

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
 25 APRIL 2014**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J D HOUGH (CHAIRMAN)**

Councillors B Adams (Vice-Chairman), J P Churchill, S R Dodds, A G Hagues, J R Hicks, B W Keimach, C R Oxby, Mrs S Ransome, Mrs L A Rollings, Mrs N J Smith, S M Tweedale, L Wooten, R Wooten and Mrs S M Wray.

**Added Members**

Church Representatives: Mr S C Rudman, Mr P Thompson and Mrs G Wright.

Parent Representatives: Mr C V Miller and Mrs E Olivier-Townrow.

Councillors: D Brailsford and M Jones attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Barnes (Executive Director of Children's Services), Keith Batty (Assistant Director of CfBT Education Services), Chris Briggs (Head of Transportation), Andrea Brown, Tracy Johnson (Scrutiny Officer), Tony McGinty (Assistant Director of Public Health - Children's and Public Health Commissioning), Andrew McLean Head of Commissioning - Children's Services), Sally Savage (Assistant Director of Children's Services) and Michelle White (CWD Team Manager).

85 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

The Chairman reported that, since the last meeting of the Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Dr Emile van der Zee had resigned as a Parent Governor Representative.

A letter of thanks had been sent to Dr van der Zee for his time and effort on both this Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J Brockway, R Hunter-Clarke and Mrs C A Talbot.

There were no replacement Members in attendance.

86 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

87 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 MARCH 2014

Due to technical difficulties, it was noted that the incorrect version of the minutes had been circulated to Members. It was therefore agreed to defer the minutes to the next meeting to allow sufficient time for consideration.

## RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014 be deferred to the next meeting.

88 SENSORY EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided the Committee with an overview of the Sensory Education and Support Service (SESS) and the Core Offer.

Michelle White, CWD Team Manager, introduced the report and explained the detail of the Core Offer which was funded through the central Designated Schools Grant (DSG) and offered county-wide support and specialist teaching to children with sensory impairment (Hearing, Visual and Multisensory) from birth to school leaving age.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- One Member had experienced the training and advised that it was an amazing service but noted that it was stretched;
- Plans for funding to provide Specialist Teaching Assistants who could support Teaching Assistants within a number of schools who have children with sensory impairments were being considered;
- It was acknowledged that there was a gap between this service and the children with autism service. Work was in the early stages of trying to narrow this gap in respect of sensory integration;
- No specific school in Lincolnshire provided British Sign Language (BSL) which meant that a school with a child whose first language was BSL would require an interpreter all day to translate the school setting to the child, not just lessons but also at break times to enable them to communicate with their peers and staff. Some staff were BSL trained, however, nationally, the perceived need of BSL seemed to be dwindling due to the new technology available to children and families;
- Two secondary and two primary schools had enhanced the support provided and work was underway to further look at how to better enhance that resource;
- Ruskington Primary School was opening an enhanced provision in September and, as a result, had attracted a child whose main form of communication was BSL;

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- In relation to the Voice of the Child, the teacher completes a contact sheet which detailed the work done with the child on a daily basis. The child was then given the opportunity to look at the sheets and add their understanding of what they did that day and why they were doing it. This was then presented to the parents;
- Within Aspiration Week, Jade Etherington had agreed to attend. The photographs included in the leaflets promoting Aspiration Week, circulated with the papers, were all of children currently being supported within the County;
- There was a staff cohort of early years teachers and teaching assistants. They receive a six-weekly report on who the children were, where they were and where they were likely to go to school and what their future needs may be. A lot of these staff were based within Children's Centres which has forged strong links with the centres; and
- It was agreed that this was an impressive service and a credit to all involved.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

89     OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE POST 16

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided details of the work undertaken to implement the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) in Lincolnshire.

Maggie Freeman, Head of Service 14-19, introduced the report, highlighting further budget reductions for 2015/2016. There would be a £2.8m reduction in funding in 2014/15 and a further £1.2m reduction in 2015/16.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

- Raising the Participation Age (RPA) was implemented in September 2013 with the second phase due to be implemented in September 2014. This would mean that young people would have to participate in post 16 education or learning until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. If an appropriate offer of places was made then the number of young people participating post 16 should decline. However, tension remained for some school sixth forms who need to maintain their numbers for financial viability;
- Support was being provided to schools in terms of collaboration by helping them develop formal arrangements and ensuring collaboration continued despite management changes within schools;
- The leverage which could be exerted through the data was used to encourage schools to collaborate. The data available showed schools how serious the issues were which has resulted in them being more receptive to the process of collaboration;

- Schools had a statutory duty to advise the Local Authority when a pupil was leaving and, in turn, the Local Authority had a statutory duty to follow that pupil;
- Plans were currently underway for September 2015 and offers for young people were scheduled to be sent out in the Autumn 2014;
- Members felt there was a clear need to find out why the numbers of young people "dropping out" of their sixth form courses were so high and an understanding of why this was happening would likely assist in providing a more appropriate offer for that student. It was confirmed that work was ongoing to improve the offers currently presented to children;
- It was acknowledged that the Joint Sixth Form provision between Sir Robert Pattinson Academy and North Kesteven School in North Hykeham was a clear example of best practice within Lincolnshire, although the geographical location of these schools was an advantage;
- Although the model used in Ipswich and Suffolk was also an example of good practice, this could not be adopted in Lincolnshire. However, replication of this model was being promoted by encouraging schools to work together;
- Headteachers in Stamford had asked New College Stamford to join discussions for a collaboration and have asked the Local Authority to undergo more detailed mapping and costings;
- The Local Authority now only have the ability to encourage schools to take a certain route and it was suggested that officers and Members should work together to ascertain how Members could potentially use their democratic mandate to work with all schools;
- There was a suggestion that the local authority role could include encouraging schools to be mindful of their moral responsibilities in addition to ensuring the business was a success;
- In order to keep specialist teachers, for example a Japanese language teacher, schools should be encouraged to work with other schools nearby to provide that course in their area rather than for their school alone which may only be for one or two pupils. This would then give pupils and teachers increased opportunities;
- Work was nearing completion to identify the strategic priorities, including the skills shortages within the county and what companies would be looking for when recruiting. Work was ongoing with the Employment and Skills Board to clarify these details which would have some influence in terms of the strategic implications;
- Additional options regarding careers guidance and making links with employers had been included but it remained the responsibility of the school to provide independent advice and guidance to young people;
- The Aspirations document was published on a termly basis; and

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- Members felt that the overall position was not acceptable at present, despite officers following statutory guidance, as young people should be able to do the courses they wanted to within Lincolnshire.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a clear strategy be formulated, taking into consideration the comments made, and presented to the Committee as part of the 16-19 Strategic Priorities report in July 2014.

90     DISCRETIONARY TRANSPORT SUPPORT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, which summarised the extent and cost of providing discretionary transport support for young learners in Lincolnshire.

Andrea McLean, Head of Service – Commissioning, introduced the report and advised that the Home to School/College Transport Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), had been last issued in 2007. In February 2014 the DfE had issued new guidance on post 16 transport, which meant that the Council had to consult on its post 16 transport policy statement, prior to its publication on 31 May 2014.

The Committee was invited to comment on the proposed statement which was detailed at Appendix E to the report presented. It was highlighted that there was no proposals to change the current home to school transport policy.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Ian Widdows, Deputy Head of the Giles Academy, to the meeting and invited him to address the Committee. He raised concerns that some providers had not been treated fairly under the existing policy, and although the Giles Academy sixth form which offered A-level tuition it had not been classed as being a Dedicated Transport Area (DTA) Sixth Form. The school currently competed in a market with other sixth forms, providers and colleges, and as such should be treated fairly. A number of students, who attended the Giles Academy, had to pay for the additional cost of travel themselves. It was highlighted that it was important to bear in mind that at the end of key stage 4, children were free agents and could choose whatever provider they wanted based on a variety of factors. Pre-16 and post 16 transport should therefore be dealt with differently, as this was having an effect on the choices for young people.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following issues:-

- That the lack of flexibility in the post 16 transport policy was having an impact on the young people's first choices;

- Some members agreed that the policy needed to be made more readable and that different ways of providing transport needed to be investigated. The policy needed to be fairer and more equitable;
- Some concern was raised that the post 16 transport policy was making the situation worse for sixth forms. The description of schools and the Designated Transport Areas needed to be relooked at especially with collaboration;
- The Committee was advised that the Council did not commission a taxi, but commissioned transport. Whoever provided the transport would decide on what mode of transport to provide. Taxis often provided the most cost effective means of transport. Officers advised that they were not in a position to comment with regard to the cost of taxis overall, as this report related to post 16 provision;
- It was noted that there were schemes to support children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to use public transport, which was quite often the most effective means, given the rurality of the County;
- The Committee was advised further that the Council was not obliged to provide post 16 transport, but it had chosen to do so. The DTA's had been reviewed, and as a result transport was provided to the nearest school if it was over three miles for post 16. It was noted that the DTA was not a legal requirement. It was highlighted that any new policy needed to be affordable;
- Collaboration between small school sixth forms would be important for future financial viability;
- The extortionate cost of home to school/college transport to the Council, which amounted to £25m for 2013/14. Officers advised that the policy had been supported by the Committee and the Leader of the Council who had put additional budget into Children's Services to cover the cost. Post-16 transport was subsidised but students were expected to contribute £399 to the cost; and
- That the post 16 transport policy was not fit for purpose. The Committee supported the key points set out in the statutory guidance in the first paragraph on page 73 of the report. However, it was felt that the current transport policy did not cover the Local Authority's statutory duty, and that officers should look at the policy again, taking into account the statutory guidance, and the comments raised by the Committee.

**RESOLVED**

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee did not support the Post - 16 Transport Statement presented.

91     THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY  
          ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: SELF-  
          EVALUATION

Consideration was given to a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which provided the Scrutiny Committee with information relating to the key strengths and areas of development identified, as a result of the framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement: self-evaluation.

In guiding the Scrutiny Committee through the report, the Assistant Director of CfBT Education Services, made reference to the fact that if an inspection was to be triggered, the nine areas that would be the focus for Ofsted would fall under four main categories; which were detailed on page 117 of the report presented.

Page 120 of the report identified the strengths identified in the self-evaluation and the strategic developments underway.

It was highlighted that members needed to be prepared to talk to inspectors, should they be called. An inspection was not expected imminently, but members were asked to be prepared.

Discussion ensued, from which the Committee enquired as to whether the A-C's including English and Maths downward trend over the last three years had been identified. It was reported that a pattern had not been identified, but it was highlighted that national figures had also dropped. Officers confirmed that there was a downward trend and that this was a concern, as evidence suggested that as more schools had become academies there had been a continued downward trend. The Council would however be working with Academies with regard to this matter.

Some concern was raised as to the implications for children as a result of what was happening. As a result of this there would be children who were going to fall through the gaps.

The Committee was reassured by officers that regular talks were had with the DfE about schools and academies causing concern and that a monitoring process took place.

It was noted that officers would bring back a report with regard to CfBT in September 2014.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the report and particularly the section relevant to the role of elected members be noted. (It is likely that the Lead member would be required to meet with the inspection team should the need arise).

2. That reports on school improvement demonstrating rigour, challenge, ambition and vision in order to demonstrate political oversight continue to be scrutinised.
3. That the ambitious vision for improving schools, which is clearly demonstrated in public documents, be supported.
4. That the Authority be prepared to articulate the Local Authority's strategic role, and enhance schools' ability to self-manage should an inspection arise.

## 92 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to an update report from the Corporate Parenting Panel, which provided details of the work of the Panel. A copy of the draft minutes from the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting held on 31 January 2014 were attached for members' consideration.

The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel advised that at the meeting on 31 January 2014, the Panel had considered a range of reports as detailed in the aforementioned minutes. This included the approval of the new Looked After Children Strategy for 2013/16, and the new Looked After Children Placement Sufficiency Strategy for 2013/16. It was reported that these would be reviewed again in December 2014.

The Panel had also considered a report on the Leaving Care Service contract, which had subsequently been considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 7 March 2014.

On 13 March 2014, the Panel had held a meeting to consider a report from Legal Services Lincolnshire regarding the legal proceedings implemented between April 2012 and November 2013, in relation to care and supervision orders.

The Committee was advised that at the next meeting of the Panel on 5 June 2014, the Panel would be considering a report on the outcomes from the CQC Review of Health Services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding in Lincolnshire, and a progress report on closing the gap for Looked After Children in terms of Education achievement. The Committee was advised further, that Senior Health officers would be asked to attend the meeting and questions would be asked with regard to a plan of action, to address the issues raised in the report.

## RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

93 CHILDHOOD OBESITY - PROGRESS REPORT FOLLOWING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2012

Consideration was given to a report from the Director of Public Health, which provided the Committee with an overview of childhood obesity and the progress made in tackling childhood obesity.

The Assistant Director of Public Health – Children's and Public Health Commissioning guided the Committee through the report making reference to the fact that 2008 saw activity increase with regard to obesity. It was highlighted that public health was currently in the process of commissioning service intervention between birth and reception. It was highlighted further that evidence suggested that if a mother was overweight, then the child was more likely to be overweight. Full details of the proposed interventions were shown in the report presented.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following points:-

- Being able to make it easier for children to get out and around safely i.e. cycling and provision of parks, the need to promote cycling and walking;
- Ensuring that school meals are nutritional, encouraging healthy cooking and making children aware of fruit and vegetables. The Committee was advised that there were programmes that dealt with growing food through to preparation and finally cooking; others that identified vegetables and food groups and also food skills. A further report would be presented to the Committee at the July 2014 meeting with regard to the Universal Free Schools Meals;
- District Council's involvement in tackling obesity. It was noted that some districts were promoting cycling;
- The need for an action plan to ensure that all the proposed activities and outcomes are managed; and
- That children were more likely to be overweight if they were from a poorer background.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

94 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014

A report by the Scrutiny Officer was considered, which provided the Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to consider its work programme for the coming year.

There were no amendments to the presented work programme. It was reported that there were a number of pre-decision scrutiny reports due for the next three agendas.

It was highlighted that the June agenda currently had seven items listed and that the July agenda already had six items listed, and that there was potentially a further

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report on the 16-19 Strategic Priorities, which the Committee had requested should come back for consultation, prior to pre-decision scrutiny in September.

It was agreed that an informal working group should be set up to consider the new home to school travel and transport guidance consultation and formulate a response on behalf of the Committee. Councillors J D Hough, J P Churchill and Mrs L A Rollings expressed an interest in being part of the informal working group.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Work Programme, as set out at Appendix A, be agreed.
2. That the content of the Children's Services Forward Plan, as set out in Appendix B, be noted.

The meeting closed at 1.25 pm