

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL

EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 25th March, 2013

Present:- Councillors: Sally Davis (Chair), Ian Gilchrist (Vice-Chair), Liz Hardman, Mathew Blankley, David Veale, Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE and Sarah Bevan

Co-opted Voting Members:-Mrs T Daly

Co-opted Non-voting Members:-Chris Batten

Also in attendance: Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People and Communities), Tony Parker (Divisional Director Learning and Inclusion Service), Mike Bowden (Divisional Director - Health Commissioning and Strategic Planning), Michael Gorman (Headteacher, B&NES Virtual School for Children in Care) and Richard Baldwin (Interim Divisional Director CYP Specialist Services)

81 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

82 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies had been received from David Williams, Sanjeev Chaddha, Peter Mountsteven and Andrea Arlidge.

Councillor Dine Romero had sent her apologies to the Panel that she would be unable to attend

84 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Councillor Sarah Bevan declared a pecuniary interest in item 8 on the agenda, since she was the parent of a child who attended St Gregory's School and was the beneficiary of home-to-school transport.

85 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

86 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF

THIS MEETING

A document [*attached to the Minutes as Appendix 1 and on the Council's website*] had been placed into the public gallery in advance of the meeting which showed a question from Councillor Eleanor Jackson and the written response from the Chair on behalf of the Panel.

87 MINUTES - JANUARY 28TH 2013

The Panel considered three requests for minor amendments to the draft minutes, all relating to paragraph 72 (home to school transport):

Councillor Sarah Bevan asked for the minutes to be amended to show that her observation had been about Roman Catholic as well as Church of England parents.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for the minutes to be amended to show more detail of what the Panel had actually agreed; and in particular to make it clearer that the Panel had recommended option 3(c) to the Cabinet member. She provided a sheet with her proposed amendment to the minutes.

Tess Daly asked for the minutes to be amended to show that she had actually said that the local authority would retain discretionary powers, not that each school would retain such powers.

The Panel asked the Democratic Services Officer to amend the minutes; and agreed to adopt the minutes as amended.

88 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT REVIEW - CABINET MEMBER RESPONSE

The Chair introduced the item by observing that the Equality Impact Assessment had been tightened up as requested. She drew attention to her briefing note on the Focus Meeting held at St Gregory's on 20th February, which had been distributed with the agenda.

Councillor Anthony Clarke said that he appreciated that the debate was now fairly advanced. He was keen to see every penny spent properly but was concerned that front line services such as this should not be cut. He was also concerned that the effect of removing this support might be that the faith schools would draw more students from within the city and this in turn would put new pressure on other schools in the city.

The Chair referred to the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations, which had been included with the agenda. The Panel agreed to NOTE the Cabinet Member's response.

89 VIRTUAL SCHOOLS UPDATE

Michael Gorman (Headteacher, Bath & North East Somerset Virtual School for Children in Care) introduced his report which had been circulated with the agenda. He welcomed the increase in pupil premium from 1st April and explained some recent initiatives, particularly in the area of forming relationships. He drew the Panel's attention to the list of key recommendations arising out of the two recent national

reports and said that in recommendation 2, the age range should read 16-25 (not 0-25 as printed).

He added that in a number of measures, the authority's children in care had achieved better results at KS2 than the national average, and at KS4 had attained about the same. All Year 6 pupils had achieved or surpassed their expected grades.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked how this compared with the B&NES average. Michael Gorman explained that compared against the B&NES averages, the KS4 English results had been about the same (71%), and the maths results were 61% (all B&NES was 65%).

Councillor Liz Hardman congratulated the team. She asked whether the advent of academies had changed the role of the virtual school.

Michael Gorman said he felt that the critical factor was the ethos of each school, not so much the organisational type. However he observed that because of the pressures on schools to demonstrate their own success, some schools might be reticent to admit a pupil with attendance or behavioural problems, depriving the pupil of opportunities.

Tony Parker (Divisional Director, Learning and Inclusion) added that early intervention by Mike and his team prevented such situations from becoming very difficult for students.

Ashley Ayre (Strategic Director, People) thanked Mike and agreed with the comments already made. He felt there was a need for a regional protocol about crossing boundaries. He pointed out that recently the House of Lords in its report "Caring Schools" had said that pupil tracking should be reintroduced into the framework. He himself felt that this would ensure rigour and would benefit vulnerable young people.

The Panel agreed to NOTE the report.

90 ACADEMIES AND SERVICES TO SCHOOLS

Mike Bowden (Divisional Director, Service Development) introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the local authority had committed to provide broadly the same range of services, with the exception that schools had in the main chosen not to continue to fund the Learning Support Service. He drew attention to paragraph 3.7 in the report and to the green background paper relating to the evolving role of the local authority.

Councillor Liz Hardman referred to paragraph 3.8 in the report, relating to the authority's role in challenging schools where they are failing. She asked how this would work in practice.

Mike Bowden said that this would be the subject of a report at a future meeting of the Panel. He observed that, while the authority was not responsible for the institution, it still retained responsibility towards the pupils.

Ashley Ayre advised the Panel that he had recently been able to ask a visiting DfE Standards Advisor how systemic failure of a failing academy could be averted, and what would happen in the event of such a failure. The reply was that the responsibility for the children would fall on the authority. He explained some of the complex issues and said he felt that ministers had not been clear about this. He emphasised however that the authority continued to be proactive in support of individual children.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist referred to paragraph 3.3 and observed that he had received feedback from a school that the brochure was not helpful. Mike Bowden welcomed the feedback and explained that the brochure would be subject to regular updates.

Ashley Ayre observed that the brochure had been prepared with the involvement of 2 head teachers and a school business manager.

Councillor David Veale asked what budget savings had been achieved now that the budget for most services had passed to schools.

Mike Bowden and Ashley Ayre replied that there had been considerable budget savings. He reminded the Panel that the authority still had a major statutory role, particularly in the areas of admissions, transport, exclusion, psychology and educational welfare.

Tony Parker observed that in critical situations such as for example the death of a child, the authority would always provide all the support a school needed and would discuss the cost later.

The Panel agreed to NOTE the report.

91 SECTOR LED IMPROVEMENT

Ashley Ayre referred to his report [*attached to the Minutes as Appendix 2 and on the Council's website*] which had been placed into the public gallery in advance of the meeting. He explained that the need for sector led improvement had arisen because the CQC no longer had responsibility for adult social care. He drew the Panel's attention to the main points made in his report. The authority had asked to be peer challenged about diversion from care. He explained how the process had worked and that it had been helpful.

The next round of peer challenges would be centred on children's social care, especially safeguarding and sexual exploitation. He offered to present a further report to the Panel at that time.

Councillor David Veale said he was encouraged by the regional dialogue and was pleased that the authority had gained from the experience. He wondered if it could be done more widely. Ashley said that plans were in place for a corporate peer review in July.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the Panel could be shown the action plan arising out of the peer challenge. Ashley replied that each team had taken responsibility for its own action plan, but he would be happy to report back to the Panel on this at a future meeting.

The Chairman thanked Ashley for his update.

92 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member had provided an update report [*attached to the Minutes as Appendix 3 and on the Council's website*] which had been placed into the public gallery in advance of the meeting. The Panel agreed to NOTE the report.

93 PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

Ashley Ayre introduced his report [*attached to the Minutes as Appendix 4 and on the Council's website*] which had been placed into the public gallery in advance of the

meeting. He updated the Panel on some of the senior appointments recently made, which were listed in his report. He welcomed Richard Baldwin to the meeting, who had recently been confirmed as Divisional Director, Specialist Services. He reminded the Panel that responsibility for Public Health would return to the Council on 1st April, so Dr Bruce Lawrence had been appointed as Director of Public Health. He reported that the recent Ofsted inspection (for which an hour's notice had been given) had been based on the case tracking of 119 cases. The inspection had been very rigorous. The Ofsted report had not yet been published but he would make it available to the Panel as soon as possible.

Ashley referred to Councillor Jackson's question about Children's Centres. He proposed to set some dates, starting mid-May, for briefing the Panel. He then propose to bring a paper to the June Panel for consideration.

Cllr Liz Hardman was delighted to hear that the review of Children's Centres was to be conducted but felt strongly that it must be held in advance of the February 2014 Budget process. She asked to be told the impact of the proposed cuts.

Ashley reminded the Panel that the one-off funding which had been found to save Children's Centres in 2013/14 could not necessarily be found in subsequent years; so the effect was that cuts of £500K were anticipated in 2014/15. He explained that the longer-term vision could only come out of the discussions with the Panel. There were some complex issues to be resolved in order to get where he hoped to be by April 2015.

The Chairman asked Ashley to circulate the details of the briefings to members because a great deal of interest was being expressed.

The Panel thanked Ashley for his update.

94 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel considered the work plan which had been circulated with the agenda. It was agreed to ask the Democratic Services Officer to add the following items to the plan:

- Children's Services Update – June 2013
- School Travel Plans (including Safer Routes to School) – July 2013
- Hot School Meals – Future Items

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services