

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors David Wood (Chair), Nick Martin (Vice-Chair), Andrew Bennett, Fay Howard, Colin Lovell, Cindy Matthews, Maureen Penny, James Robbins, Rochelle Russell and Nadine Watts.

Co-opted Representatives: - Dick Mattick (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers), Rachael Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteacher) and Mrs Melanie Sancto (Swindon Association of Primary School Headteachers).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rex Barnett, Doreen Dart and Emma Faramarzi, Peter Crockett (Association of Swindon Special School Headteachers), Mrs Penny Summers (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education), Peter Wells (Catholic Church Diocese), Malcolm Barton (Church of England Diocese) and Sam Cantlon (Swindon Youth Forum).

Also Present: Councillor David Renard.

8. Vote of Thanks - Malcolm Barton

The Committee noted the resignation of Malcolm Barton, Co-opted Representative, Church of England Diocese.

Resolved - That Malcolm Barton, Church of England Diocese representative, be thanked for his work for his service to this Community and its predecessors and a letter of thanks be issued on behalf of the Committee.

9. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Nick Martin made a personal declaration of interest in respect of item 5 (Cabinet Member Q & A) as he was a Governor of Lydiard Park Academy and Chair of Plas Pencelli, Outdoor Recreation Centre.

Councillor James Robins made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of item 5 (Cabinet Member Q & A) as he was employed by Churchfields Academy and Item 6 (Children in Care) as he was a foster carer in Swindon.

10. Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted for this meeting.

11. Minutes

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2012, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

Minute No 5 – The Chair advised that the information requested in respect of Item (2), (factors affecting school attendance and exclusions), had been incorporated within paragraph 12.10, (Exclusions) in Agenda Item 5. The Committee agreed that a further report regarding school attendance would not be required at a future meeting. The Chair requested that Councillor Nick Martin liaise with Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning – Economy / Attainment regarding the number of students studying Out of Borough and how this affected Swindon's educational data.

Resolved: That a report relating to the achievements of students studying out of borough and how this affects Swindon's educational data be presented at the Committee meeting to be held on 16th January 2013.

12.

Cabinet Member Q & A

Councillor David Renard, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children's Services presented a report setting out details of his portfolio and advised that as part of its Scrutiny role, he welcomed the Committee's comments on the work undertaken by Children Services. He commented on the layout of the report as it reflected key strengths identified through the Self-Assessment process undertaken by Children Services.

The Committee considered the report and commented on the following issues:

- The LIFE programme. Councillor Renard confirmed that the programme started in 2009 and had expanded to include a larger number of families. Members noted that the remit and focus of the programme had evolved to support troubled families.
- Oxford Brookes and the University Technical College (UTC) in Swindon. Councillor Renard advised that the UTC was an Academy Trust jointly sponsored by Oxford Brooke's University and Johnson Matthey Fuels Cells. He stated that the Council would have a representative on its Board. He further commented on the partnership working being undertaken and Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning / Attainment, elaborated explaining the project structure to be adopted and processes to be undertaken to deliver the UTC by 2014. With regards to the Teaching School run by the White Horse Federation, Councillor Renard explained that it promoted good teaching practices.
- Admissions. The Committee enquired if there was any data regarding the travelling distances for pupils who obtained their first and/ or second preferences during the Admission process. Councillor Renard advised that this information would be circulated to Members. In response to a query regarding the publication of application figures in April 2011, the Committee noted that it was standard practice to publish this in the School Admission booklet published in September and that the information realised in April had been an isolated case in response to a Freedom of Information request.
- NEET figures. The Committee noted that the NEET figures had improved and the target was for 100% of 18 year old students to be in education or training.
- Health of children and young people. Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults confirmed that the tendering process for Health Watch had been undertaken and this would shape changes in service provision.
- Criteria for short breaks. The Committee sought clarity on the criteria for short breaks. Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, advised that the criteria had been broadened to ensure more families were included.

- “Signs of Safety” Pilot Scheme. In response to a query regarding this model, Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, confirmed that this model worked with families to identify their strengths to ensure child safety.
- Plas Pencelli. The Committee enquired if the Cabinet Member for Children was aware that children on free school meals could be subsidised through school budgets to enable them to attend facilities such as Plas Pencelli and take part in some of the available activities. Councillor Renard advised that the pupil premium supported young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend these facilities.
- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities. The Committee noted that work was contracted out to a school funding agency that had targets based on deprivation factors. Learning was conducted at various locations within the Borough.
- Immunisation. The Committee welcomed the information set out in the report. Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults commented on the partnership working with public health and surgeries.
- Obesity. The Committee enquired why Swindon figures were above the national average. Sue Wald confirmed that figures had not changed over the past two years and it was disappointing that figures had now gone up for Year 6 pupils despite the fact that work had been carried out with schools and school nurses. She advised that work to reduce the obesity figures would be further targeted when Public Health responsibilities passed to the Council with effect from April 2013.
- The increase in number of children in care. Councillor Renard advised that this was a national issue and as the number of children at risk had increased, consequently, the number of children placed in care had also increased. Terry Scragg, Head of Children and Young People in Care, advised that the Council’s systems had been reviewed and they were confident that only young people actually at risk were put into care.

Resolved: (1) That information regarding the travelling distances for pupils who obtained their first and/ or second school admission preferences be circulated to Members of this Committee.

(2) That representatives from Swindon’s Academies be invited to a future meeting to advise the Committee on how they utilised the pupil premium for the benefit of their disadvantaged pupils.

(3) That data set out by geographical area on the numbers of prosecutions resulting from non-attendance at school be circulated to Members of this Committee.

(4) That the Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, be requested to investigate to obtain information from Public Health reference any national statistics linking smoking with obesity and deprivation and circulate any data to Members of this Committee.

(5) That performance data for 2009 relating to the current 2011 Key Stage 4 Black and Ethnic Minority group be circulated to Members of this Committee.

13. Work Programme

The Committee received a report detailing its updated work programme for the Municipal Year 2012/13. The Council’s Scrutiny Officer advised that an independent review panel on school openings and closures had been established and meetings with affected residents and officers would be held.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

14.

Children in Care

Sara Tough (Head of Children and Families) introduced a report analysing the number of Children in Care in Swindon. The Committee noted that the report aimed to outline the implications of the current trend and offered operational management solutions.

The Committee considered the report and noted the following points:

- The importance of partnership working with the Health Board pending its integration to identify and resolve issues.
- The recruitment of foster carers to address the increase in the number of Children in Care in Swindon.

Resolved: That the report on the increase in numbers of Children in Care, be noted.

15.

Adoption

Terry Scragg, Head of Children and Young People in Care, submitted a report to update the Committee on the functions of the Adoption Services. He explained parts of the adoption process and commented on the work undertaken in support of adopters and adoptees. He added that the number of children adopted had increased over the last year and that Swindon benefited from the positive effects of an increased pool of volunteers from the community wishing to adopt.

In response to a query regarding the placement of Black and Minority Ethnic children, Terry Scragg confirmed that ethnicity matching played a part but the needs of the child were the priority.

Resolved: That the review of the adoption service, be noted.

16.

Munro Commissioning Plan

Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, presented a report updating the Committee on the Swindon Munro Commissioning Plan developed to provide a local response to the recommendations contained within in the Munro Review of Child Protection. The Committee noted that the plan would be reviewed by the Swindon Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Resolved: (1) That the Swindon Munro Commissioning Plan, be noted.

(2) That further to (1) above, the Committee receive an update on the Swindon Munro Commissioning Plan at the meeting to be held on the 6th March 2013.