

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 19 JUNE 2013

PRESENT:- Councillors Emma Famarzi, Colin Lovell, Maureen Penny (Chair), Nadine Watts, Steve Weisinger, Michael Bray, Ann Richards, Joe Tray, Fay Howard and Robert Wright.

Co-opted Representatives: - Mrs Melanie Sancto (Swindon Association of Primary School Headteachers), Andrew Wild (Church of England Diocese) and Mr Paul Sunners (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education).

Apologies for absence were received from Dick Mattick (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers), Rachael Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteacher), Mr David Dawson (Catholic Church Diocese), Councillor Paul Baker and Councillor Mark Edwards.

Also Present: Councillor Fionuala Foley.

1. Councillor Rex Barnett

The Chair advised that Councillor Rex Barnett, a valued member of the Committee, had sadly recently died. She expressed her and the Committee's condolences to Councillor Barnett's family.

The Committee held a minute silence in memory of Councillor Barnett.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved – That Councillor Emma Famarzi be Vice Chair of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

3. Declaration of Interest

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

Councillor Maureen Penny (Chair) made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of Agenda Item 7 (Children's Services Performance Report) as she was a member of the Fostering Panel and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Board.

Councillors Fionuala Foley and Joe Tray made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of Agenda Item 7 (Children's Services Performance Report) as they were members of the Adoption Panel.

Councillor Bob (Robert) Wright made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of Agenda Item 7 (Children's Services Performance Report) as he was the trustee of a national organisation set up to influence national policy regarding domestic violence.

Councillor Mick Bray made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of Agenda Item 7 (Children's Services Performance Report) as he was a member of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Board.

4. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Matters arising

Councillor Fay Howard expressed her concerns over what she considered to be the lack of detail contained within the minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2013. The Committee Officer explained that as per current Council policy, meetings were not recorded and not transcribed verbatim.

Councillor Nadine Watts further commented on the apparent omission of some questions that had been raised at the meeting. In response, the Committee Officer gave further details of how the minutes were compiled and the Chair confirmed that her personal experience of this style of minuting was reflected across other meetings within the Council.

Councillor Bob (Robert) Wright raised the point that without detailed and named minutes, as a Councillor he would not be able to reference specific points as needed from previous meetings. However he agreed with the salient points and resolutions of the minutes.

Councillor Fionuala Foley reiterated that it was not Council policy to record meetings and therefore not humanly possible for verbatim transcription of meetings to be raised as minutes. She also highlighted that minutes would be always be subject to individual committee officers' styles.

Paul Sunners stated that this had been an emotive subject at the previous meeting and that some members of the Committee anticipated an apology by the Chair to the residents of Croft and enquired if an apology would have left the Council liable. The Chair confirmed this matter had been dealt with at the Council meeting of the 11th April 2013 (Minute 129, refers).

Resolved: That the Chair to raise the issue of minute taking at meetings with Stephen Taylor, Director of Law and Democratic Services.

5. Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted for this meeting.

6. Co-optees Report

The Committee considered a report of the Director Law and Democratic Services regarding the appointment of co-optees to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14.

Paul Sunners enquired if the Committee had considered the appointment of either a representative from the Youth Forum or a suitably experienced individual

currently undertaking youth work within Swindon. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that a member of the Youth Forum had been co-opted onto the Committee but had subsequently resigned due to personal educational commitments. She advised that to date, no nominations had been received from the Youth Forum.

The Committee noted that in September 2013, a meeting was to be held between the Chair, Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children Services, and members of the Youth Forum.

Councillor Bob Wright referred to a previous event with young people undertaken with Councillor Mike Bray and advised that the community contained a wide range of individuals from organisations such as Youth Centre, Scouts and Cubs who could be approached to become co-optees.

Resolved - (1) That at the meeting to be held with Swindon Youth Forum in September 2013, the Chair be requested to seek a nomination from the Youth Forum for a Co-optee to the Committee.

(2) That the appointment of Andrew Wild as Church of England Diocese representative to the Committee be confirmed.

(3) That the appointment of David Dawson as the Catholic Church Diocese representative to the Committee be confirmed.

(4) That the appointment of the following non-voting representatives be confirmed:

Dick Mattick (Swindon NASUWT Branch)

Jackie Smith (Swindon Association of Special School Headteachers)

Paul Sunners (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education)

Melanie Sancto (Swindon Association of Primary Headteachers)

Rachel Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteachers)

(5) That the appointment of a Parent Governor Representative to the Committee be submitted as and when nominations were received.

7. Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services on the results of the 2013/14 Overview and Scrutiny work programme consultation and on details regarding the priorities for Children's Services.

The Chair referred to work programme suggestions submitted by Councillors Cindy Matthews, Jim Robins, Stan Pajak and Claire Ellis and commented on items in the work programme including:

1. Troubled Families Agenda. The Chair advised that this would be included in the "Troubled Families" report to be submitted at the 13th November meeting of this Committee.
2. Relationship between children on free school meals and academic achievement, with a focus on GCSE results of pupils who receive free school meals. Councillor Bob Wright referred to the academic attainment gap indicated by food, wealth and income factors. John Gilbert, Board Director Commissioning, commented on the work being undertaken with all Local Authority and Academy schools in the Borough.
3. Further to (2) above, the report to encompass "at risk" groups.
4. Relationship between Social Care and Schools. Councillor Bob Wright referred to circumstances young people found themselves in that were detrimental to their wellbeing. The Committee noted that information

requested related to the relationship between schools and social workers, in particular in light of the Early Support Strategy.

5. Council support to schools in the wake of a number of schools becoming academies. The Committee agreed that the report would include information relating to traded services to schools.
6. Review of sex education in Swindon schools.
7. Impact on the Council – Teenage conception rates. Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, confirmed that the conception rate was currently at an all-time low and referred to the support provided by the Family Nurse Partnership for 16 to 18 year old young women who were pregnant. She referred to the support and education provided to the young mothers during the pregnancy and after the birth of their child.
8. Out of Borough Placements. The Committee noted the impact these had both financially on the Council and emotionally, on the family. Councillor Bob Wright commented on work undertaken by Councillor Ray Ballman that endeavoured to reduce out of Borough placements by relocating the children and young people back into Swindon. Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, confirmed that out of Borough placements were normally within a twenty mile radius and the distance varied on a case by case basis. She further advised that placements were monitored to ensure the wellbeing of the young person.

The Chair referred to the task groups to be set up. These related to troubled families, adoption and out of borough placements.

Resolved – (1) That Councillors, Members and stakeholders submitting areas for consideration under this Committee's Work Programme for the Municipal Year, 2013/14, be thanked.

(2) That Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning Economy/ Attainment, be requested to include information relating to the relationship between children on Free School Meals in the performance report to be submitted in January 2014.

(3) That Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, be requested to present the Early Support Plan and training strategy at the next meeting of this Committee.

(4) That Paul Sunners refers the review of sex education in Swindon schools to members of SACRE and request the Chair of SACRE to submit the group's comments at a future meeting of this Committee.

(5) That the Scrutiny Officer refers the review of sex education in Swindon schools to the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(6) That Members requiring further information regarding the e-safety report presented to this Committee at the meeting on 18th January 2012 (Minute 35 refers), contact the Scrutiny Officer.

(7) That, Sally Smith, Scrutiny Officer circulated the proposed Task Groups list.

(8) Further to (7) above, Members advised the Scrutiny Officer on which task groups they wish to volunteer for.

(9) That the report regarding the Impact on Children and Young People following the Welfare Reform be presented at the Committee meeting, 5th March 2013.

(10) That the Children's Services Performance Report to be presented on 15th January 2013 included information regarding academies.

(11) That the work programme be noted and further revised to incorporate changes agreed at this meeting.

8.

Swindon Women's Aid

Olwen Kelly, Swindon Women's Aid, gave a presentation regarding domestic violence and abuse and highlighted the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people. She explained that the definition of domestic abuse had been amended by the Home Office in September 2012 and referred to the different facets of domestic violence and abuse. In response to questions concerning the work undertaken and the services provided, Olwen Kelly referred to strong partnership working with Children Services, colleges within the town and outreach services.

The Committee thanked Olwen Kelly for the presentation and commented on the following Points:

- The "Bedroom Tax" and its effect on the service provision. Olwen Kelly confirmed that Women's Aid was a national body that lobbied Central Government with the result that these premises were exempt from the "Bedroom Tax".
- The number of children in protective services. Olwen Kelly advised that whilst the figure given in the presentation of three per cent was low, there were a number of reasons for this. She referred to the difference between a child in need and a child at risk and confirmed that through multi-agency working, risk is managed and children protected. She advised that it was nationally known that Swindon provided an excellent service when addressing domestic violence and this was due to robust partnership working.
- Domestic violence against men. Olwen Kelly referred to the support offered to male victims and confirmed that whilst this did occur, domestic violence was predominately against women. With regards to the equality breakdown of victims, Olwen Kelly confirmed that victims came from a range of age, religion and ethnicity.
- Review of policies within Housing and Children Services with regards to service provision to domestic violence victims. Olwen Kelly advised the best way to support victims was when they were able to remain in their own homes. She referred to the often slow process of the Criminal Justice system.

Resolved: (1) That Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member, Children Services be requested to examine policies within Housing and Children Services to ensure that they were aimed to improve support for domestic violence victims.

(2) That a report regarding the development of Reducing Domestic Violence Strategy to ensure children and young people's needs were taken into account, be submitted at a future meeting of this Committee.

(3) That Olwen Kelly, Swindon Women's Aid, be thanked for her presentation.

(4) That the Swindon Women's Aid report, be noted.

9.

Children's Services Performance Report.

Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning - Children and Adults, presented a report updating Members of the Committee on the performance within all service commissioning for the period to February 2013. Members noted that the report had been structured to highlight the improvements that had been made, areas where further work would be undertaken and areas where further actions would be required to improve the programme.

The Committee welcomed the report and the Chair referred to a question submitted by Councillor Cindy Matthews regarding what actions were being undertaken to close the attainment gap at Key Stage 4 for pupils on free school meals. John Gilbert, Board Director Commissioning, advised that this was an area of concern for the Borough and that Ofsted had picked up on this as an issue nationally. He advised that work was being undertaken to address this issue across all Key Stages and referred to the detailed report to be submitted to the Committee in January 2014. He commented on the range of actions being undertaken, that included:

- Challenging all secondary schools to narrow the gap.
- Working with the Teaching School.
- Ofsted regional seminars, "Getting to Good".

In response to a query regarding the increasing birth rate and its relevant demographic breakdown, Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning – Children and Adults, confirmed that this rise was in part due to an influx of younger families to North Swindon and the Swindon population was younger than the national average. She referred to the information available in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. John Gilbert, Board Director Commissioning, commented on the increased pressure on schools due to the increase in birth rate.

The Committee noted the situation in North Swindon regarding the influx of commuters living locally but commuting outside the Borough for work purposes contrasting with the town centre where the local community with families lived and worked as they were unable to afford the higher house prices out of town.

In response to a question submitted by Councillor Cindy Matthews regarding actions being undertaken due to the decline in common assessment completion, Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, confirmed that there was no statutory requirement to complete common assessments. She referred to common assessments being used by schools and partners as a means to provide support. She stated that there was a decline across all practitioners in conducting these assessments due to various factors including staffing levels and the complexity of the form. Sara Tough, Head of Children and Families, referred to a training programme that would emphasise the importance of conducting an assessment and sharing of information.

Resolved - That the performance data for the period end of February 2013, be noted.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings of the Committee during the Municipal Year 2013/14 be held on:

Wednesday, 4th September 2013, 6.00 pm in Committee Room 6.
Wednesday, 13th November 2013, 6.00 pm in Committee Room 6.
Wednesday, 15th January 2014, at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 6.
Wednesday, 5th March 2014, at 6.00 pm in Committee Room 6.