

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

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

Monday, 21st May, 2012

**Present:- Councillors:** Sally Davis (Chair), Dine Romero (Vice-Chair), Liz Hardman, Mathew Blankley, David Veale, Andrew Furse and Ian Gilchrist

**Co-opted Voting Members:-** David Williams and Sanjeev Chaddha

**Co-opted Non-voting Members:-** Chris Batten and Teresa Austin (substitute for Peter Mountstephen)

**Also in attendance:** Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People and Communities), Tony Parker (Divisional Director for Learning and Inclusion), Briony Waite (Strategic Planning Officer, Children's Health & Commissioning Service), Sally Churchyard (Youth Offending Team Manager), Jeremy Smalley (Divisional Director - Skills & Employment) and Lauren Rushen (Policy Development and Scrutiny Project Officer)

**Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth:** Councillor Nathan Hartley

#### **1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Peter Mountstephen (Primary School Representative) and Dawn Harris (Secondary School Representative) had sent their apologies to the Panel. Teresa Austin was present as a substitute for Peter Mountstephen for the duration of the meeting.

#### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There were none.

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

There was none.

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

The Strategic Planning Officer for Children's Health & Commissioning addressed the Panel. She wished to update them on some of the issues that arose during the Primary / Young People's Parliament of 2011.

She reminded them that at last year's Primary Parliament they voted to have a Healthy Living Week and that by way of a coincidence that week had begun today. She added that a number of themes and events were planned to take place across the next five days.

In 2011 the Young People's Parliament voted for a Community Garden Scheme and she was pleased to report that two sites had now been identified for young people to work upon.

Alongside the Strategic Planning Officer for Children's Health & Commissioning was a current pupil named Luke who wanted to speak to the Panel regarding one of the themes for this year's Parliament – Equalities.

School Dinners – He spoke of the need to stop young people who receive free school dinners from being victimised by either having to queue separately or being made to wait a substantially long time at the till while their name is checked off in a book. He suggested that pupils entitled to free school dinners should be given a similar card to those pupils that have a pre-paid card in an attempt to eliminate this occurring.

Bullying – He informed the Panel of the need to investigate the possibility that cases of bullying against Children in Care and Care Leavers were taking place. He added that the Anti-Bullying Strategy Group had been recently made aware of the matter.

Councillor Dine Romero thanked both of them for attending. She asked if they felt that the problems mentioned were being properly addressed.

Luke replied that he did not think they had been on previous occasions, but was hopeful that they would on this occasion if the appropriate action was taken.

The Chairman thanked them for attending and on behalf of the Panel said she was looking forward to receiving the Parliament feedback reports at the July meeting.

## **7 MINUTES - 19TH MARCH 2012**

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

## **8 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT 2012/13 REVIEW: DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel and asked them if they had any comments they wished to make.

Councillor Liz Hardman said that she welcomed the review as it would be an opportunity for all stakeholders to give their views to the Panel.

Councillor Dine Romero proposed that the Terms of Reference be approved as printed.

David Williams seconded the proposal.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Approve the Terms of Reference
- ii) Agree to undertake the review within the timescales set out within the Terms of Reference.

## **9 ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The People and Communities Strategic Director introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that the post of Director of Children's Services (DCS) is regulated under the Children Act 2004 which sets out the specific accountabilities of the DCS as the Government legislated to bring together Education Services and Children's Social Care Services following the Victoria Climbié inquiry.

As part of the revised guidance any local authority intending to combine the DCS responsibilities with any other accountability is strongly advised to carry out an assurance process to ensure that the statutory accountabilities vested in the post are appropriately identified and discharged within the structure and line management arrangements. Given the proposals to create a 'People and Communities' Department it is envisaged that such an assurance process will be put in place for completion by late June 2012.

He added that the Chief Executive had asked him to establish an Assurance Process and liaise with the Head of Human Resources to advise the process and ensure robustness. In addition he said that he will request the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to test the process and report directly to the Chief Executive.

The finalised template and outcome of the process will be shared with the Panel as its September meeting.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what assurances he could give that all Academies will maintain the same safeguarding standards that have previously been in place.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that all Academies are bound by the same Local Authority safeguarding regulations.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if a substantial rise in exclusions had occurred within schools since they had chosen to become Academies.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that B&NES had not experienced as much of an increase in exclusions as other authorities may have. He added that some Academies had excluded pupils and then reversed the decision through Council intervention.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if Academies would still be a part of the Managed Move system.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that all Academies were being encouraged to retain their involvement.

Councillor David Veale asked if the Council had a good relationship with its Academies.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the Council maintained a strong relationship with the majority of its Academies, however this was not universal.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked for clarification on the role of the Lead Member for Children's Services and their statutory duties.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the role of the Lead Member for Children's Services was still held by Councillor Nathan Hartley.

Councillor Dine Romero asked if the statutory functions within the Children's Services department were being adequately funded.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the Council has been very helpful in recent years by increasing the budget for children in care. He added that some additional Social Work capacity would be required in the future.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his report and welcomed the update that would take place at the Panel meeting in September.

## **10 PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES SERVICE RE-DESIGN**

The People and Communities Strategic Director introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that following the decision of the Council to move to three major departments based around 'People', 'Place' and 'Resources' work has been undertaken to develop a structure for the new People & Communities Department. The proposed structure covers all of the functions previously covered by the Education and Social Care functions. In addition it also incorporates the Skills and Employment function, Housing and the majority of health services.

The structure will comprise the following six divisions:

- Regeneration, Skills & Employment

- Children & Young People Provider Services
- Children & Young People Strategy & Commissioning
- Adult Care, Health & Housing Strategy & Commissioning
- Public Health
- Acute & Specialist Health Commissioning

Councillor Liz Hardman asked what impact the structure would have on staff and resources.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the structure was not being driven by the need for savings and that it was integral for the structure to be correct. The restructure is being carried out in two parts, the first part is to establish the overall Divisional structure, the second part will include all of the detailed arrangements for each Division. Whilst the restructure was not driven by the need to make savings there would be a need to make savings as the Council faces further budget reductions from 2013 onwards.

Sanjeev Chaddha asked for some further information on section entitled Commercial and Business Readiness.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that this would be a time limited role that would gear up services and secure them for use in the future. He added that it would also attempt to assess what the schools and the public want from the department and keep under review the changing policy and legislative landscape so that the Council could respond quickly to externally driven changes.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note the report.

## **11 SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT**

The Divisional Director for Skills and Employability introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that this new area of Council work is transformational in its philosophy, action and organisation and hopefully would be in terms of delivering outcomes. He added that this work also underpins the Council's Economic Strategy.

He informed them that B&NES had a lower than average unemployment figure of 9% and that the issue of worklessness needed to be tackled alongside the up-skilling of the existing workforce.

Growing the economy without addressing the skills and employability of residents will likely mean that more people will migrate in to work. This will exacerbate the challenge we all face with increased commuting and demand for housing.

He highlighted to the Panel some current areas of focus.

Worklessness:

Placement Plus Programme – personally tailored long term placements of practical work experience alongside which job coaching and specific support around the other social difficulties in someone's life is provided. The person is supported by an Engagement Worker who works to develop a plan with the individual focussed on a result of getting work.

Skills:

Development obligations – using Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), development agreements and licences to meet the needs of the economy and the labour market. For example ensuring developers employ apprentices etc.

The Council as an employer – in recognising the Council is a major employer working to develop policies, targets and procedures that ensure teams can engage placements, interns, work experience and volunteers in a positive way that supports local people in gaining new skills and experience.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if a service such as Connexions was still available for looked after children.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that the Connexions service was still available within Secondary Schools through Learning Partnership West.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked how many of the 91% employed within B&NES were working part-time.

The Divisional Director for Skills and Employability replied that he did not have that information to hand and would therefore issue a response to the Panel at a later date

Chris Batten asked if the work experience programme within schools was in decline.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that it has declined. He called for the links to be re-established between the Secondary Schools and local employers as he believed the majority of them broadly supported the scheme.

David Williams commented as to whether certain pupils should have their education more targeted so that it can have a positive impact on their future career.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- i) Accept the brief as written, understand the intended outcomes and be aware of the context for Skills and Employment within the District,
- ii) Articulate opportunities and linkages to support the work of Skills and Employment,
- iii) Champion and commit to delivering the ambitions for people through Skills and Employment and
- iv) Commit to continue to review the Skills and Employment Division in terms of its budget, value for money and effectiveness.

## **12 SAFEGUARDING AND LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The People and Communities Strategic Director introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that it was a six month plan and that it would be placed on the Council's website. He added that staff were being consulted as to how they would like to become involved.

He informed the Panel that work had already been undertaken with 'front of house' staff to improve interventions and the changes have been welcomed by both the public and staff.

He added that a system was now in place to notify Health colleagues and the Virtual School when a child comes into care. All information is now recorded on one system not two.

He stated that the department currently had six Social Worker vacancies and that if possible he was looking to over recruit in this area.

Councillor Dine Romero asked if it was hard to recruit Social Workers at the present time.

The People and Communities Strategic Director replied that it really does vary. He added that three years ago it was a difficult task, but that two years ago the vacancies were filled easily.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his update and welcomed his offer a full report to the July meeting.

## **13 SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Divisional Director for Learning and Inclusion introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that collectively, the People and Communities Department and schools and colleges, together with a wide range of partners, devote significant resources to a range of activities that are designed to prevent 11-18 years olds from suffering disadvantage or harm. Many vulnerable young people and families are provided with the services they need when they need them and outcomes for most young people in our area are very good. However, a small number of young people and families are not served as well as they could be and some young people still experience significant difficulties and poor outcomes.

He acknowledged that when it came to complex issues the Council was not always as successful as it could be. He stated that the Common Assessment form should be promoted where possible and that they hoped to appoint a lead professional in this work area.

He added that early identification in these matters really does pay off.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his update and asked for a further report in six months time.

## **14 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor Nathan Hartley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth addressed the Panel.

In response to the question posed earlier in the meeting by Councillor Ian Gilchrist on the role of the Lead Member for Children's Services Councillor Hartley responded by saying that he was more than happy to be carrying out this role.

Councillor Hartley then informed the Panel of some of his latest actions, plans and visits.

- He had written to the Department for Education (DfE) on the matter of School Funding. He expressed his concern over the reduction in Small School support as a number of them would collapse without this valuable resource.
- Placement Plus – Excited that the Council were at the forefront of this initiative.
- Project Search – He spoke of how 4 out of the 5 people that took part in the project last year now had employment.
- He had concluded his tour of the B&NES Children's Centres and was due to meet with the lead officer shortly to discuss his observations.
- Future Fund – The Council is being recognised nationally for its work on this project. A further £100,000 has been awarded to B&NES.
- MoD Concept Statements – He said he was aware of the current consultation and the possibility that 800 extra primary school places may be required. He added that he was currently assessing the points raised so far in the consultation

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his update.

## **15 PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING**

The People & Communities Strategic Director addressed the Panel. He informed them that recently the Government had announced their Adoption scorecards and he was pleased to say that the Council had met the required threshold. He voiced his concern that they may view the sole success of the process is an adoption and not the fact that the match must be the very best one that it can be.

He said that as the Council was such a strong performer in the area of Adoption it would be acting as a peer challenge to another authority.

He announced that Pamela Akerman's role as Interim Director of Public Health was due to conclude and that Paul Scott would hold the position of Director of Public Health from June 2012.

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel thanked him for his update.



**16 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel. She highlighted some of the items mentioned during the course of the meeting that had been identified to return to them at a later date.

July: Safeguarding and Looked After Children’s Services Improvement Plan

September: The Role of the Children’s Services Director

November: 11-18 Preventative Services Strategy

Future: Skills & Employability

The People and Communities Strategic Director offered to bring to the Panel a report on Sector Led improvement later in the year.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist suggested the Panel receives a report on what services the Academies still receive / purchase from the Council.

The Divisional Director for Learning and Inclusion replied that the September meeting could be best suited for such a report.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if a report on exam results, Key Stage 2 etc was due for November.

The Chairman replied that yes they would receive a verbal update in September followed by a formal report in November.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree with all of the proposals as stated above.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**