

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**5.00PM 16 SEPTEMBER 2009**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Older (Chairman); McCaffery (Deputy Chairman), Allen, Cobb (In place of Smart), Wakefield-Jarrett and Phillips

**Statutory Co-optees: with voting rights::** Mike Wilson (Diocese of Chichester) and David Sanders (Diocese of Arundel & Brighton)

**Non-Statutory Co-optees:** Mark Price (Youth Services) (Non-Voting Co-Optee), Rachel Travers (Community Voluntary Sector Forum) (Non-Voting Co-Optee), Kenya Simpson-Martin (Youth Council) (Non-Voting Co-Optee) and Rohan Lowe (Youth Council) (Non-Voting Co-Optee)

**Apologies:** Councillor Pat Drake, Councillor Lynda Hyde, Councillor David Smart and Dr. Carrie Britton

**PART ONE**

**11. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS**

**11.1 Declaration of Substitutes**

Councillor Denise Cobb was substituting for Councillor David Smart. Councillor Lynda Hyde and Co-optee Carrie Britton sent their apologies.

**11.2 Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

**11.3 Declaration of Party Whip**

There were none.

**11.4 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

**11.4 RESOLVED** – That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

**12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

12.1 The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting on the 17 June, 2009.

**13. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

13.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Alex Phillips who was replacing Councillor Ben Duncan and thanked Ben Duncan for his contribution.

13.2 The Chairman welcomed Mike Wilson, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester who was replacing Nigel Sarjudeen and thanked Nigel Sarjudeen for his contribution.

13.3 The workshop for the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) was on the 7 July, 09. The Chairman asked Steve Barton, Assistant Director – Strategic Commissioning and Governance, to update the Committee and on the CYPP and said the workshop was very useful. The Draft Plan was heard at the 7 September, 2009 CYPT Board meeting and members of the CYPOSC Work Planning Group had received copies of this Draft. The Plan is due to be signed off on the 2 November 2009.

13.4 The Chairman asked Steve Barton to update the Committee on how the Children and Alcohol report was received at the last CYPT Board meeting. The Assistant Director – Strategic Commissioning and Governance informed members that report was received positively and all the recommendations were discussed. The report would be presented to the Draft Youth Alcohol Action Plan.

13.5 The Chairman informed the Committee that the Special Educational Needs (SEN)/ special schools –a major change Strategy Report was taken off the Agenda, as this item will be picked up by the School Exclusions Scrutiny Panel.

13.6 The Chairman agreed to alter the Agenda items as the Youth Council representatives would stay for the following 3 reports:  
16, 18 & 20.  
The remaining Agenda items would follow on consecutively:  
17, 19, 21 & 22.

**14. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

14.1 There were none.

**15. QUESTIONS AND LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS**

15.1 Following the publication of a press release from the Committee Chairman in the Argus the following letter was received from Cllr Kevin Allen.

*Dear Averil*

*In the Argus of Wednesday 12 August you accused the government of 'playing politics' over FE funding.*

*Irrespective of whether or not the accusation was well-founded did it not occur to you that by making such a partisan remark you yourself were 'playing politics'?*

*Do you now accept that this needless intervention was a mistake? And do you also recognise that you need to retain the confidence of all members of your committee, of whatever party?*

*Regards*

*Kevin*

*Cllr Kevin Allen*

There was discussion on the importance of scrutiny being a non-political forum that allows for key issues to be raised and debated in an objective manner. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Committee needs to play a role in acting as the mouthpiece of the committee and therefore any comments made to the press need to be supported by the Committee as a whole; this will be particularly important in the coming months.

## **16. BARRIERS TO THE TAKE UP OF SCHOOL MEALS**

- 16.1 Steve Healey, Head of Admissions and Transport presented the report to Members and answered questions.
- 16.2 In answer to a question on the take up figures for school meals and the differences between primary and secondary schools Members were informed that some secondary pupils could leave the premises for lunch and that meals taken in an extended morning break were not recorded. It was noted how regions varied, for instance West Sussex had for a period stopped serving hot school meals but had now reintroduced them. Schools closure days were not recorded within the statistics and it was noted that as a result the take up of free school meals was higher than it appeared although there was still much to be done to improve take up.
- 16.3 In response to a question as to why the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) are supplying 3 secondary schools and not small independent companies, Members were told how this was written into their contracts which covered a range of services not just school meals, e.g. cleaning contracts etc.

A Member commented how useful it was to have the key determinants of whether pupils had lunch or not, and how there was work to do on this. Members were informed how an evolving rolling programme was in place and the School Meals Manager and Monitoring Officer would check on the varying aspects of school meals, from dining room noise, how attractive the food was, how long the wait times were, to giving nutritional advice to staff, plus monitoring kitchen standards.

- 16.4 It was noted how the cashless payment system would be able to assist in learning more about pupils eating habits in relation to school meals.
- 16.5 Kenya Simpson-Martin (Youth Council representative) questioned whether school meals were good value for money compared to healthy and similar sized portions in supermarkets. It was pointed out that the cost of a school meal would include the cost of the food (for a two course meal), labour, preparing the dining furniture, cooking serving and washing up. It was felt that £2 for 2 courses was good value.
- 16.6 Kenya Simpson-Martin (Youth Council representative) asked why pizza and pasta dishes were expensive at schools and how supermarkets charged less for such items, it was noted that large supermarkets could have loss leaders, thus making their money on other sales.
- 16.7 Rohan Lowe (Youth Council representative) questioned how the incentive scheme to encouraging children to eat more and fruit and vegetables would work, Members were told that a reward card scheme and stickers would be given out each time a pupil ate fruit or vegetables with prizes at the end. It was noted that primary schools liked participating in such schemes.
- 16.8 In answer to a question on whether funding will be made available for free school meals for all on a trial basis in a local school, it was noted that the installation of a cashless system would be more useful at this stage to learn about pupil eating habits before considering such a pilot scheme.
- 16.9 In response to whether there was a target for the uptake of school meals, Members were told that higher than 50% would be preferable, and while there were no set targets work was taking place on a variety of initiatives to improve quality and take up for both free and paid meals.
- 16.10 In answer to a question on what safeguards were in place to ensure that entitled pupils received their free meals, Members noted that letters and flyers were sent regularly to parents and that schools were active in promoting free meals to low income families; low income families would receive information on free school meals.
- 16.11 **RESOLVED-**
- (1) The Committee noted the report.
  - (2) It was agreed to receive an update on the take up of School Meals and the progress of the cashless system in a year's time.
  - (3) The Committee agreed to receive information from Public Health on how Body Mass Index relates to deprivation and to the school meal take up.

## **17. THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOL CLOSURES ON CITY SCHOOLS**

- 17.1 This item was taken after Agenda Item 20.
- 17.2 Steve Healey, Head of Admissions and Transport presented the report to Members and answered questions.

- 17.3 It was noted that although the Council does not have legal powers to take over redundant independent schools, they did still have a dialogue with these schools. However, the opportunity to influence independent schools was limited with regard to how they choose to make use of their premises and resources.
- 17.4 In response to a question on forecast figures for secondary school places, Members were informed that the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative was working on forecasting figures and this information would be in the public domain soon, with community and parental consultation planned. Longhill High School's building programme, which was already underway but outside the BSF initiative, had already provided some additional places.
- 17.5 Members noted that the main purpose of BSF would be to provide good quality upgrading of school premises, not just additional places. Forecasting pupil numbers for primary schools was subject to a limited planning horizon, as data in the form of GP registration records was not available until age 1 leaving just a 3 year window until school admission to Reception class.
- 17.6 Members were advised that to date there was no indication that significant numbers of pupils would be leaving independent school and going into maintained schools. Nonetheless the Admissions Team would be monitoring closely so that any potential change in the pattern was identified early.
- 17.7 **RESOLVED**  
(1) The Committee noted the report and agreed to take no further action.

## **18. OFSTED INSPECTION REPORTS**

- 18.1 This item was taken after Agenda Item 16.
- 18.2 Linda Ellis – Senior Secondary and Special School Advisor presented the report to Members and answered questions.
- 18.3 Kenya Simpson-Martin, Youth Council Representative asked whether Officers did think that inspections gave an accurate picture of how the school really operated, as the inspectors were there for such a short period of time, Members were told how on the whole that this was taken as an accurate assessment, as the inspectors did prepare beforehand by researching all the relevant statistics and due to the vast amount of experience that the inspectors had it would be very rare to get an inaccurate account of the school.
- 18.4 Members were advised that there would be a move towards unannounced inspections in the future and more focus on the observations of teachers.
- 18.5 In response to a question on how themed inspections on equalities was carried out, Members were informed on how the inspectors audited school policies on gender, race equalities; how this was covered within the curriculum and on how equalities issues were addressed within the school with the pupils and parents.

- 18.6 Kenya Simpson-Martin, Youth Council Representative informed Members that in her experience she felt that some religions were not taught in any depth and felt this could be improved, the Senior Secondary and Special School Advisor told Members that Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACRE) would advise schools on what the curriculum should include.

A Member advised that it maybe useful to find out from SACRE how the religious education advice is implemented in schools.

- 18.7 In reference to a question on Portslade Community College and whether school improvement partners had the necessary expertise to advise schools who had a Notice to Improve, Members were informed that a National Challenge Advisor, who has their experience accredited would carry out regular visits to support, offer training to the staff, and focus on the areas of development.

- 18.8 In response to a question on Safeguarding, Members were advised that the Ofsted inspectors carry out a thorough review and if any school fails this, they automatically show an overall judgment of not satisfactory on the inspection report. Schools have been given a safeguarding audit school and would be advised on how to meet any gaps. Ofsted Inspectors' have had safeguarding training and a Member advised the Committee how as a Governor the Local Authority provided such training for her and others on the School Board.

**18.9 RESOLVED-**

(1) The Committee noted the report and the improvements made by Portslade Community College.

**19. CORPORATE PARENTING**

- 19.1 Liz Rugg- Assistant Director, Citywide Services presented the report and answered Members questions.

- 19.2 Members were informed that there were 441 Looked After Children (LAC) at the end of August 09 which is a 20% increase in the last year, resulting in a pressure on the system.

- 19.3 In answer to a question on whether CYPOSC could give support for increased resources, this was discussed and a form of words was agreed which asked the DCS to bear in mind the increased numbers and hence the increased pressure at the point at which the budget is set within CYPT. Members were also concerned about the relatively high numbers of LAC having a substance misuse problem. The Assistant Director told Members it was uncertain as to why Brighton & Hove's percentage were double that of national and regional comparators. This may have been due to the City's high substance misuse figures and people migrating from neighbouring areas, who had substance misuse problems. Further work will be done on this indicator to try and tease out the underlying factors.

- 19.4 The Assistant Director confirmed that there was good communication with the neighbouring authorities on good practice initiatives so that learning can be shared.

- 19.5 The Committee was told that there was an increased activity in child protection plans since the Baby P case at Haringey and understandable impact on individual staff from all sectors.
- 19.6 Members were advised that currently there are 46 small babies or pre- birth assessments underway where maternal substance misuse is the issue so that babies are being born substance dependent. It is important that there is secure early permanence planning for this group of children.
- 19.7 In answer to a question on why LAC were being excluded members were told that schools were expected to give as much advance warning as possible if exclusion were likely so that additional support could be put in to try and avoid the exclusion and immediate alternatives offered once the exclusion has taken place.
- 19.8 A Member asked whether a future ad-hoc Scrutiny Panel was needed to look into the quality of care to increase knowledge about this area but it was felt that an annual reporting cycle and performance report that pulls together outcomes for LAC would be the best way forward.

**RESOLVED-**

- (1) Members agreed all the recommendations.
- (2) Members recommended that ensuring good outcomes for LAC should be considered within the budget setting process for the CYPT.

**20. UPDATE ON SAFEGUARDING**

- 20.1 This item was taken after Agenda Item 18.
- 20.2 Steve Barton, Assistant Director – Strategic Commissioning and Governance presented the report and answered questions.
- 20.3 In answer to a question on the membership of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Members were informed that the Panel consisted of representatives from the Local Health Economy and Community Voluntary Sector, Police, CYPT Trust, CAFCASS, Probationary Service, Ambulance Service and has an independent Chair.
- 20.4 Members noted that the Annual report would go to the LSCB on the 3 November, 2009.
- 20.5 Rohan Lowe, Youth Council Representative asked how the two new posts; Head of Safeguarding and the new LSCB Manager/Development post would help to protect the increased number of abused children needing Child Protection Plans, the Committee were advised that the new Head of Safeguarding would be responsible for looking at the management of Child Protection Plans and to look at the overarching management, leadership and coordination of services. The new LSCB Manager/Development post would coordinate, manage and support the work of the Board and its sub-groups and improve communications.
- 20.6 Rohan Lowe, Youth Council Representative questioned whether the Trust were increasing the number of Social Workers to deal with the significant increase in child

protection, Members were told that there were 5 additional posts and that investing in training and support for all Social Workers would aid workloads. The workloads were challenging and currently child protection numbers continued to increase, but at some point it is anticipated that it would plateau.

- 20.7 In response to a question on the budget pressures facing the Trust, Members were informed that these pressures would be taken into account in the making of future budgets.

Members noted that there was an additional Budget meeting arranged for the 5 January for CYPOSC and this will be an opportunity for members to raise their concerns.

- 20.8 In answer to a question on whether CYPOSC could have access to other reports including the LSCB Annual report, Members noted that the Children's Trust had to be cautious about sharing some sensitive information, and the LSCB report will be a public document.

- 20.9 In relation to a question on the high levels of administration work that Social Workers had regarding the completion assessment of forms e.g. Child Protection Plans and Common Assessment Framework (CAF); Members were informed how an Interim member of staff was covering some of the administration work and also that the current electronic systems were more advanced than other authorities; which would free up a post to carry out more direct work with young children.

20.10 **RESOLVED-**

- (1) CYPOSC noted the report and action taken by the CYPT and the LSCB.
- (2) CYPOSC recommended that the budget for 2010/11 should take the Trusts' challenges into account.

**21. 4TH QUARTER OF THE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REPORT (PIR)**

- 21.1 This item was taken after Agenda Item 19.
- 21.2 Steve Barton, Assistant Director – Strategic Commissioning and Governance presented the report and answered questions.
- 21.3 In relation to Teenage Conception rates, Members were informed that there was an Action Plan in place. Members requested that the Plan be circulated to CYPOSC.
- 21.4 In answer to a question on Persistent Absence and whether there was a correlation with misbehaviour and exclusions, Members were informed there was evidence to support this.

A member informed the Panel that persistent absence was linked to bullying and a holistic view needs to be taken by schools.

- 21.5 In answer to a question on the Parenting Programme and how the Trust responds to the needs of challenging targets e.g. traveller families, substance misusing parents, parents of young people at risk of homelessness and young fathers; Members were informed



that the Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) Tip Sheets and programmes gave important advice to all groups of parents covering varying issues.

- 21.6 In answer to a question on the development tools for working alongside CAF, members were informed that lower grade school nurses were being recruited, who would develop the relevant skills needed for our City; who would have salary increments according to the developments of their skills.
- 21.7 In answer to a question on what post terminations support there was, Members were informed that there were expert Nurses who were doing direct 1 to 1 work; from giving advice on practical issues to looking at innovative ways that young men and women could carry contraception around with them.

In response to how difficult it is to go through the termination and the added issue of having to travel to varying places, Members were told how young women were given information on the locations of the Contraception and Sexual Health (CASH) services; which were more accessible.

- 21.8 Members noted the Trust was committed to signing up to surveys to find out young people's views and new methods were being used e.g. texting.
- 21.9 Members noted that the Trust had a good database, the 14-19 Agenda and September Guarantee meant that the Trust could work on their target groups. The current recession has meant that there was an additional 250 young people in this year's September cohort who were staying on in education.
- 21.10 **RESOLVED-**  
(1) Members noted the report and thanked the Assistant Director – Strategic Commissioning and Governance for presenting it.  
(2) The Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan to be circulated to CYPOSC.

## **22. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 22.1 This item was taken after Agenda Item 22.
- 22.2 Members were informed about the items on the Agenda for the next 3 Committee meetings.
- 22.3 A Member wanted to add to the work programme an item about the attainment of Children in Care (CiC).
- 22.4 It was agreed to receive an update on School Meals, it's take up and progress of the cashless system in a year's time.
- 22.5 **RESOLVED-**  
(1) The Committee agreed the Work Programme.  
(2) Quality of Care and Attainment of CiC would be added to the Programme.  
(3) An update on School Meals, it's take up and progress of the cashless system in a year's time, would be programmed into September 2010.

The meeting concluded at 7.40pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of