



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES HELD ON THURSDAY 14 JULY 2005, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.07AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.18PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D Anson MBE, Mrs M Baldwin, Mrs L Clarke, Mr C Ditta, Mr N Hussain, Mrs B Jennings (Chairman), Mr P Rogerson (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Smith, and Mrs C Willetts.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D Ashburner, Mrs A Howe, Mr P Monk and Mr M Moore.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs S Bresnahan, Mr N Cook, Mr R Edwards, Mrs J Fisk, Mrs R Lally, Mr R Lundie-Sadd and Mrs C Street.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Mr D Carroll, Mr D Polhill and Mr F Sweatman. Members were informed that Mrs E Lay would be substituting for Mr D Carroll for the duration of the meeting.

The Chairman asked that members observe a two-minute silence at 12.00noon to reflect on the recent tragic events in London. It was noted that some members would observe the silence outside of the council offices.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr N Hussain declared a personal interest as he has a child with special educational needs. Mr D Ashburner declared a personal interest as a foster carer of a child with special educational needs. Mrs A Howe declared a personal interest as an independent member of Buckinghamshire's School Appeals Panel.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held on 23 June 2005, were agreed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

4. DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S SERVICES: EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Members received a presentation from Richard Lundie-Sadd and Sally Bresnahan, Programme Managers for the Every Child Matters programme. A copy of the presentation was circulated with the agenda.

The presentation contained four outline models for the programme. Members were informed that these were being consulted on. Part of the consultation involved workshops for staff. Staff would be informed of the preferred model in October, which would be followed by further workshops and the development of an implementation plan in November. It was thought that member consultation would take place in September.

During discussion of the item, members stressed the need for clear accountability for the 26 targets contained in the government's 'Outcomes Framework' document <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/outcomes/>. It was noted that the Director of Children's Services would be ultimately responsible, but parents would want to know who was accountable on a day-to-day basis. The officers agreed with this, commenting that accountability would be built into the models with a named lead professional. As there would be a range of partners involved, providing accountability might prove to be complex in some cases but was very necessary.

Another complex area was lead commissioning. Officers advised that this might be achieved through the development of the new Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Budget setting would be part of the commissioning process and member's stressed that this would need careful preparation.

Members were keen that they should have early involvement in the programme and queried why they were not being consulted until September. The officers responded that by this time they would have some idea of the preferred model from the point of view of staff, but no decision would have been taken. It was noted that members were represented on the Every Child Matters Steering Group. A member pointed out that it might be necessary to set more than one date for member consultation due to the number of member commitments. It was suggested that arranging sessions on the rise of full Council should ensure a good attendance by members. Members also stressed the importance of involving school governors in the consultation process.

Members were keen that young people should be consulted regarding the development of the programme. It was noted that they would be involved in the Children and Young People's Plan in terms of contributing to a child friendly version of the local vision, which was laid out in the officer's presentation, and would be involved in producing a child friendly summary of the Children and Young People Plan.

The Vice-Chairman stressed the importance of tracking relationships between actions on the timeline chart for the CYP Plan, in order that a logical process could be viewed. The officer's advised that a more full document was available giving more details. Members had been issued with a summary version of the Plan, the layout of which was dictated by government.

Members raised concerns regarding the make-up of the ECM Programme Board and Steering Group as the membership was duplicated. Officers advised that this had been discussed and they were looking to slim down the number of boards and groups involved in ECM.

Members queried the nature of Children's Trusts. The Strategic Director for Children's Services advised that this was likely to be a multi-agency commissioning body. It was not clear yet who would be represented on it. A Safeguarding Board would be set up to replace the Area Child Protection Committee. Members highlighted the need for both groups to have terms of reference that complimented each other and to avoid duplication of work.

A member referred to the planned needs analysis for changes to children's services, commenting that others might already have carried out some work on this and that this information should be shared. Officers responded that they had collated information that already existed within the CYP and Schools portfolios and were currently looking at the gaps in services. This part of the work should be completed by the end of August, at which point a consultant might be brought in to help progress matters.

Members noted that that would be a high level of cultural change required. Officers advised that they would be delivering plans for cultural change later in the year, which would take effect from January 2006.

A member asked which of the four models was proving most popular with other authorities. The officers advised that the Area Model seemed to be most favoured, but Bucks had not yet committed itself to any of the models.

At the suggestion of the Vice-Chairman, it was agreed that a summary report of members concerns to be submitted to Cabinet, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board and ECM Programme Board. The Policy Officer agreed to compile a draft of the report and email this to OSC members.

Members of the OSC agreed that they wished to be regularly updated on progress with the ECM Project and progress on work towards a Children's Trust.

5. EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN - TRAFFIC LIGHT REPORT

Members had been issued with a traffic light report updating them on the status of the Education Development Plan (EDP). Nigel Cook, Senior Adviser - School Improvement, advised that the EDP priorities had been set up three years ago to cover a five-year period. Since it was first drafted amendments had been made to incorporate actions resulting from the development of the Single Education Plan and the Post-Ofsted Improvement Plan. Eventually the Children and Young People Plan would supercede the EDP. The OSC was asked to consider how they might like to scrutinise this information in future.

During discussion, members made the following points:

- They would like to have some idea of the indication of travel for amber items, possibly through the use of an arrow. It was noted that the traffic lights identified progress made against actions.
- They would like a summary page reviewing progress in key areas and highlighting areas of particular concern
- They would like an indication of trends and of relationships to other key corporate events such as the Annual Performance Assessment.

(11.50am Mr N Hussain left the meeting)

A member commented that it was difficult to relate progress to other versions of the EDP. The officer advised that next year the same numbers would be used as in the current version of the EDP to allow for comparison where possible, and cross referencing to other plans would be included.

The officer was asked to identify any points of concern. He advised that there was some really good work taking place in supporting schools, which had been recognised by external advisers and which was further evidenced by the fact that there were currently no primary schools in a formal Ofsted category. Further work was required in co-ordinating services to schools and supporting under-achievement.

A member queried progress in Plan D5, 3.8, creating confidential drop-in sessions for primary age pupils. The officer replied that this was still considered to be important but needed a different form of delivery. The officer was asked how much the EDP was used. He advised that he personally used it when line managing members of staff for performance management purposes. It also helped inform his area's Service Plan, which played a key role in directing work.

Members raised concern regarding the red action on Plan D6, 1.2, tracking and monitoring all young people whose parents or carers elect to educate them out of school. The officer responded that this did not fall within his service area. The Chairman stressed the need for good communication between the service areas to ensure that actions such as these were pursued appropriately. It was thought this would be addressed through the CYP Plan.

The officer was thanked for his contribution to the meeting.

6. WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Corporate Task Group

Members discussed the role and membership of the Corporate Task Group (CTG). The Lead Officer for Scrutiny advised that the CTG would have the role of scrutinising the preparation of the Medium Term Plan / budget process. The ongoing monitoring of the Council's performance in delivering the aims and priorities of the MTP from the Overview and Scrutiny aspect would be the responsibility of the appropriate 'service' OSC. He added that the OSCs (excluding Health) might decide to charge the CTG with other tasks. A member had continuing concerns about the nature of the CTG, which she indicated that she would pursue outside of the meeting.

It was noted that the membership of the CTG was proportional. Members of the other OSCs had already put forward nominations and current members were asked to do the same. Paul Rogerson and Peter Smith were nominated and accepted. The Policy Officer agreed to email those members not present at the meeting for nominations. The Chairman indicated that she would be willing to be nominated as a member if required.

Membership of the Performance Management Working Group

The Policy Officer agreed to seek nominations by email for membership of the Performance Management Working Group.

PRU Working Group

The Chairman of the PRU Working Group reported on the first meeting of the group. The membership consisted of four elected and two co-opted members who were representative of the various districts within the county. The group had discussed its objectives and timescales, and had received a presentation from Steve Edgar, lead

officer for PRUs. Members would be visiting the PRUs and feeder schools in September / October 05. A report to Cabinet would follow in December.

(At this point Mrs E Lay declared a personal interest as a member of the management board of The Grange in High Wycombe. Mrs B Jennings declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the Aylesbury PRU management board).

Preparation for September's Meeting

Members were issued with a draft document concerning priorities for Children's Services. They agreed to forward any comments on this to the Policy Officer or Lead Officer for Scrutiny by Thursday 28 July 2005. The Vice-Chairman suggested that some of the points in the draft document and any subsequently raised by members could be included in the summary report previously mentioned. The Policy Officer advised members that a representative from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) would attend the September meeting to assist members in scrutinising changes to Children's Services.

A member reported that Yvette Thomas, Diversity Adviser, was putting together a protocol for young people.

11.42 Mr D Anson MBE, Mrs M Balwin and Mrs C Willetts left the meeting.

Members were informed that a member of the public would be speaking to the Schools Admissions item. Concerns from parents laid out in a letter would be included as part of the papers for the meeting. It was agreed that any specific concerns regarding the Admissions item be submitted to the Policy Officer, Lead Officer for Scrutiny or the Chairman, before the next meeting. Because of the lengthy agenda, the meeting would start at 9.45am with a private briefing at 9.30am.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 15 September 2005, 9.45am, **(private briefing for members 9.30am)**, Mezzanine Rooms 1 and 2, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN