



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
2 DECEMBER 2011**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S F WILLIAMS (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors P A Carpenter, C J Davie, M Exton, M W Gilbert, J R Hicks, J D Hough, D C Hoyes MBE, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, R A Shore, R B Singleton-McGuire, T M Trollope-Bellew and C N Worth.

Added Members: Mrs J E Pilsworth, Mr S Rudman and Mrs G Wright.

A P Williams (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning) was also in attendance.

Councillors A G Hagues, Mrs M J Overton, R B Parker and Mrs S Woolley attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance: Debbie Barnes (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Andy Breckon (Assistant Director of Children's Services and Director of the School Improvement Service), Jill Chandar-Nair (Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager), Matthew Clayton (School Organisation Planning Manager), Linda Duffield (Project Co-ordinator, Property and Technology Management), Paul Snook (Principal School Improvement Adviser, Strategic Projects – School Improvement Service), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer) and Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer).

**43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M Smith.

Dr B Roberts also submitted his apologies for absence.

The Chief Executive reported that, having received notice under Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups Regulations 1990), he had appointed Councillor A G Hagues in place of Councillor Miss A M Jenkyns on the Committee until further notice. In addition, Councillors D C Hoyes MBE and T M Trollope-Bellew were appointed as replacement Councillors on the Committee in place of Councillors A G Hagues and T M Trollope-Bellew, respectively, for this meeting only.

**44. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor C J Davie declared a personal interest in minute number 47 as his wife was employed as a Teaching Assistant at a primary school in his electoral division.

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45. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2011

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 21 October 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

46. NOTES OF THE MOCK MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2011

RESOLVED

That the notes of the mock meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held as part of the 11 Million Takeover Day on 11 November 2011 be noted.

47. PROPOSAL TO REVIEW SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION IN LINCOLN INCLUDING THE CLOSURE OF QUEEN'S PARK SCHOOL

NOTE – Councillor C R Oxby declared a personal interest in this item in respect of home to school transport, as his wife escorted autistic children and young people across the county.

A report was presented by the School Improvement Service's Principal School Improvement Adviser (Strategic Projects), which invited the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider a proposal to review special school provision in Lincoln, including the closure of Queen's Park School, prior to consideration by the Executive on 6 December 2011. A copy of the report to the Executive was appended to the Scrutiny Committee's report.

The proposed closure of Queen's Park School was part of a wider review and reorganisation of special education needs in Lincoln, which would also involve investment to further improve the specialist facilities and expand the capacity of St Christopher's School and St Francis School with effect from September 2013, with the formal closure of Queen's Park School being August 2013. The closure would only proceed if the expansion proposals went ahead as the additional places would be required to facilitate the closure and ensure overall improvement in special school provision, therefore complying with the Department for Education's Special Educational Needs Improvement Test.

It was reported that there were three elements of the proposal that required statutory consultation, with those affecting St Christopher's School being unable to proceed without the closure of Queen's Park School. These were noted as follows: -

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- closure of Queen's Park School with effect from 31 August 2013;
- expansion of St Christopher's School with effect from 1 September 2013;
- amendment of the age range at St Christopher's School to 3 – 19 years with effect from 1 September 2013.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee considered a report at its meeting on 13 May 2011, where support was given to proceed with taking these proposals through a public consultation process, which was subsequently confirmed by the Executive on 7 June 2011. In accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and guidance of the Department of Education, the County Council consulted on the three proposals set out above. Following the first stage of the consultation process a decision was taken to proceed to the Statutory Notice stage, which was published on 16 September 2011 and initiated the six week statutory period during which representations could be made. This period ended on 28 October 2011 and the process was now entering the final stage where a final decision must be taken on the proposals.

The following appendices to the Executive report had been circulated and were referred to as part of the Committee's considerations: -

- review of special school and mainstream unit provision;
- the Department for Education's guide to 'closing a maintained mainstream school';
- the Department for Education's guide to 'expanding a maintained mainstream school by enlargement or by adding a sixth form';
- the Department for Education's guide to 'making changes to a maintained mainstream school';
- summary of written responses in the consultation period;
- letter from the Queen's Park School Governing Body to the Executive Director Adults and Children's;
- summary of written response to the Queen's Park School Governing Body;
- summary of written responses in the representation period;
- letter from the City of Lincoln Council regarding land adjacent to Queen's Park School;
- letter to commence the consultation process;
- list of interested parties;
- questions and answers at the public meetings;
- consultation response form;
- equality impact assessment form.

The Chairman provided the Committee with an opportunity to question officers in relation to the proposals outlined in the report. In answering a number of questions the following points were noted: -

- via road, St Christopher's School and St Francis School were approximately two and a half miles and two miles away from Queen's Park School, respectively;

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- a new funding mechanism for special schools was introduced in April 2011 following the undertaking of a comprehensive review. This removed the notion of one-to-one funding, the funding of 'ghost places' and the funding of types of need rather than the needs of children and young people. Money was now allocated into the whole budget and distributed throughout individual schools, using an agreed formula so that focused support could be provided to address special educational needs. This meant that schools received a level of funding based solely on the needs of children and young people and the numbers of pupils attending the school. As a consequence, the budget for Queen's Park School was £169,000 less than in previous years. The deficit would be fully protected this financial year to enable the school to manage a declining budget, however, it would taper over the next three years. This significant reduction in budget was as a result of money being linked to the actual number of children and young people on roll, the number of which was also decreasing in respect of Queen's Park School. As a result of this decrease in pupil numbers the school would face a deficit in excess of £350,000 in 2014;
- Queen's Park School currently had 81 children and young people on roll, with 91 on roll last year and 71 projected at the end of this academic year;
- mainstream schools were increasingly able to meet the needs of children and young people requiring special educational needs. As a result, in the majority of cases, special schools catered for those children and young people with the most complex special educational needs;
- it would be for the Headteachers and Governors of the three schools to determine the required staffing structures for the two schools. This could not be addressed until such time that a decision was made about the future of Queen's Park School. If the decision was that the school should close, the Headteachers and Governors, with advice from the County Council's Human Resources team and officers, would determine the structure of staffing, present this to staff and subsequently instigate the decided method of transferring staff;
- moving towards a more generic model of providing services for complex special educational needs would reduce the distance many children and young people had to travel across the county. Examples were given whereby children and young people were travelling from Grantham or Gainsborough to Lincoln and back on a daily basis. Local provision by special schools for these children and young people could significantly reduce this travelling time;
- the Council was committed to ensuring that any changes to a child or young person's provision or transport arrangements was done so with the least disruption possible;
- the reconfiguration would lead to an increase in accommodation through new build at both St Christopher's and St Francis Schools of up to 30 places in each school. The Annex site would transfer to St Christopher's School, together with those pupils who would be attending the Annex (14 – 19 years) from September 2013. In total, the maximum rise in pupil roll would be 30 places at St Francis School and 60 places at St Christopher's School.

The Committee was invited to debate the proposals in respect of the review of special school provision in Lincoln, further to which the following points were noted: -

- the consultation needed to be meaningful, especially since the report referred to the importance of a system being shaped by parents. A suggestion was made that parents wanted an opportunity to be more involved in shaping these proposals;
- the proposal confirmed the importance of transferring the outstanding ethos, culture, professional knowledge and expertise through the staff from Queen's Park School to St Christopher's and St Francis Schools;
- a concern was expressed that the proposal included the closure of Queen's Park School, which was judged as outstanding by Ofsted;
- future proofing was the key issue in respect of these proposals. It was better to make a properly planned change to provision at this stage rather than have to react to events and make numerous other changes at a later date;
- the site at Queen's Park School was restricted as it could not be increased or expanded. The provision could be improved at the sites of St Christopher's School and St Francis School, with the right expertise being put in place following whichever staffing model the governing bodies felt would be most appropriate;
- reductions in travel for children and young people with complex special educational needs was an important part of the wider proposals for special educational needs;
- the facilities at Queen's Park School should be offered for community use.

In closing, the Committee agreed and understood that the closure of any school was an extremely emotive subject. It was also agreed that important points had been picked up as part of this meeting's deliberations, which should be taken into account by the Council's Executive on 6 December 2011.

A motion was moved and seconded that the recommendations to the Executive, as outlined in the report, be supported and the Executive be asked to investigate future community use of the facilities at the Queen's Park School site.

The required number of members requested a recorded vote on the motion.

The following eleven Councillors voted for the motion: -

Councillors P A Carpenter, C J Davie, M J Exton, M W Gilbert, D C Hoyes MBE, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, R B Singleton-McGuire, T M Trollope-Bellew, S F Williams and C N Worth.

The following three Councillors and one Added Member voted against the motion: -

Councillors J R Hicks, J D Hough and R A Shore and Mrs J E Pilsworth (Parent Governor Representative Added Member).

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The following two Added Members abstained from voting: -

Mr S Rudman and Mrs G Wright (Church Representative Added Members).

**RESOLVED**

That the recommendations to the Executive, as outlined in the report, be supported and the Executive be asked to investigate future community use of the facilities at the Queen's Park School site.

NOTE – At this stage of proceedings the meeting temporarily adjourned from 11.30 a.m. until 11.40 a.m.

**48. PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 2 2011/2012**

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, which provided members with a summary of quarter two performance for 2011/2012 in respect of children and young people for each Performance Indicator that was underperforming or overperforming. The following documents were appended to the report: -

- summaries of performance by the relevant Assistant Directors;
- Children's Services performance report for quarter two 2011/2012 covering all indicators that were currently in operation in Children's Services;
- customer satisfaction report from the Customer Service Centre.

During discussion the following points were noted: -

- the Committee was initially concerned about the number of Performance Indicators that were not meeting their targets but assurances were given that this was not as negative as it appeared as 'stretch targets' had been set and the Council continued to out-perform its statistical neighbours;
- members were concerned about the 314% increase in fixed-term exclusions within academies in the last academic year and asked whether there was anything the County Council could do to address this. It was reported that a Parent Partnership Service provided an advocacy role to parents for children and young people with special educational needs. All schools and academies were also encouraged to engage with the Team Around the Child programme to support children and seek early intervention. It was emphasised, however, that the Council could only influence rather than control how academies undertook their business;
- a number of the indicators not meeting their targets related to the remit of social care. The Committee questioned whether this was as a result of social workers having their workloads increased last year. It was reported that there were a number of reasons why these targets were not being met. An example was given of the difficulties and stresses people and families faced as a result of the current economic climate, meaning that there was increased demand for support from social services and therefore more pressure on staff. The Lincoln team in particular also had a higher than expected level of sickness

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absence this year. It was noted that a dedicated Head of Service had now been allocated to the Lincoln team to provide further managerial support. Other issues also contributed to targets not being met, such as the introduction of a changing educational system in terms of academies. The Committee was informed that, despite the number of indicators not meeting target for this quarter, the County Council was still performing in the upper quartile nationally compared to its statistical neighbours;

- the Committee was informed of a number of accusations that had been made in relation to a specific Academy in the county and exclusions, whereby pupils with special educational needs were being discriminated against. It was suggested that a meeting of representatives from this Committee should be held with officers and the relevant Headteacher, together others who had an interest, in order that this issue could be addressed. It was also noted that the Headteacher had indicated that he would be prepared to attend a future public meeting of the Scrutiny Committee;
- the ratio of Team Around the Child cases was considerably below target and assurances were sought as to what this meant. It was noted that the core offer resulted in changes to the business support arrangements of the Team Around the Child programme, meaning that the County Council no longer organised or minuted meetings or provided other administrative support to its partners in respect of this process. Briefings and training sessions had taken place with partners on the administrative processes required for the Team Around the Child programme and it was emphasised that the performance of this specific indicator would significantly improve by the third quarter;
- the majority of the areas where performance was not meeting the targets referred to Looked After Children and members expressed their concerns that this did not seem to be improving. Members agreed to re-consider these performance indicators as part of the quarter three performance report and stated that a more detailed report would be requested if they had not improved to explain why these indicators were consistently not meeting their targets.

In closing, members requested an executive summary of the main implications of the Education Act 2011 following its recent Royal Assent and subsequent publication. Officers were currently working on this document which should be available for the Scrutiny Committee's meeting in January 2012.

#### RESOLVED

That the report and the issues raised, as outlined above, be noted.

#### 49. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY

A report by the Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager was considered, which presented the Scrutiny Committee with a copy of the Council's draft Elective Home Education Policy.

The Elective Home Education Policy was a revised version of the 2009 policy and incorporated recommended changes in relation to recording, monitoring and safeguarding elected home educated children and young people. A consultation had taken place with those parents who electively home educated, together with an

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Equality Impact Assessment which had also been shared with the consultation group. Copies of the draft policy, the Children's Services Elective Home Education Procedure and the initial Equality Impact Assessment for the draft Elective Home Education Policy were appended to the report.

**RESOLVED**

That the Council's draft Elective Home Education Policy be supported by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

**50. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY – CONSULTATION**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, which provided the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the County Council's Child Poverty Strategy.

The Child Poverty Act received Royal Assent on 25 March 2010 and required local authorities to conduct a needs assessment and develop a strategy to reduce and mitigate the effect of child poverty in their local areas.

The first part of Lincolnshire's needs assessment highlighted areas of the county where there were relatively higher numbers of children living in poverty and also found statistical correlations between these areas and those where children were not achieving at key stages in their education. Further research in some of these areas highlighted other issues that were likely to impact on households included high levels of priority debt, health inequalities and offending.

Using the evidence base and discussions with key stakeholders, the Child Poverty Strategy had been developed and was now ready to go out for wider consultation regarding the approach the Council was proposing to take in Lincolnshire. This would be to continue to target resources where there was the greatest need and to encourage all providers to co-ordinate their services where needed. Consultation would include key stakeholders and families engaged with public services, further to which the Strategy would be reviewed and an action plan developed in partnership with key stakeholders.

Copies of the Child Poverty Strategy, the consultation document and the Child Poverty Needs Assessment were appended to the report.

During discussion the Committee agreed strongly that the issue of child poverty was much wider than the remit of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in terms of the economy, access to services and aspiration. Members were reminded that the Environmental Scrutiny Committee had recently commenced the undertaking of a Scrutiny Review into tackling fuel poverty in Lincolnshire, which was another issue that would link into and influence child poverty in the county.

Reference was made to the action plan contained within the Child Poverty Strategy as it was noted that lots of the actions listed were outside of the County Council's control. Members were reassured that the Council did have strong levels of influence



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from a leadership perspective and could encourage partners to target and allocate resources so that issues relating to child poverty in Lincolnshire could be addressed.

Councillors C J Davie, M W Gilbert, J D Hough and R B Singleton-McGuire and Mrs G Wright (Added Member) agreed to meet as an informal working group to consider a response to the consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy on behalf of the Committee.

**RESOLVED**

- (1) That the report be noted and be referred to the Communities Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.
- (2) That a working group be established, as outlined above, to consider a response to the consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy on behalf of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

**51. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL UPDATE**

A report of the Head of Regulated Services was considered, which informed members of the matters raised and addressed at the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 20 October 2011. The draft minutes of that meeting were appended to the report.

**RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

**52. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2012**

Consideration was given to a report by the Committee's Scrutiny Officer, which enabled members to discuss the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the coming year.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee's meeting originally scheduled to be held on 13 January 2012 would now be held on 5 January 2012. Further to minute number 48 above, a report summarising the main issues arising from the Education Act 2011 would be submitted to this meeting. The report on school support services required information on funding allocations from the Government before it would be available for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee. This could therefore be deferred from the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in January 2012. In the event of this item being available for consideration at the meeting of Executive in February 2012, it was proposed that a special meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee would be held in order to carryout pre-decision scrutiny.

Further to minute number 48 above, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2011 had requested that a report on special educational needs and academies be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in January 2012, if possible. The Chairman and Vice-

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Chairman would discuss this request with officers outside of the meeting and seek to include the item on the Committee's work programme.

**RESOLVED**

That the work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be approved, subject to the inclusion of the above additions.

The meeting closed at 1.00 p.m.