



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1 JUNE 2012**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR S F WILLIAMS (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C J Davie, M Exton, M W Gilbert, A G Hagues, J D Hough, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, R B Singleton-McGuire, M Smith and C N Worth.

Added Members: Mrs E J Olivier-Townrow, Dr B Roberts, Mr S C Rudman and Mrs G Wright.

Councillor D Brailsford (Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning) was also in attendance.

Officers in attendance: Debbie Barnes (Interim Executive Director of Children's Services), Andy Breckon (Assistant Director of Children's Services and Director of the School Improvement Service), Stuart Carlton (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Matthew Clayton (School Organisation Planning Manager), Stephanie Douglas (Head of Service – Birth to Five), Karen Dowman (Team Manager for Children with Disabilities), Simon Evans (Scrutiny Officer), Elaine Radley (Principal School Improvement Adviser – Primary), Paul Snook (Principal School Improvement Adviser – Strategic Projects) and Graham Watts (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P A Carpenter, J R Hicks, C J Underwood-Frost and R A Shore.

An apology for absence was also received from Mr C V Miller (Added Member).

The Chairman reported that Mr G Porter had resigned following his recent election as a Parent Governor Representative Added Member. An election to fill this vacancy would be held later in the year.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of Members' interests were made at this stage of proceedings.

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3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 APRIL 2012

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 20 April 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. MERGER OF MONKS' DYKE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE (LOUTH) AND THE TENNYSON HIGH SCHOOL (MABLETHORPE)

The Assistant Director of Children's Services and Director of the School Improvement Service presented a report, which invited the Committee to consider the proposed merger of Monks' Dyke Technology in Louth with the Tennyson High School in Mablethorpe to form one Local Authority maintained school, with effect from 1 September 2012.

It was emphasised that the proposal was being made in order to provide the best quality of education for children and young people in Louth and Mablethorpe as the Local Authority had a duty to balance the raising of standards with the maintenance of diversity of provision, parental choice and a focus on local communities. The Committee agreed that a merger was in the best interests of children, parents, local communities and staff of both schools. It was noted that the proposal would retain the appropriate number of places in the secondary sector in Mablethorpe and Louth and help ensure that secondary education continued on both sites, whilst at the same time provide the opportunity to improve educational standards and opportunities for the young people in the area.

Discussion ensued on national changes to school funding and it was reported that the Department for Education's consultation on school funding reform had recently ended. A response to this consultation had already been submitted by the County Council and officers agreed to circulate this to all Members of the Committee in due course. It was agreed that a report on the future of school funding would be added to the Committee's work programme, for consideration in due course.

Specific reference was made to the pressure put on schools in meeting the government target whereby 50% of pupils enrolled had to achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including Mathematics and English. Members agreed that the proposed merger of Monks' Dyke Technology College and Tennyson High School provided both institutions with a better chance of meeting this target.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the recommendations to the Executive to close the Tennyson High School with effect from 31 August 2012 and to expand Monks' Dyke Technology College with effect from 1 September 2012 be supported.

- (2) That an item on the future of school funding be added to the Committee's work programme under the list of items to be scheduled.

5. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES STRATEGY

The Team Manager for Children with Disabilities presented a report, which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider the draft Children with Disabilities Strategy.

The County Council's Children's Services Directorate aimed to provide a workforce that was able to work alongside children with disabilities and their families, to support them and help them access appropriate services whilst also ensuring that they had the same opportunities as their peers. The Children with Disabilities Strategy set out how this would be achieved over the next four years and included principles for strategically commissioned services for children with disabilities, as follows: -

- early intervention and prevention;
- safeguarding;
- aspiration and wellbeing;
- learning and achievement;
- best use of resources.

During discussion on meeting the needs of children and young people, questions were raised regarding the level of co-operation between the Council's Children's Services Directorate and Public Health. It was reported that the County Council did currently engage with Public Health in Lincolnshire and was working towards an integrated team in respect of children with disabilities. It was also noted that, where possible, provision would be jointly commissioned so that there was one contract funded from both the Council and Public Health. Moving forward, the introduction of the four Clinical Commissioning Groups in Lincolnshire would result in each Group being responsible for the commissioning of most health services in their respective areas. This would be driven by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

In terms of a needs analysis, it was noted that there was currently no single cross-referenced database stating accurately the number of children with disabilities in Lincolnshire. Officers stated that this was an on-going programme of work, but provided a real challenge mainly due to the different definitions of disability that were used by partner organisations, service providers and even parents. It was therefore difficult to cross-reference data in a consistent and meaningful way.

Members agreed that reference to transport costs should be included as part of the Strategy, making it clear what the Council's policies were in respect of children with disabilities and transportation. In addition, in noting that the evidence in the Strategy relating to safeguarding had been undertaken through national research, the Committee recommended making this clearer in the document.

In closing, Members requested the addition of an action plan to support the Strategy's implementation.

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RESOLVED

- (1) That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee recommends that its comments, as detailed above, be reflected in the Children with Disabilities Strategy.
- (2) That the Committee requests the re-submission of the Children with Disabilities Strategy, with the addition on an action plan to support its implementation.

6. LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY STRATEGY FOR POST 16 LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND OR DISABILITIES

A report by the Principal School Improvement Adviser was considered, which invited the Committee to consider the County Council's Lincolnshire County Strategy for post 16 learners with learning disabilities and or disabilities.

The fourth strand of a review into Special School and Mainstream Unit provision recommended the undertaking of a review into post 16 provision for learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities, together with the production of a Strategy to ensure that the Council was well placed to meet its obligations in respect of this vulnerable group of learners. The aspiration was that the significant majority of these learners were able to have their education, employment and training needs met within the county and within their respective communities.

The Strategy, as appended to the report, had been developed by officers working with a stakeholder group made up of representatives from schools, colleges, independent providers, specialist providers, parents, young people, the voluntary sector and County Councillors, including the Chairman of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. The document consisted of eight key priorities that, when implemented, enabled a network of flexible provision to be developed across the county to meet the individual needs of the significant majority of post 16 learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

Members welcomed the Strategy, but were concerned about the implications for external providers who were dependent on providing services to children and young people in Lincolnshire. It was noted that representatives from these providers had taken the opportunity to fully engage as part of the stakeholder group and were already planning for reductions in funding due to the introduction of a new national funding formula.

RESOLVED

That the Lincolnshire County Strategy for post 16 learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities be supported.

7. PERFORMANCE – QUARTER FOUR 2011/2012

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services, which provided the Committee with a summary of quarter four 2011/2012 performance for each Performance Indicator that was underperforming or overperforming in relation to children and young people.

The following points were raised during discussion: -

- NI099 'children in care reaching level four in English at Key Stage Two' – this indicator was still below target and had been an area of concern for a number of years. Improvements were evident when the Virtual School Headteacher was in place but performance had dropped again. Members did accept that the level of attainment for this group of young people depended on the cohort that came through each year;
- NI147 'care leavers in suitable accommodation' – Members were very pleased with this level of performance;
- NI148 'care leavers in education, employment and training' – Members felt that this indicator should be performing better;
- CS119 '% participation in learning for young people with learning difficulties and or disabilities leaving Year 11' – it was accepted that this was part of the Strategy discussed in minute number 6 above, therefore, it was anticipated that performance for this indicator would improve as a consequence of the document's implementation;
- CS043 'primary school persistent absence rate' – Members felt that the primary school persistent absence rate was too high in Lincolnshire, but acknowledged that this was a national problem. It was agreed that a report on this issue would be submitted to the Committee for consideration in approximately six months;
- NI117 '16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training' – in seeking clarity around the performance of this indicator, Members noted that a national change in the definition of a vulnerable child or young person meant that the cohort and the number of cases whereby it was unknown whether a child or young person was in education, employment or training had significantly increased. Further work would be taking place to identify these people and ascertain whether they were in education, employment or training, however, it was noted that the change of definition had the same effect for the whole country and was not unique to Lincolnshire. It was agreed that an update on this issue would be reported to the Committee's November meeting.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. ENTITLEMENT FOR DISADVANTAGED TWO YEAR OLDS TO ACCESS 15 HOURS FREE EARLY EDUCATION

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Service – Birth to Five, which provided Members with a comprehensive overview of free early education places for two year olds in Lincolnshire.

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It was noted that in September 2009 the County Council started to offer ten hours of free early education over 38 weeks to 15% of the most disadvantaged two year olds as part of a government pilot project, which provided funding for 171 places. There had been a commitment to continuing the offer for two year olds throughout 2010 to 2012 using funding allocated through the Early Intervention Grant.

The Committee was informed that the government was committed to extending this free provision to those two year olds who may gain most from it. Building on the pilot, therefore, the government planned to create a new entitlement to free early education for 15 hours a week over 38 weeks a year for the most disadvantaged two year olds nationally from September 2013. From 2014, free early education places would be available nationally for around 260,000 two year olds, which equated to approximately 40% of all two year olds in the country.

The proposed staged increase to meet the statutory requirements in both 2013 and 2014 would require a significant scaling up of the existing market. Making this vision a reality would rely upon the continued commitment of commissioners in the Local Authority and all those in the early education sector across all providers in the private, voluntary and maintained sectors. To ensure a stepped increase in the number of places to be able to meet the statutory requirement in 2013, it was decided to increase the local offer to 20% of the total number of disadvantaged two year olds in Lincolnshire. This would provide 360 places and increase the entitlement from ten hours to the required 15 hours over 38 weeks.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

9. PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director of Children's Services and the Director of the School Improvement Service, which summarised the challenges facing primary education and identified the current performance of schools in terms of Ofsted gradings, leadership development and attainment at Key Stages One and Two.

Members were informed that Lincolnshire currently had 276 schools which educated children in the primary age range of four to eleven.

Proposed revisions to the Ofsted framework, including the introduction of short notice inspections and the removal of the 'satisfactory' Ofsted category, presented significant challenges for a high number of Lincolnshire's schools. Lincolnshire currently had 96 schools that were judged to be satisfactory, with three that had a 'Notice to Improve' and three that had been placed in 'Special Measures'. Of the satisfactory schools, 56 had been judged satisfactory in their last two inspections and appeared on the government's list of satisfactory schools, which meant that they needed to perform better. Many of these satisfactory schools were small or cited in more challenging areas, with significant levels of deprivation.

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Within the primary sector the pressures of meeting higher standards were already being realised, with the real consequence of being forced to become a sponsored academy if there was a failure to do so. There had been a marked increase in the number of primary exclusions since September 2011 compared to previous years and a growing number of headteachers suffering under the pressure had also decided to take early retirement or were absent with stress related illness.

The County Council and the School Improvement Service had developed a number of successful strategies over the last few years, enabling proactive rather than reactive support to schools. Members noted the following Strategies that would be in place for continuing to support and improve primary provision: -

- school to school transport;
- leadership support;
- teaching support;
- targeted support to raise standards and 'narrowing the gap';
- pre-Ofsted support.

Proposals for structuring future support were detailed in the report and included the following: -

- addressing the future demands for headship and continuing to support the Future Leadership Programme in primary education;
- providing funding to support interventions in schools through subject consultant support in English and Mathematics and the removal of inadequate teaching staff;
- more intensive reviewing and monitoring of 'satisfactory' schools from advisers by increasing the allocation to each school, helping to identify teachers in need of greatest support.

Members were provided with details of the leadership development programme that had been internally developed and rolled out in Lincolnshire. The Committee congratulated officers on this piece of work which, when compared to the previous five years, had made a huge difference to the county.

Reference was made to the Strategy for sustaining small and medium sized primary schools in Lincolnshire and creating Collaborative Partnerships, as considered by the Committee at its meeting on 3 February 2012. It was noted that work was taking place to establish ways in which funding could be used to support Collaborative Partnerships, however, it would be necessary to learn of the government's intentions regarding the future of school funding, as referred to in minute number four above.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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10. LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING BOARDS SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP UPDATE

The Chairman introduced a report which provided the Committee with the draft minutes of the meeting of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub-Group held on 11 April 2012, for information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

11. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL UPDATE

The Chairman introduced a report which provided the Committee with the draft minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 19 April 2012, for information.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

12. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2012

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

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved, subject to the incorporation of the items agreed at minute numbers four, five and seven, as detailed above.

The meeting closed at 1.05 p.m.