

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 5 MARCH 2014

PRESENT:- Councillors Maureen Penny (Chair), Emma Faramarzi, Colin Lovell, Cindy Matthews, James Robbins, Nadine Watts, Steve Weisinger, Paul Baker, Michael Bray, Ann Richards, Joe Tray and Alan Bishop.

Co-opted Representatives: - Rachael Matthey (Swindon Association of Secondary Headteacher) 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), Mrs Melanie Sancto (Swindon Association of Primary School Headteachers), Andrew Wild (Church of England Diocese), Mr David Dawson (Catholic Church Diocese), Councillor Mark Edwards and Jackie Smith (Swindon Association of Special School Headteachers).

Also present: Councillor Fionuala Foley, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

34. 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 Maureen Penny (Chair) declared a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest concerning Agenda Item 8 (Children's Services Performance Report) as she was a member of the Fostering Panel and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Board.

Councillor James Robbins declared a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest concerning Agenda Item 8 (Children's Services Performance Report) as he was a foster carer.

35. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

36. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

37. End of Year Report 2013/14

The Committee received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the achievements of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year 2013/14. Sally Smith, Scrutiny Officer, referred to the three Task Groups that were agreed to be set up at the beginning of the Municipal Year 2013/14 and commented on the need for further work to be undertaken regarding Out of Borough Placement during the Municipal

Year 2014/15. She further referred to the task group dealing with sex education and sexual exploitation and advised that discussions were held between the Chair, the Cabinet Member for Children Services and members of the Youth Forum regarding sexual exploitation and further progress was to be made.

Councillor Cindy Matthews presented the final report of the Task Group Review on the Troubled Families Programme. She referred to the meetings held with staff and families and explained the eligibility criteria set by Central Government. She stated that the Task Group had identified that the programme criteria was limited and that some families currently participating in the programme may not have met the threshold for social care and some families that needed to be in the programme did not fully meet the criteria for participation. The programme funding was initially an upfront payment and then further payment by results.

Joy Kennard, Strategic Commissioner, Children and Families, explained that the Life Team worked closely with other partner agencies for the benefit of the families involved.

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment and Joy Kennard, Strategic Commissioner, Children and Families responded to questions on:

- The “Curriculum for Life” Campaign. The Committee noted that all secondary schools had signed up to the campaign.
- The possibilities of extending the Troubled Families Programme.
- Financing the Programme beyond 2015.

Resolved: (1) That the Cabinet be requested to note the Troubled Families Task Group Final Report and its recommendations be presented to the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services for consideration.

(2) That any future proposals for this Committee’s Work Programme be forwarded to the Council’s Scrutiny Team for consideration by the 1st May 2014.

(3) That the following topics and reviews be included in the Committee’s work programme for 2014/15:

- Continue the work currently being undertaken by the Troubled Families Task Group.
- Child sexual exploitation.

38. Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session

The Cabinet Member for Children Services and the Board Director Commissioning, Children and Adults submitted a joint report setting out successes, challenges and future direction of the portfolio for the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

Councillor Fiona Foley, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, referred to the position statement where she summarised performance in respect of the various service areas within her portfolio of responsibility, including her assessment of what she felt had been done well, what might have been done differently and the challenges facing her portfolio.

Councillor Foley, John Gilbert, Board Director Commissioning, Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning Children and Adults, Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment and Jo Olssen, Interim Head of Children

and Families responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following issues:

- The revised protocol and training following the establishment of "See the Adult, See the Child", a joint group between the Local Adult and Local Children Safeguarding Board. The Committee noted this was an Agenda item for the next Local Safeguarding Board meeting and that the work was included in the Work Plan for 2014.
- The welfare of staff. The Committee heard about the various support tools available for staff, including "Care Matters".
- The Social Care Institute of Excellence Review (SCIE). Information had to be pooled between involved agencies to ensure timely and effective communication and better methods of cascading this information sought.
- The Multi-Agency response to Child Sexual Exploitation.
- As Corporate Parents, staff needed to understand that Children in Care were more vulnerable to exploitation.
- An explanation of what constituted a Lower Super Output Area.
- The reason why the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds that were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) was higher than the national average.

Resolved: (1) That the Committee thank the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for answering the questions from the Committee.
(2) That the report be noted.

39. Skills and Employment Strategy

The Board Director Commissioning, Children and Adults and the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment submitted a joint report concerning the priorities of the proposed Skills and Employment Strategy that had been approved by the Cabinet in December 2013 (Agenda Item 72, refers).

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment referred to the skills required in the workforce and commented on the specific priorities relating to young people identified as part of the strategy. Sally Burnett, Commissioner, Routes to Employment, commented on the proposals and strategies being undertaken to obtain improvements and skills for young people to ensure employability.

Mr Bradley and Ms Burnett responded to questions submitted by the Committee regarding the following issues:

- Awareness of local employers' skills and needs from prospective employees.
- The needs of local industries being met by the educational programmes offered by local schools.
- Ways of Council engagement with employers to ensure clear dialogue and understanding of what was required by both parties
- The range of apprenticeships on offer.
- Higher Education provision particularly the work undertaken within the Villiers Park Project.
- Raising aspiration of young people.
- The percentage rate of young people with 10 or more GCSEs not in Higher Education compared to national statistics.

- The creation of opportunities for the local community presented by the location of a University Swindon.
- Apprenticeship opportunities within the Council for Children in Care.
Resolved: That the report be noted.

40. Children's Services Performance Report

The Board Director Commissioning, Children and Adults and the Head of Commissioning Children and Adults, submitted a joint report updating the Committee on the final performance outturn for Children's Services for the period to December 2013.

Sue Wald, Head of Commissioning, Children and Adults, referred to the monitoring undertaken by Children's Services across all areas ranging from Early Help to NEET (Not in Education Employment of Training).

Ms Wald, with Jo Olssen, Interim Head of Children and Families and Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment responded to the questions regarding the following points:

- The correlation between an increase in the number of contacts by families and an increase in the number of referrals.
- Impact on work since the appointment of the new Manager within the Referral Team. The Committee noted that due to on-going workload, the recruitment drive was still underway.
- Whether an increase in Children in Care would result in an increase in Child Protection Plans.
- Attendance, particularly the effect of unauthorised parental removal of children from school for holidays.
- Reasons for the increase in the number of Children in Care having three foster placements.
- The importance of placement stability for Children in Care in order to reduce stress levels for the children involved.
- Children who were obese. The Committee noted that no children had been taken into care in Swindon because they were obese.

Resolved: (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment be requested to circulate information on the percentage of agreed school absenteeism for the current period, 2013/14 before the end of the Municipal Year.

41. Update Reports

The Director of Law and Democratic Services submitted a report setting out (a) the Swindon Children's Service Position Statement and, (b) the University Technical College (UTC) Swindon – Progress of the Development Phase of the University Technical College.

Paddy Bradley, Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment, responded to queries regarding the governance of the University Technical College and the take-up of places by Year 10 pupils.

Resolved – That the Update Reports be noted.

The Chair thanked the Committee and officers for their valuable work during the previous 12 months and their attendance at the Committee meetings.