



**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 JANUARY 2011**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S F WILLIAMS (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors P A Carpenter, C J Davie, M W Gilbert, J R Hicks, J D Hough (Vice-Chairman), Miss A M Jenkyns, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, R A Shore, R B Singleton-McGuire, M Smith and C J Underwood-Frost.

Councillors Mrs P A Bradwell (Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education) and A Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Education) were also in attendance.

Added Members: Mrs J E Pilsworth, Dr B Roberts, Mrs K A Seddon and Mrs G Wright.

Officers in attendance: Debbie Barnes (Assistant Director for Children's Services), Sue Westcott (Assistant Director for Children's Services), Andy Breckon (Assistant Director – School Improvement Service), Paul Snook (Principal School Improvement Adviser – Strategic Projects), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer) and Katrina Cope (Team Leader Democratic Support).

61. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N Worth.

Apologies were also received from Mrs E French and Mr S Rudman.

62. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor R A Shore declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 (minute number 64 refers), as a member of an Academy.

Councillor C J Underwood-Frost declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 (minute number 64 refers), as a member of an Academy.

**63. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2011**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

64. CHILDREN'S SERVICES CORE OFFER

The Chairman at the start of this item highlighted to the Committee, the contents of a briefing note from the Executive Director Performance and Governance, which highlighted that when members were considering the budget proposals, it was appropriate to explore the impact on service delivery. It was highlighted that it was not however appropriate to seek to debate any detail which would have an impact on employees, as proposals for future staffing arrangements in the context of the budget recommendations were currently being developed. A copy of the full briefing note was circulated to members at the meeting.

The Assistant Director for Children's Services submitted a report which set out a series of proposals which would enable Children's Services to deliver the required budget reductions as part of the Government's spending review. Children's Services had radically reviewed its current service delivery model and in proposing a revised core offer, sought to maintain services where the Council had a statutory duty, to protect front line services especially safeguarding; and to maintain a level of preventative services to sustain, or prevent an increase in the numbers of children requiring statutory safeguarding services.

It was reported that the total budget for Children's Services for 2010/11 was £100.070m, and that the budget for 2011/12 included an addition of £0.450m for front line services. Savings to be phased in over the four years were as follows:-

- 2011/12 £11.379m
- 2012/13 £9.564m
- 2012/14 £1.520m
- 2014/15 £0.589m

In a short presentation, the Assistant Director for Children's Services made reference to:-

- The context the budget was based on;
- Current spend against service areas;
- Priorities for services;
- Significant changes to services;
- The impact on the budget profile;
- Risks associated with service changes;
- Capital requirements; and
- Service budgets.

Copies of the presentation were circulated to members at the meeting.

During questions and debate, the following issues were raised:-

- Transportation – It was felt that this was an area than needed review and that what ever changes were ultimately made should be effectively communicated

to the general public. It was reported that the budget for transport was staggering, but this was as a result of the council's statutory role in providing transport for primary and secondary school pupils living more than two and three miles respectively from their nearest school;

- Safeguarding – Overall, the Committee agreed that this was an area that needed adequately funding. Some concern was raised as to why we spend so much on safeguarding and that this needed communicating better to the general public. It was highlighted that the council was under obligation to protect the most disadvantage children from harm. It was noted that Councillors had a vital role in getting messages out to the general public in their community role;
- Young people – Due to the economic downturn, it was essential that young people were kept motivated and that the Council needed to be looking at ways of getting young people more engaged. It was highlighted that these types of issues would be addressed as part of the 'Big Society' agenda of getting people more involved to meet the needs of local communities;
- Rural nature of Lincolnshire – Due to the rural nature of Lincolnshire, this posed greater challenges with regard to transport and education in general, it was stressed that it was imperative education should not decline, as there had been an excellent educational system over the last five years;
- It was noted that the core offer preparation had taken a lot of officer time, but officers had found the exercise very useful, as it had highlighted where the Council could be more effective. It was noted that more valuable information would come to the fore front, as services were evaluated further, ensuring good value for money;
- Some concerns were expressed regarding the lack of details provided within the report. The main areas of service had proposed changes, but there were no details relating to these changes for the Committee to scrutinise. It was reported that further information would be available at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 27 January 2011, to which Scrutiny Vice-Chairmen would also be invited to attend;
- Exclusions – It was noted that the White Paper's current position was that all schools should pay for a pupil who was excluded to attend another school. This was not popular with the schools in Lincolnshire;
- Extended provision – It was highlighted that grants were being simplified but it was still to be decided whether the money would be allocated direct to the schools or clusters; and
- Academies what happens if they fail - The Committee was advised that the Secretary of State would offer the Academy to another trust, it would not be offered to the local authority.

In the second part of the presentation, the Assistant Director for Children's Services made specific reference to the schools budget and the breakdown as detailed in the early presentation; the pupil premium (details were shown at paragraph 7.3 of Appendix A to the report).

During discussion, the Assistant Director for Children's Services responded to questions raised which included:-

- Lincolnshire's Formula Grant;
- Allocation of the pupil premium. It was noted that increases in the number of pupils at a school could trigger further funding; and

- The impact on schools as a result of the cuts. It was highlighted that it would be difficult to assess the impact as the process was still work in progress, and that it would be the end of March before details were confirmed.

RESOLVED

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is in agreement to the necessary cuts suggested, but is very concerned that it has not been able to scrutinise the budget fully, due to the lack of detail provided.

64. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER “THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING”

Consideration was given to a report from the Assistant Director – School Improvement Service, which invited the Committee to consider the White Paper “The Importance of Teaching” and its impact on Children’s Services. A copy of the White Paper was detailed at Appendix A to the report.

The Assistant Director guided members of the Committee through the Executive Summary which was detailed on pages 8 – 15 of Appendix A (The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010) making particular reference to extracts from the summary:-

- That the current curriculum contained too little which stretched pupils to achieve standards matching the best in the world. That the educational system needed to compete internationally. And that teachers should be free from constraints and improve their professional status;
- Teaching and leadership – That a national network of Teaching schools would be developed on the models of teaching hospitals, to ultimately increase the number of National and Local leaders of Education;
- Behaviour – To trial a new approach to pupil exclusions, where schools have new responsibilities, pupils who are excluded have to be put into another school, and that school has to pay for the alternative provision. It was the intention that there would be no right of appeal;
- Curriculum, assessment and qualifications – The introduction of the English Baccalaureate to encourage schools to offer a broad set of academic subjects to age 16, whether or not students then go down an academic or vocational route. It was noted that this posed a large challenge for secondary schools in Lincolnshire as subjects met pupils demand. That vocational educational should be reformed so that it supports progression to further and higher education and employment, and overhaul vocational qualifications following Professor Alison Wolf’s review to ensure that they match the world’s best. Raise to 17 by 2103 and then 18 by 2015 the age to which all young people will be expected to participate in education or training;
- The new school system – Helping every school who wants to enjoy greater freedom to achieve Academy status, with the opening for Free Schools. Those local authorities have a strong strategic role as champions for parents, families and vulnerable pupils. Their role will be to promote educational excellence by ensuring a good supply of high quality school places;

- Accountability – It was noted that schools should be accountable to parents for how well pupils do, and how taxpayers' money is spent. That a new 'floor standard' would be established for primary and secondary schools, which sets an escalating minimum expectation for attainment. And, that it should be easier for schools to adopt models of governance which work for them, including more focussed governing bodies, which clearly hold the school to account for children's progress;
- School Improvement – That the requirement for every school to have a local authority school improvement partner is ceased along with the current centralised target setting process. That local authorities were free to provide whatever forms of improvement support they choose. It was noted that there was no requirement for this, but the Council would maintain a good service to its schools; and
- School Funding – That the school funding needed radical reform to make it more transparent, fairer and progressive with the potential of National Funding to schools.

Discussion ensued, from which the following issues were raised:-

- Parent empowerment – It was noted that a higher percentage of governors would now be parents. It was highlighted that not all parents were keen to get involved. This was an area that would be difficult to overcome, motivating some parents to take an interest and become involved;
- Key stage 2 tests - It was noted that these were being retained, but an additional reading test was being introduced for six year olds. It was noted further that phonics would be compulsory;
- Exclusions – The cost of an excluded pupil travelling elsewhere. It was noted there would be no right of appeal. If a pupil was excluded then the school would have to pay for the pupil to travel elsewhere;
- That the funding for sixth form colleges would be cut;
- Looked after Children funding – It was reported that a pupil premium of £430.00 would be paid, but would this would be spent at the discretion of the school;
- That the White Paper was more about fashion fads rather than education. It was reported that a small group of head teachers had dominated the writing of the White Paper;
- Comparison with the other countries, that these should be relevant countries and we should be sharing relevant best practise;
- Difficulties of vocational education in Lincolnshire;
- That the English Baccalaureate was too prescriptive; and that the concept was different in Europe than that proposed. Concern was expressed with regard to retrospective grading, as this had affected morale within schools; and
- Concerns were expressed that the White Paper had made no mention to information technology (IT).

RESOLVED

That the concerns of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee with regard to the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching" as detailed above be noted.

65. SPECIAL SCHOOL FUNDING

A report by the Executive Director of Adults and Children was considered, which set out the funding proposals for special schools. Detailed at Appendix A was a copy of the draft Special Schools Funding – Lincolnshire Model.

In his verbal presentation, the Improvement Adviser – Strategic Projects advised that a working group had been established comprising of special school head teachers, bursars, governors, officers, school forum members and a County Councillor to review the funding arrangements for special schools. The details of the funding proposals had been as a result of extensive consultation with special schools and other parties and had been managed solely through the working group. Based on the principles for the working group (detailed on pages 1 and 2 of the report), the group developed a funding formula for the allocation of funding to special schools (detailed at Appendix A to the report).

It was reported that the approach had significantly reduced the number of budget lines in constructing special school budgets, simplifying the process and aiding transparency the proposal had introduced the notion of funding a range of needs rather than specific pupils and through the allocation of the existing entire special school budget had made budgets predictable. As an outcome of the application of the revised formula there were winners and losers, (details of which were contained within the report presented). It was noted that to ensure schools whose budget had been reduced were able to manage the transition effectively, it was proposed that tapered protection would be put in place over a three year period (details contained within Appendix A to the report). The period of tapered protection also provided an opportunity for the County Council to monitor the impact of the new funding arrangements and change the formula if necessary.

It was highlighted that the budget had not been cut and that the changes had been worked within existing budgets.

RESOLVED

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee support the proposed funding of special schools (Lincolnshire Model) as detailed at Appendix A to the report presented.

66. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2011

Consideration was given to a report by the Committee's Scrutiny Officer, which provided members with an opportunity to review the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for 2011.

RESOLVED

That the work programme as detailed at Appendix A to the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 1.00 p.m.