved – that the Committee notes the achievements of IPEH during its first year, together with proposed actions to further the aims of a dynamic and integrated preventative service during 2018/19, and endorses the progress made so far.

9. Private Fostering

9.1 The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director Children, Adults, Families, Health and Education and the Director of Children and Family Services (copy appended to the signed minutes). The report was introduced by Sarah Foster, Service Lead Fostering and Adoption, who told the Committee:

- A private fostering arrangement is when a child under the age of 16, or 18 if they are registered disabled, lives with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. Relatives that are not defined as 'close' include cousins, great aunts and family friends.
- The person intending to privately foster a child must notify the County Council at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to commence.
- Once the arrangement has commenced, the County Council must be notified that this is the case. A written assessment by officers should be started within 7 days to consider the suitability of the arrangement. The assessment must be complete within 42 working days of the notification. The child should be seen alone during this time, to inform the suitability assessment.
- The private foster carer becomes responsible for the child's day-to-day care. Although the County Council doesn't regulate private foster carers, it must be satisfied that the welfare of the child is safeguarded and promoted.
- Every privately fostered child should be visited at regular intervals; the frequency of these visits would decrease if the arrangement continued for a second, and any subsequent years. Ad-hoc visits can also be made based on the need. Again, the child should be seen alone during these visits, and a written report of the visit made.
- Awareness raising activities are a key priority for the Private Fostering service. As these arrangements can often be informal, an annually prepared Awareness Strategy is prepared in order to achieve the following:
 - Raise awareness amongst residents and professionals of what private fostering actually is, the responsibilities and statutory functions.
 - To support those providing private foster care.
 - To build and maintain links with internal and external stakeholders, ensuring they are aware of their legal duties and provide timely referrals.
 - To support related national campaigns.

9.2 Members appreciated the challenges faced by the Private Fostering service and the heavy reliance upon referrals to identify these arrangements. They also understood this made it a difficult topic to both report and provide data on. The Committee agreed that hidden arrangements had potential to be of some concern, and hoped that the awareness strategy would promote an increase in referrals. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People suggested a concise brief for members might be useful to enable them to assist in raising the profile of private fostering. Members agreed this would be useful, and that they could also have conversations with their local schools.

9.3 Resolved – that the Committee supports the approach undertaken in West Sussex to identify, assess and support private fostering arrangements.

10. Procurement of a Dynamic Purchasing System for Children's Placements and other Accommodation and Support Services

10.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Education and Skills (copy appended to the signed minutes). Karen Wells, Head of Market Development, delivered a presentation to the Committee on the procurement of a Dynamic Purchasing System (copy appended to the signed minutes), who highlighted the following:

- The County Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure the sufficiency of a variety of accommodation based services for children and young people.
- There is an increasing demand for these placements and the children and young people who are supported are done so in a number of different settings. The cost of the placement can vary depending on the needs of the child. There is not one unit cost.
- The County Council does provide some of these services, however the demand is such that a number of placements are purchased from the external market. Predictive analytics indicate this trend is expected to continue.
- The County Council currently has a number of contractual arrangements for purchasing these placements. Two of the largest contracts are coming to an end of their permitted term. The County Council is therefore seeking to procure one DPS to facilitate the purchase of external accommodation based placements.
- The commissioning of the DPS is primarily designed to focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. It will also encourage new suppliers, competitive pricing and the provision of specialist placements.
- The DPS would result in a longer term commitment to developing specialist services for our children and young people.

10.2 The Committee noted there were potential savings to be made, and felt that an evaluation after six months would realise the impact and savings.

10.3 Resolved – that the Committee supports the recommendation that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agrees:

- i. To procure a DPS which will facilitate the purchasing of placements for individual children from providers of accommodation based services, including independent foster and residential care and independent non-maintained schools, as and when they are required. The term of the DPS is to be 7 years in total, starting on 1 February 2019 and concluding on 31 January 2026.

- ii. To delegate authority to the Director of Children and Family Services to implement the DPS for the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2026 for the supply of all children's placements and other support services.

11. Outturn Total Performance Monitor 2017/18

11.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Finance, Performance and Procurement (copy appended to the signed minutes). The report was introduced by Chris Salt, Strategic Finance Business Partner, who explained the financial and performance position of the Children's and Young People portfolio at the end of financial year 2017/18. He told the Committee:

- The Children and Young People portfolio had underspent by £1.3m. Cost pressures had been mitigated through deliberate management action including staffing underspends.
- Spending within Children's Social Care had improved vastly on 2016/17, and stayed mostly on budget. This has however meant the service has been under pressure with an increase in caseloads.

11.2 Andy Thorne, Strategic Finance Business Partner, took the Committee through the financial and performance position of the Education and Skills portfolio at the end of financial year 2017/18. He told the Committee:

- The Education and Skills portfolio had overspent by £1.1m owing largely to the pressures of the SEND home to school transport service. The service had also seen a large level increase in both the volume of children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP), and the market cost for these services. An action plan to mitigate this pressure in 2018/19 is currently being worked on within the service.
- Additional costs arose to support redundancy schemes in West Sussex schools. These redundancies were required in order to stay within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), however, where there are no funds to support these schemes the County Council had to pick this up.

11.3 Members considered the performance overviews for both the Children and Young People and Education and Skills portfolios. The following comments were made by the Committee:

- Performance in Key Stage 2 needed to be a major focus for the Education and Skills directorate. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agreed, and it was noted that the new School Effectiveness Strategy should help in realising improvements for KS2.
- Members questioned what was being done to improve underperformance. The Director of Children and Family Services explained that action plans had been put in place, informing the priorities for the service. It was noted that the performance data in the Outturn Total Performance Monitor (TPM) should be considered alongside the contextual information that is also provided in the report.

- Members heard that the data could be hugely affected by a minority cohort which would give a skewed representation of performance. Members and officers agreed that a clearer narrative thread would be helpful for 2018/19's Outturn TPM, particularly as the Education and Skills directorate enters a period of change.

11.4 Resolved – that the Committee examined the data and supporting commentary for the Outturn TPM.

12. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

12.1 The Committee considered a tabled paper which was a new version of the Forward Plan dated 4 June 2018 (copy appended to the signed minutes). This version of the Forward Plan was not included in the Committee papers as it had been published following the statutory despatch of the agenda.

12.2 Resolved – that the forward plan be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting

13.1 The Committee noted that the next scheduled meeting will be held on 12 September 2018 at 10.30 at County Hall, Chichester.

13.2 The Committee thanked Deborah Myers for her work as Director of Education and Skills; she will leave West Sussex County Council in August 2018. The Committee also extended their thanks to Dr Ann Holt, who announced that this meeting would be her last as a co-opted representative of the Church of England Diocese.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

Chairman