

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
 5 JUNE 2015**

**PRESENT:**

Councillors R Wootten (Vice-Chairman), B Adams, W J Aron, Mrs J Brockway, S R Dodds, A G Hagues, B W Keimach, Ms T Keywood-Wainwright, C R Oxby, Mrs S Ransome, Mrs L A Rollings, Mrs N J Smith, S M Tweedale, L Wootten, Mrs S M Wray and D C Morgan

Councillors: Mrs P A Bradwell and D Brailsford attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Stuart Carlton (Assistant Director Children's Early Help), Matthew Clayton (School Organisation Planning Manager), Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), John O'Connor (Service Manager Education Support) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J D Hough and Mrs H N J Powell.

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 D C Morgan as a replacement member on the Committee in place of Councillor J D Hough for this meeting only.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2015

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 PROPOSAL FOR A SCRUTINY REVIEW ON THE COUNCIL'S HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY IN RELATION TO DISCRETIONARY GRAMMAR SCHOOL TRANSPORT

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****5 JUNE 2015**

The Committee received a report which set out a proposal for a scrutiny review on the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in relation to discretionary Grammar School Transport to be carried out by a Task and Finish Group.

Members were informed that during the past year a group of parents in the villages north of Grantham had campaigned for changes to the Home to School and College Transport policy in respect of transport to the county's Grammar Schools. Following representations by the parents, and meetings with their representatives and the local MP, Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services, asked the Committee to consider at its meeting on 24 April 2015 whether this was a suitable topic for a scrutiny review. It was agreed at this meeting that a draft proposal should be developed.

The Committee was guided through the scoping document highlighting the purpose for the review and main lines of enquiry. It was also noted that the review had the support of the Executive Councillor and the Executive Director.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was clarified that this review would be examining the policy in relation to grammar school transport only which was from age 11-16/18. Home to college transport was covered under the policy for Post-16 transport;
- It was clarified that grammar school transport and Post-16 transport were discretionary functions;
- There was no difference in the eligibility criteria for Post-16 transport regardless of whether a young person attended a college, sixth form or a grammar school;
- It was clarified that the statutory school leaving age was still 16 years old, but the participation age had increased which required a young person to be in education or work based training until they were 18 years old;
- Members were informed that the Council had received a petition from parents who felt that they were being discriminated against by the existing policy as their children could not receive free transport to a grammar school, and therefore the proposal for a scrutiny review into this had been proposed;
- A councillor commented that they supported this proposal, and in relation to petitions, felt that in some cases were not being treated with enough seriousness. In this instance parents had put forward a petition asking the Council to look at this issue in particular.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the proposal for a review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in relation to Discretionary Grammar School Transport be agreed as a suitable topic for a scrutiny review, taking into account the guidelines;
2. That the Proposal for the Scrutiny Review be approved and submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for approval;

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

3. That Councillor Mrs J Brockway and Councillor B Adams be noted as expressing an interest in participating in this scrutiny review if agreed.

5 FRONTLINE SOCIAL WORKERS AND SAFEGUARDING SCRUTINY REVIEW - FIRST MONITORING UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the content and progress of the original action plan devised from the Task and Finish Group of October 2013.

It was reported that the Committee had agreed at its meeting on 18 October 2013 that there was a need for scrutiny to review and investigate the safeguarding arrangements in frontline social work teams. This review was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 24 October 2013. The key purposes of this review were to examine the robustness of safeguarding practice and to ensure sufficient support was provided to frontline social workers.

The Task and Finish Group completed the review and presented the final report to this Committee on 13 June 2014. The report contained 17 recommendations which were nearly all accepted in full by the Executive on 1 July 2014 and were subsequently developed into an action plan to address the issues raised in the review.

The Executive Director for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on progress with each of the recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1 – this has been implemented, however, there was a delay with the survey being released, but work was ongoing;

Recommendations 2 & 3 – the strategy was in development, and it was on the forward plan to be considered by this Committee at its next meeting;

Recommendation 4 – one 'Closing the Gap' conference had been held and it was intended to hold another one in July 2015;

Recommendation 5 – a letter had been sent to secondary school head teachers. There was also a national debate taking place on whether personal, social and health education (PSHE) should be part of the mandatory curriculum;

Recommendation 6 – there was an ongoing training programme in relation to signs of safety;

Recommendation 7 – options for Louth and Grantham were being explored;

Recommendation 8 – some internal standards had been set, and the amount of time that parents must wait to receive the review report had reduced;

Recommendation 9 – this had been completed;

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
5 JUNE 2015**

Recommendation 10 – this had also been completed and was subject to a quarterly review;

Recommendation 11 – a more detailed update on this recommendation had been included at Appendix B of the report. It was also noted that Samantha Clayton was leading on a significant piece of work around this. There had been some really positive successes in terms of newly qualified social workers;

Recommendation 12 – work was continuing, and the authority was expanding the number of universities that it worked with;

Recommendation 13 – the case manager was leading on this work which was ongoing;

Recommendation 14 – officers were working with the university;

Recommendation 15 – the authority was working regionally to review the role;

Recommendation 16 & 17 – these recommendations were linked together and were linked with the procurement of the new case management system. The time scale for the implementation of this system was currently July 2015, but it was acknowledged that there were risks associated with the implementation.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that the communication between social workers and managers was very open and it was suggested that there were some social workers who should be invited to attend a future meeting of this Committee;
- Another member also commented that they found the relationships within the teams to be very supportive, in particular the dynamic between new staff and experienced social workers was very good;
- In terms of report writing, it was commented that an improvement in the standard of reports presented to the Adoption Panels had been seen;
- It was confirmed that the neglect policy was on the work programme for the July meeting of this Committee;
- Signs of Safety had been introduced consistently across all areas of business. Members were advised that the authority was moving to the compliance part, as it was now expected that it would be used as all relevant staff had been trained;
- In relation to parental training, it was commented that there was a drive from secondary schools to focus on the core subjects, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) was not a subject they were judged against, which was why there was a national drive to make this subject mandatory;
- A briefing session on Signs of Safety would be organised for the independent members on adoption panels;

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

- It was agreed that the capability framework for social workers and the Customer Service Centre advisor training programme would be circulated to the Committee;
- It was commented that it had been an impressive experience meeting some of the frontline social workers;
- Health services and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) would be involved in elements of the work, such as the Neglect policy, and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board;
- It was queried whether the authority had considered working with the Open University in relation to recommendation 12, and officers agreed to look into this further.

RESOLVED

1. That the content and progress of the action plan be noted;
2. That the Committee continue to monitor the actions arising from the review and receive an update on the action plan in six months' time;
3. That visiting frontline social work teams be an ongoing piece of work and visits for Mrs E Olivier-Townrow and Councillors S R Dodds, J D Hough and Mrs L A Rollings be arranged in the near future.

6      APPOINTMENT OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/CARE LEAVER REPRESENTATIVE

The Committee received a report which invited the Committee to appoint a Looked After Children/Care Leaver Representative for the Committee, following approval of the Corporate Parenting Strategy at the Council meeting on 19 December 2014.

Members were advised that the role of the Looked After Children/Care Leaver Representative would be to ensure that the Committee actively considered the potential impact of a policy, strategy or action carried out by the Committee on Looked After Children/Care Leavers and to seek further advice from relevant officers where this is unclear or unsure.

It was proposed that when the representative raises any issues at the Committee, this would be formally recorded in the minutes and passed onto the Assistant Director – Children's Safeguarding for information and any further action required. Members were advised that training for this role would be provided.

Councillor S R Dodds volunteered to act as the Looked After Children/Care Leaver Representative for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

That Councillor S R Dodds be appointed as the Looked After Children/Care Leaver representative for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

7      PROPOSAL TO EXPAND CAPACITY AT PINCHBECK EAST CHURCH OF

ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL (FINAL DECISION)

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposal to expand the capacity at Pinchbeck East Church of England Primary School (Final Decision) which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services on 22 June 2015.

It was reported that there was a requirement for the expansion of this school due to the increasing pressure on primary school places from the rising birth rate and increased migration into the area.

Members were advised that officers used data from the health services to be able to plan for what the population was likely to look like. There was confidence that the projections were correct to within 1%.

It was reported that this was an outstanding school, as rated by Ofsted, and was very popular in the local area, and so the proposals would also assist in meeting parental preference.

Members' attention was drawn to the written responses which had been received, of which there were 48 valid responses, of these 29 were in support, with 14 against and 5 which were neither for nor against but made comments for consideration. It was noted that the majority of the points raised were around parking, access and safety of the children and the loss of outdoor space, as well as concerns over whether the facilities at the school would cope with the increased numbers.

Members of the Committee were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to information contained within the report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- Members were advised that officers had met with the Highways department and local residents in relation to access arrangements to the site from Knight Street, which was currently pedestrianised. It had been suggested that arrangements be put in place with the local pub for a park and stride scheme. There were also discussions with the parish council regarding the use of the playing field;
- It was important that the impact of the changes to the school on the local area were not underestimated;
- There was a need to use the local knowledge of residents/parish councils/town councils and community groups in planning projects such as this;
- It was noted that some very good ideas had been received from local groups;
- Some concerns were raised regarding the low level of responses from residents to the consultation, and it was queried whether the residents from Guildhall Drive had also been included in the consultation;
- It was confirmed that it would be a single storey extension;
- A pre-planning meeting had been held in the past week in relation to the design, and residents from Guildhall Drive, as well as other streets had been invited to attend;

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

- Comments from the pre-planning meeting would be included as part of the final consultation for the planning application;
- The size of the site had been examined, and there was a formal agreement with the parish council to allow the school to use the playing field for PE as required;
- It was also commented by another councillor that it was thought that there had been a relatively good response to the consultation.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor set out in the report;
2. That the following additional comments be passed to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item:
  - It was queried what the impact would be on the surrounding neighbourhood in terms of parking and access. It was highlighted that a number of options were being investigated, including looking at a park and stride option from a local pub car park. It was suggested that using local knowledge would help to provide the best solution. The Committee was informed that a local resident group had been consulted which came up with a number of good ideas and these had been passed onto the Road Safety Partnership and the Highways team.
  - It was queried if the expansion would be a single storey and whether the residents on Guildhall Drive had been consulted as the proposed extension would back onto the housing along this road. It was reported that the extension would be a single storey and that the residents of Guildhall Drive had been consulted as part of the design and planning process which was separate to this consultation process. The residents' comments would be put forward to the Planning Committee as part of the planning application. The Committee suggested that for future school expansion reports, it would be useful to also include the consultation responses from the design and planning process in the reports to the Committee.

8      PROPOSAL TO EXPAND CAPACITY AT SPALDING PARISH CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND DAY SCHOOL (FINAL DECISION)

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposal to expand the capacity at Spalding Parish Church of England Day School (Final decision) which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services on 22 June 2015.

It was reported that this expansion was required to ensure that there was the required number of primary school places in Spalding to accommodate the increasing pupil numbers in the area. This proposal would expand the Ofsted rated 'Good' school from a two form entry, to a three form entry, with a proposed implementation

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
5 JUNE 2015**

date of 1 September 2016. Members were advised that there was a requirement for school places due to the continuing increase in the birth rate in the area. This proposal would not create competition between schools.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following;

- Concerns were raised regarding the potential loss to the early years play area. However, members were advised that space for the extension would not be from the current early years play area;
- It was noted that this proposal was at a much earlier stage of the design process than the previous one;
- The school was currently rated as 'good' by Ofsted and should be able to respond flexibly to grow to meet the needs of the community;
- It was noted that the number of pupils with English as a second language was above average for this school.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor as set out in the report;
2. That the following additional comments be passed to the executive Councillor in relation to this item:
  - Concerns were raised about whether there would be a reduction in the outside playing area as there were no play areas marked on the existing floor plan. The Committee was informed that the outside playing area would actually be increased rather than reduced. It was suggested that in future reports, it would be useful to have a site plan, and if no plans to show the expansion were available yet, then a plan showing the existing site should be included.
  - It was queried whether there was a high proportion of pupils with English as an additional language at the school. It was reported that the number of these pupils was above average, but as it was a "good" school, it should be able to deal with any changes in the demographics of its pupils with flexibility.

**9 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF BROCKLESBY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND POTENTIAL CLOSURE (FINAL DECISION)**

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposal to close Brocklesby Park Primary School (Final Decision) which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Adult Care and Health Services, Children's Services on 22 June 2015.

Members were advised that at the time the report was produced there were 14 pupils on roll (75% surplus capacity) with no pupils due to start Reception in September 2015 and 2 leaving Year 6. Therefore there were 12 pupils expected to be on roll at the beginning of the next academic year. Members were advised that there were not

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

enough pupils in the local area to sustain an educationally and financially viable primary school without relying on attracting pupils from areas closer to other schools, many of which already had surplus capacity.

It was reported that following careful consideration of how to secure a viable future for the school, the Governing Body had taken the difficult decision in November 2014 to request that the local authority started the consultation process on the proposal to close the school.

The Chairman read out a statement from Councillor A H Turner, the local member for the school, which stated that "whilst disappointed at the outcome of the recommendation he accepted the situation".

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was considered sad when a small school had to close, particularly when the parents had spoken with such passion for the school;
- Small schools were a nurturing environment for those children who did not cope well in a larger schools;
- It was queried whether setting up a nursery provision would help with increasing the pupil numbers. Members were informed that there was already sufficient nursery provision in the area;
- It was noted that the neighbouring schools were not large and so personalisation in terms of education would still be maintained;
- It was queried whether, as the neighbouring schools were also small, if they would be faced with a situation where they would need to expand in the future. Members were informed that there was sufficient capacity for primary school places for the current and projected number of pupils in the area;
- There were concerns that in a rural village, the school was often the hub for the village, and so the loss of this school would impact the village. Members were advised that this school was slightly displaced from the village centre, and a new village hall had recently been built;
- It was also noted that it was unlikely that further housing developments would be built in the village as it was within Lord Yarborough's Estate;
- If the school was to close, the building would revert back to the Estate, as it was built on Lord Yarborough's land;
- It was commented that demographics changed and populations moved;
- Significant sums of money would be needed for the school to remain open, and if an early years provision was to be introduced, then further investment in the building would be required;
- Lord Yarborough had offered to financially support the school, but this contribution would be capped so there would still be a financial risk to the Council;
- It was suggested whether this school could be used to create some personalised education for children to avoid exclusion. However, members were advised that this would be a re-appropriation of use of the building. It was also noted that it was not in an area of high exclusions, and there was a

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
5 JUNE 2015**

centre not far from this school which was meeting the needs of children who had been excluded;

- It was commented that the closure of any school was a very big step;
- It was noted that the school had submitted another application to the Regional Schools Commissioner to become an academy with an early year's unit as part of the Tollbar Multi Academy Trust;
- It was suggested that the school should be given the additional year to ensure that every option to avoid closure was considered;
- It was very stressful for parents to have their child in a school with an unknown future;
- The Council had been supportive of the Tollbar Trust application to take over the school, but it had been the Regional Schools Commissioner that turned it down;
- A school needed a minimum of 40 pupils to be financially viable;
- The pupil numbers at this school had been monitored for the past 8-10 years, and the school had recently seen a big drop in pupil numbers;
- The school could not legally teach all children in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in the same class;
- There was a need to think about what the children were getting out of this school;
- Members were reminded that it was not within the power of the County Council to appoint a sponsor for an academy;
- It was queried whether there would be another opportunity to bring this back to scrutiny in September, however, members were advised that there were only two months to make this decision following the end of the consultation and a decision had to be made by 22 July 2015;
- The cost of maintaining this school further was huge. The governors of the school had asked the council to start the closure process. It was felt by one member that it was the right decision to close the school;
- In response to a comment made, it was clarified that the authority had not commissioned a 50 seater bus to transport 2 pupils to the school. If that was what was provided then that was the company's decision;
- Marketing had been undertaken by the school over the previous year to try and increase its pupil numbers;
- There were no new housing developments planned for this area as the village was surrounded by thousands of acres of farming land;
- If the school was to remain open for a further year it would have a budget deficit of around £50,000.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee support the recommendation to the Executive Councillor as set out in the report;
2. That the following additional comments be passed to the Executive Councillor in relation to this item:
  - It was questioned whether there was enough demand for the early years unit at the school. It was noted that in terms of nursery provision, there was already sufficient capacity in the area.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

- It was queried whether there would be a shortage of primary school places in the area in future as a result of rising birth rates. The Committee was informed that there were more than enough places for current and projected numbers as there were nine other primary schools in the area. In addition, there was no new housing planned for the area as the school was in the middle of an arable estate.
- Concerns were raised as to whether it was too soon to close the school, and whether the closure should be delayed until August 2016 to see what the outcome would be from the school's submission to the Regional Schools Commissioner to become an academy with an early year's unit as part of the Tollbar Multi Academy Trust. The Committee was informed that the delay would lead to further uncertainty for the parents and children, and that a school needed sufficient pupils to be financially viable.

10      PERFORMANCE: QUARTER 4 2014/15

Consideration was given to a report which provided performance information for Quarter 4 2014/15 which was relevant to the work of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was queried whether there were any measures which could be introduced to improve the average time for a child to move in with an adoptive family. Members were advised that Lincolnshire's court times were outstanding and the authority was one of the best in the country for this. However, there were always one or two cases which experienced delays;
- In relation to the percentage of privately fostered children visited within required timescales it was commented that there had been some improvement. Members were advised that this was a strange indicator, as if one visit was missed, even if by only a day, then all scheduled visits would then be late. Officers were not happy with this and would be re-examining it. However, members were reassured that children were being visited and officers had no concerns in relation to this. It was noted that the implementation of the new case management system should help to address this issue and make planning easier;
- It was noted that the vacancy rate of social workers was slightly below target. However, it was confirmed that this related to the earlier document presented with the action plan for the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding scrutiny review report;
- The below target performance of children making expected progress in Maths between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was attributed to change in the maths requirement, and all results needed to be re-balanced so that they were more comparable at all levels;
- It was queried whether there was any reason for the rate of permanent exclusions to be worse than target. Members were advised that a new strategy around exclusions would shortly be considered by the Children's

Services management team, and would be added to the Committee's work programme at the appropriate time;

- In terms of families turned around, it was confirmed that 100% would be moving to phase two;
- Members were informed that it was proposed that all ombudsman complaints which were recorded against the authority would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee;
- There was a need for a rethink in relation to how schools with extremely challenging children were supported, as the impact on the needs of other children in schools and academies who sit with these children was considerable;
- It was commented that the Narrowing the Gap conference was inspirational, and there were three speakers who were particularly good, and it would be money well spent to run it again. It was queried whether there would be a follow up with schools that attended to see what effect it had had;
- It was confirmed that the Narrowing the Gap conference would be repeated;
- It was noted that exclusion of pupils was an issue that affected all schools, including grammar schools, and that school engagement on this issue was crucial;
- Bullying was a very subjective issue, and all schools had an anti-bullying policy. It was noted that a report was scheduled to come to this Committee in July 2015 on this issue. There was a need for schools to work with pupils and parents. Officers would continue to monitor this, but it was the responsibility of the school;
- 100% of troubled families involved in the Families Working Together programme had been turned around, and the authority would be able to continue this work as it was funded by central government. However, funding levels for next year had not yet been announced, but it was hoped that the same level of funding would continue. There was a five year plan if the funding level was maintained.

In order for the Committee to discuss the content of Appendix F, which was marked as exempt, it was moved, seconded and agreed that the press and public be excluded for consideration of that information.

#### RESOLVED

That the performance information presented be noted.

#### 11 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015

The Committee received a reported which provided the opportunity to consider its own work programme for the coming year.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that there were no amendments to the work programme.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**5 JUNE 2015**

It was suggested that a working group be set up to allow a few members to discuss the options for the Monks Dyke Tennyson College which would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in July 2015. Volunteers were requested for the working group for a one-off meeting to discuss this.

Councillors S R Dodds, Mrs L A Rollings and A G Hagues volunteered to sit on this working group.

It was suggested that it would be useful to invite some social workers to attend the meeting when the Committee considered the next monitoring update on the Frontline Social Workers and Safeguarding Scrutiny review. It was also suggested that it would be useful to hear from some of the Families Working Together officers and troubled families who had been turned around when the Committee considered the Families Working Together Update in October 2015. The Scrutiny officer advised that she would look into whether these attendances would be possible.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the content of the work programme be noted;
2. That the above members be appointed to sit on the working group to discuss the options for the Monks Dyke Tennyson College;
3. That the attendance of Social Workers, Families Working Together officers and troubled families at future meeting be investigated by the Scrutiny Officer.

The meeting closed at 12.27 pm