

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL**

### **EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Monday, 8th September, 2014

**Present:- Councillors:** Sally Davis (Chair), Sarah Bevan (Vice-Chair), Liz Hardman, David Veale, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE, Michael Evans and Nicholas Coombes

**Co-opted Voting Members:-** David Williams

**Co-opted Non-voting Members:-** Chris Batten and Edward Joseph

**Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth:** Councillor Dine Romero

**Also in attendance:** Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People and Communities), Mike Bowden (Deputy Director - Children & Young People, Strategy and Commissioning) and Deborah Forward (Senior Commissioning Manager - Preventative Services)

#### **30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **31 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were none.

#### **33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **34 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none, although the Chair did announce that the Corporate Parenting Group meeting on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September had been cancelled.

#### **35 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING**

There were none.

**36 MINUTES - 14TH JULY 2014**

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

**37 RE-STRUCTURING OF THE EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND EARLY HELP (0 - 11 YEARS) SERVICES 2014 - 2016**

The Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth, Councillor Dine Romero introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that all of the Children's Centres would remain open and that unlike other authorities this would not be at the expense of an increase in Council Tax.

She added that the operating times of the centres would remain the same and that the one situated in Weston was about to start delivering some externally commissioned nursery provision.

She stated that universal services were not a 24/7 service and acknowledged the concerns at the loss of some groups. She added that groups would be encouraged to use the centres as much as possible.

She said that the proposal to establish a staff mutual through a 'Right to Provide' request was currently being considered.

Councillor Sarah Bevan asked if she wished to make any points relating to enhanced integration.

Councillor Romero replied that the centre in Chew Valley planned to become more of a community hub alongside its substantive role.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked at what stage the 'Right to Provide' request was at currently.

Councillor Romero replied that it was still in its early stages and that any decision regarding it would follow the formal decision making process.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked whether the Panel would be consulted further on this matter and if the final decision on it would be made in public.

Councillor Romero replied that she would keep the Panel informed of the progress of 'Right to Provide' request and that she intended to make a public decision on the matter at the appropriate time. She added that recommendation 2.10 of the Cabinet report asks the Panel to 'receive a report and review implementation of new models a year following implementation'.

Councillor Michael Evans asked if most of the planned savings would be made through not manning centres when in official use.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that there would be a reduction in staff at the centres as the intention was to match the opening times to when groups would be using them.

Councillor Nicholas Coombes commented that he supported the proposal that some universal services may be delivered by putting in place appropriate charging arrangements.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities commented that the Council was never in the business of running a vast array of services, its role is to assure a quality of services and to fund targeted work.

Councillor Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst commented that she felt it was great news that nursery provision was to be provided at the centre in Weston. She asked if there was to be an increase in Health Visitors within the Council.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that the commissioning of the Health Visitor Service was due to transfer to the Local Authority on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 and that investment in expansion of the service was planned. He added that the Council was already talking to the NHS regarding the transfer.

David Williams asked if schools could use the Pupil Premium to fund their use of the Parent Support Advisory Service.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that he saw no reason why schools could not choose to use it in that way.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how far along were plans for staff redundancies associated with Children's Centres.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Preventative Services replied informal consultation had begun and that a formal consultation would be launched following the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if all of the planned cuts were necessary in 2015 due to the additional transitional period.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that the service must make the planned budget reductions for 2015. He added that the possibility of a Staff Mutual has re-evaluated their thinking in some way, but that the Cabinet need to make a further decision regarding that matter.

He said that the Staff Mutual would have the ability to bid for further funding and to trade services that the Council cannot. He added that any surplus funds generated would be re-invested into associated services.

He said that he agreed that the delay in the process was not helpful to staff.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Social Enterprise would be looked upon favourably if lower service bids were received from competing groups.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Preventative Services replied the Government are promoting Social Enterprise and that we are expecting there to be some flexibility regarding tenders.

Councillor Nicholas Coombes commented that he felt the Council should work harder to maintain the current provision of services by introducing charges.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that his service as a whole was shrinking and that due to both staff and financial pressure it would not be viable for the Council to maintain the current services.

The Chair commented that the visits the Panel embarked on at the start of the review clearly showed what services were provided and by who. She added that it was easy for the public to think that all were provided by the Council.

Councillor Nicholas Coombes called for the Council to be careful when making redundancies if staff were likely to be re-employed by the Staff Mutual at a later stage.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that universal services were valuable to so many as parents were able to share similar problems with each other. She asked if the Cabinet would consider supporting some universal services through either officer time or funding.

Councillor Romero replied that current Health Visitor levels provide 80% of referrals and that we would not expect volunteers to be able to act in the same way. She added that training and support within groups would be encouraged.

The Senior Commissioning Manager for Preventative Services added that funding from Government was expected to enable Health Visitor levels to reach their capacity of 49 FTE in 2015. She added that Children's Centre staff would be able to act as consultants through the Volunteer Development Programme.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the same level of targeted work would be achieved.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities replied that the same number of groups and outreach work would be delivered. He added that safeguarding training would be available to staff at a reduced rate.

Councillor Sarah Bevan asked if an app was being developed that would give information on services that were available at the centres.

Councillor Romero replied that they were thinking along those lines of development.

The Chair wished to thank all parties for their work on this matter including the Panel for providing a challenge throughout the process. She added that she would address the Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> September to give the view of the Panel.

She then proposed the four following recommendations;

1. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel notes the results of the consultation and recognises the work that has gone in to developing new models which seek to minimise the adverse impact of the budget reductions;
2. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel notes in particular the consultees' concerns about the loss of universal services delivered by the Children's Centres and requests a report back on how alternative ways of delivering universal groups without council funding is progressing, ahead of implementation of the new model;
3. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel supports the concept of the staff mutual and requests a further report on this as the business case develops;
4. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel welcomes the recommendation for a further report on implementation of the new models in due course and will want that report to include evidence of the implementation of the mitigating actions and the impact that the remodelling has had for families.

Councillor Sarah Bevan suggested that a further recommendation should be added regarding the need to avoid duplication of services.

Councillor Nicholas Coombes seconded the recommendations that had been proposed by the Chair.

The Strategic Director for People and Communities proposed the following additional recommendation.

The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel recognises the service needs to remove duplication and consolidate operations to make sure the service is efficient and all components dovetail appropriately.

The Panel agreed and asked for it to become the first recommendation.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the following recommendations;

1. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel recognises the service needs to remove duplication and consolidate operations to make sure the service is efficient and all components dovetail appropriately.
2. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel notes the results of the consultation and recognises the work that has gone in to developing new models which seek to minimise the adverse impact of the budget reductions;
3. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel notes in particular the consultees' concerns about the loss of universal services delivered by the Children's Centres and requests a report back on how alternative ways of delivering universal groups without council funding is progressing, ahead of implementation of the new model;
4. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel supports the concept of the staff mutual and requests a further report on this as the business case develops;

5. The Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel welcomes the recommendation for a further report on implementation of the new models in due course and will want that report to include evidence of the implementation of the mitigating actions and the impact that the remodelling has had for families.

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**