

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 18 OCTOBER 2013**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors B Adams (Vice-Chairman), Mrs J Brockway, J P Churchill, S R Dodds, A G Hagues, J R Hicks, R J Hunter-Clarke, B W Keimach, P J O'Connor, Mrs S Ransome, Mrs N J Smith, Mrs C A Talbot, S M Tweedale, L Wootten, R Wootten and Mrs S M Wray

Added Members: Mr C V Miller, Mrs E Olivier-Townrow, Mr P Thompson, Mr S C Rudman, Mrs G Wright and Dr E van der Zee

Replacement Members: Councillors N Pepper and C L Strange

Officers in attendance: Michelle Andrews (Interim Head of Service – Property and Technology Management), Debbie Barnes (Executive Director Children's Services), Keith Batty (Assistant Director of CfBT Education Services), Andrea Brown, Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer) and Janice Spencer (Assistant Director for Children's Services)

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W J Aron and C R Oxby.

The following Councillors were in attendance as replacement members:-

- Councillor N Pepper for Councillor W J Aron
- Councillor C L Strange for Councillor C R Oxby

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health Services and Children's Services, and Councillor D Brailsford, Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services.

33 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

**34 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2013**

The Chairman noted some amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2013. Councillor T M Trollope-Bellew was present, although omitted from the attendance list, and replaced Councillor Hagues. Councillor Palmer was in attendance as a replacement member for Councillor Hicks and not Councillor Hagues, as noted in the minutes.

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RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 6th September 2013, noting the amendments as tabled, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35 NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP (INCLUDING VULNERABLE LEARNERS)

Further to discussion with the Executive Director for Children's Services, Debbie Barnes, the Chairman explained that the statistics for 2013, as previously requested, were not yet available and, with reluctance, he had agreed to defer this item for the Committee's consideration in November 2013.

RESOLVED

That Narrowing the Attainment Gap be deferred and added to the Committee's Work Programme for the meeting scheduled in November 2013.

36 PROPOSAL FOR A SCRUTINY REVIEW ON FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS AND SAFEGUARDING

Janice Spencer, Assistant Director of Children's Service, introduced the report which set out a proposal for a scrutiny review on Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding to be carried out by a Task & Finish Group.

With his apologies to the Chairman for the late arrival, Councillor A G Hagues joined the meeting at 10.15am.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- It had been thought that Added Members would not be able to take part in the review as it was not specifically related to education matters. Added Members, collectively, felt that this was an important issue and that they should be represented on the Task & Finish Group. Officers agreed to take further advice and clarify the position.
- The review was particularly focussed on children up to the age of 19 which the Local Authority have responsibility for. The decision to undertake a review was taken following a Serious Case Review (SCR) in respect of a child. It was acknowledged that parents of these children may have vulnerabilities and so there may be some issues in relation to adult safeguarding but the main focus remained on children's safeguarding. Should any issues arise during the review, relating to adults, recommendations could be made to the Adults Scrutiny Committee.
- Officers anticipated little cost to the council in undertaking the review as officers were doing this work on a daily basis with Members travelling with officers during their regular routines. Outcomes of the review may have financial implications and it was agreed, therefore, to provide regular updates to the Committee.

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- It was noted that focus groups with parents and schools would be undertaken but acknowledged that this was not clear within the report. Officers agreed to make the necessary amendments to ensure this was clearer.
- The Committee requested that a separate point be included regarding evaluating relationships with other agencies.

RESOLVED

1. That the proposal to undertaken a scrutiny review in relation to Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding, taking into account the guidelines, be agreed;
2. That the Proposal for Scrutiny Review be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for approval;
3. That the following expressions of interest from Members for their participation in the Scrutiny Review be noted and provided to Group Leaders for their approval:-

Councillor J D Hough
 Councillor J R Hicks
 Councillor Mrs C A Talbot
 Councillor S R Dodds
 Councillor Mrs S Ransome
 Councillor B Adams
 Mrs E Olivier-Townrow, Added Member (if appropriate)

37 PROPOSAL FOR A NEW PRIMARY ACADEMY IN GAINSBOROUGH
(SUBMISSION TO SECRETARY OF STATE OF RESULTS AND
EVALUATION PROCESS TO IDENTIFY AN OPERATOR)

Michelle Andrews, Interim Head of Service – Property and Technology Management, introduced the report which invited the Committee to consider a report on the proposal for a new Primary Academy in Gainsborough, due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health Services and Children's Services on 31 October 2013.

The Chairman welcomed Sharron Close (Executive Principal) and Rachel Ward (Executive Business Manager) of Tall Oaks Academy to the meeting and invited them to give their presentation, which comprised a brief overview of the proposals.

During discussions, the following points were noted:-

- The process of selecting an education provider for an academy was explained to the Committee, following a query regarding the scoring documentation provided at Appendix G. The written application was not solely relied upon to make a decision and a formal interview process was undertaken with a panel consisting of two headteachers, the Head of Service – Property and Technology Management, The Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and an added member on the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee.

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- As the Member for Gainsborough Trent, Councillor O'Connor welcomed the proposal for this Primary Academy in Gainsborough due to the development of the town.
- A mobility clause was included in staff contracts for those working between the two schools. Following consultation and agreement with staff, this remained within the TUPE agreement. Assurance was given to the Committee, however, that staff would not be expected to travel great distances or to travel to the other site during break times. In relation to the SENCO, their time would be organised between the two schools.
- Officers confirmed that they were not obliged to select an applicant if they deemed them inappropriate following the selection process.
- In the event that no applicant was shortlisted and, given the timescales involved, concern was noted that the government grant may have been lost. Officers reassured members that this was not the case as there would be an opportunity to renegotiate the position with the DfE, should this situation arise.
- The basic streamline model proposed by the DfE for newly built primary schools was not being used in this case. A model had been developed for Lincolnshire schools which included more advanced design features, for example green energy, dependent on the site and location.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health Services and Children's Services as set out in Appendix A of agenda item 6;
2. That the comments of the Committee, as noted below, be relayed to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health Services and Children's Services for their consideration:-
 - a. Depending on the site/plans for the new academy, green energy should be incorporated into the new building;
 - b. In future, any differences or anomalies in the results from the scoring mechanism will be highlighted and explained within the report;
 - c. An assurance that, should it be agreed that Tall Oaks Academy is the preferred operator, the issue of their performance of championing vulnerable children, as highlighted in the report, will be addressed by officers in conjunction with the school.

The Chairman thanked Sharron Close and Rachel Ward for their attendance and presentation to the Committee.

38 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Keith Batty, Assistant Director for CfBT Education Services, introduced the report which provided the Committee with the background to the three key components and it was hoped that the reduction in exclusions would be sustained.

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During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- The issue of children being permanently excluded was work ongoing, in consultation with schools, to identify what could be done to prevent this happening and provide support to the child wherever necessary.
- Keeping young people in mainstream education was key but this was the responsibility of the schools/academies as well as the local authority as each case had different levels of complexity.
- Encouraging schools to be inclusive had been an ambition of the Council and, following discussions with headteachers, it was found that their aspiration was also to support young people and find solutions for them rather than take the decision to exclude. It was acknowledged, however, that in some circumstances there may be no option but to permanently exclude a young person.
- Paul Keenleyside was a consultant who had been commissioned to undertake a piece of work looking at the development of partnership working in relation to exclusions, following a request from the sub-group established with the schools. The Committee suggested that Mr Keenleyside be invited to the meeting scheduled for January 2014 to provide an update.
- A suggestion was made to change the language around exclusions and to refer to them as "inclusions". It was felt that "exclusion" was a negative and may give the impression to young people that they were not wanted and the concern was that this impression was unlikely to improve the behaviour of these young people. Although it was acknowledged that some of these children were challenging, they were still children who required support.
- Information was gathered about children who were excluded regarding any special educational needs or learning difficulties they may have. Some children who had been excluded had not had their special educational needs assessed before the exclusion stage had been reached. Informing schools of the support mechanisms available for different areas of learning disabilities was also part of the process.
- Monitoring of the six day target was ongoing and appeared to be improving. The assumed cost of a place in alternative provision had seen a significant reduction.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted and commented upon;
2. That further recommendations, following completion of the in-depth consultation described in the supplementary action plan, be presented to the Committee at its' meeting in January 2014.

39 CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION

Michelle Andrews, Interim Head of Service – Property and Technology Management, introduced the report which documented the proposed changes by the Department for Education (DfE) and detailed the content of the draft responses prepared by the Local Authority to the consultation.

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During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- The Committee noted its concerns about the enormity of the proposed changes and, in particular, the potential threat to local education.
- The Committee requested that the wording in the response be strengthened to reflect their concerns. Once amended, officers were asked to gain approval from the Vice-Chairman, Councillor B Adams, prior to submission on 24 October 2013.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and appendices be noted.
2. That the wording of the response be strengthened and approved by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor B Adams, prior to submission.

40 SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM: FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF 2013/14 & ARRANGEMENTS AND CHANGES FOR 2014/15

Tony Warnock, Head of Finance – Children's and Specialist Services, introduced the report which invited the Committee to consider a report on School Funding Reform: Findings from the Review of 2013/14 and Arrangements and Changes for 2014/15 scheduled to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services on 30 October 2013.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- The Looked After Children (LAC) factor was a factor within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which was ringfenced and, as a result of the October census, officers would know what was required in order to set the budget for this element. Any residual sum would be reported to the School's Forum for them to take a view.
- The Committee confirmed that they had no additional comments to present to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services.

RESOLVED

1. That the recommendations as set out within the report be noted and supported by the Committee.

41 LINCOLNSHIRE SAFEGUARDING BOARDS SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub-Group, Councillor P J O'Connor, provided an update on the progress report and confirmed that he had been elected as Chairman with Councillor Mrs H N J Powell elected as Vice-Chairman.

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During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Feedback from the sub-group had suggested further work should be undertaken to ensure the robustness of safeguarding practices. This suggestion had contributed towards the proposal for a review into frontline social workers and safeguarding practices.
- It was confirmed that the sub-group members were attending meetings of both the Safeguarding Children's Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board but it was acknowledged that Members were undergoing relevant training.

RESOLVED

That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Boards Scrutiny Sub-Group, held on 25 July 2013, be noted.

42 YOUTH HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2018

Debbie Barnes, Executive Director for Children's Services, introduced the report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider the Youth Housing Strategy scheduled for consideration by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services on 22 October 2013.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- It was confirmed that the comments made by the Committee at its last meeting had been incorporated into the strategy.
- Work was being undertaken with housing providers to give young people opportunities to manage finances, cook and develop life skills to be able to support their own tenancy.
- The Committee requested six-monthly updates on the progress of the strategy.
- One of the challenges in reporting concise figures was that the districts operate different recording systems. One of the actions was to work with the districts to ensure they were monitoring like for like.
- The Committee requested that the early identification wording within Objective B4 (Develop methods of early identification of young people at risk of homelessness) should be more specific.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted;
2. That the comments made by the Committee in relation to the amended wording of Objective B4 be passed to the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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PROGRAMME 2013/14

Tracy Johnson, Scrutiny Officer, presented the Committee's work programme for 2013/14. The following amendments to the Work Programme were noted, further to discussions during the meeting:-

- "Narrowing the Gap" would be considered in November 2013;
- "Inclusion Review" would be considered in January 2014 (Paul Keenleyside, Consultant, to be invited to attend);
- To incorporate six-monthly updates in relation to the "Youth Housing Strategy";
- The inclusion of "Stamford Endowed Schools Review" for 2014 to be discussed further with the Executive Director of Children's Services.

The Chairman encouraged Members to visit Children's Centres, following feedback from some Members who had undertaken visits and found them interesting and extremely useful. The Chairman queries whether Members would like to undertake visits to other Children's Services provision, such as Solutions 4, and the Committee agreed this would be a worthwhile exercise.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the work programme, noting the amendments above, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm