

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

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

Monday, 18th July, 2011

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

**Also in attendance:** Mike Bowden (Acting Divisional Director for Service Development ), Liz Price (Children's Planning Manager), Briony Waite (Strategic Planning Officer, Children's Health & Commissioning Service) and Sally Churchyard (Youth Offending Team Manager) and Mark Durnford (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillor Nathan Hartley – Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth

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

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The members of the Panel introduced themselves to the assembled members of the public.

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

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

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

Apologies had been received from Tess Daly, Stuart Bradfield, David Williams and Sanjeev Chaddha who are all Co-opted Members of the Panel.

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

There were none.

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

The Chairman declared that she had received no actual urgent business, but wished to highlight a couple of issues to the Panel.

Culverhay – She informed them of the Cabinet decision made last week to withdraw the proposed closure of Culverhay School.

Writhlington – The recent fire at the school has left some property damage, but no pupils, staff or public were injured in the incident.

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

There were none.

## **7 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PARLIAMENT FEEDBACK**

The Strategic Planning Officer for Children's Health & Commissioning introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that the Parliament gave pupils an opportunity to put forward proposals and discuss priorities for their future learning activities.

Pupils from St Saviours and All Saints Schools had developed the proposal to have five themed days at school to promote Healthier Living.

Healthy Eating Day  
No Cars Day  
Recycling Day  
Litter Picking Day  
PE / Active Day

Pupils from Youth For Christ, St Mark's School and Culverhay made a presentation to the Parliament on Community Gardens. Their plan would be set out over the following seven steps.

Locate an overgrown site and seek permission to develop it.  
Clean the site.  
Open the site to the community.  
Grow produce.  
Share the produce among people who had worked on the site.  
Sell off any excess produce for charity.  
Create friendships and enjoy the experience.

A number of event days would also be held to promote the scheme, such as composting and recycling.

The plan would also have a number of benefits for the environment. People would be making less car journeys to get their produce as it would be local to them, less packaging would be involved with the produce than at supermarkets and less food waste will be generated as people will not want to throw away produce that they have helped to grow.

Chris Batten asked if they had been able to identify any sites in particular yet to start work on.

A member of the group replied that they had not, but were in discussions with Somer on some possible ones.

Councillor Dine Romero congratulated them on their presentation and asked them how soon they felt they could start on the project.

They replied that they would like to start on it as soon as possible.

The Chairman wished them good luck in the project and hoped that they would face as little red tape as possible in order to get it up and running.

The Strategic Planning Officer for Children's Health & Commissioning commented that she would be seeking help from officers around the Council in an attempt to get the projects off the ground.

Peter Mountstephen commented that the great deal of work that the Strategic Planning Officer for Children's Health & Commissioning had done on behalf of the Parliament should be acknowledged.

The Panel thanked all the pupils for attending and wished them luck in the future.

## **8 CHILDREN'S SERVICE SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS ANNUAL REPORT**

The Complaints Procedure Manager introduced this item to the Panel. She informed them that the total number of complaints recorded at Stage 1 was higher than previous years. The increase however should not be seen as negative but as an indicator that people are aware of the procedure and their right to have their complaint listened to if they are unhappy with the service. It is important however that the lessons learned from these complaints are considered and that any patterns and trends in the information identified.

She added that with the input of additional administrative support since April 2010 there had been a marked improvement in the time taken to acknowledge complaints. The acknowledgment is an important part of developing confidence in the complaints procedure. As long as the complaint is passed directly to the Complaints Procedure Manager it is possible to acknowledge all complaints within 4 working days and the majority within 2 days.

Councillor Katie Hall asked how the public were made aware of the complaints procedure.

The Complaints Procedure Manager replied that an information sheet is available on the Council's website. She added that information about the Complaints Procedure should be given to all children and young people and/or their parents and carers at the first point of contact. Workers are encouraged to check that children and young people are aware of the complaints procedure when they first start working with them, particularly when the case has been transferred from another team. The Independent Reviewing Officer will also ensure that the young person is aware of their right to make a complaint at each review.

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

## **9 LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11 AND WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12**

The Acting Divisional Director for Health, Commissioning and Strategic Planning introduced this item to the Panel. She explained that it was a very detailed report and that it had been published in accordance with the new national guidance. She added that in establishing its priorities for the coming year, the Board considered the developing national safeguarding agenda: its evaluation of the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements: progress with its 3 Year Strategic Plan 2008-2011: progress with its Annual Report and Business Plan Work Programme 2010/11: its analysis of the Local Needs Assessments: feedback from the Annual Stakeholders' event: and its review of the national and local safeguarding context within its Annual Development Day in January 2011. Having done so, the Board concluded that whilst maintaining its overall commitment to the 5 aims of the Staying Safe Outcome, it must in the coming year give priority to its core business of protecting children and young people from violence, maltreatment, neglect and sexual exploitation.

Peter Mountstephen asked if it would possible to make closer relationships with groups that work with and on behalf of black and other minority ethnic communities in an attempt to reduce the number of Child Protection Plans.

The Acting Divisional Director for Health, Commissioning and Strategic Planning replied that she would take that proposal back to the team. She also wished to acknowledge the work of the advocacy service and their role in mediation on behalf of black and other minority ethnic communities.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Note the Annual Report 2010/11, its priorities and associated Work Programme and the challenges and issues it poses for the Children's Trust Board.
- (ii) Request that the draft Annual Report for 2011/12 is presented to the November meeting of the Panel for discussion and comment.
- (iii) Note that the annual LSCB Stakeholders' event will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011.

## **10 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY FINAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

The Business and Performance Manager introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that the Childcare Act 2006 requires local authorities to carry out and publish a sufficiency assessment of childcare in their area at least every 3 years. Local authorities carried out their first assessment in 2008 and the subsequent report was completed by April 2011.

Councillor Katie Hall asked how accurate the figures relating to the proposed providers as at November 2010 could be.

The Business and Performance Manager replied that not all childminders who have expressed an interest will become registered childminders, 30 was a more realistic estimate. He added that since the report had been written three new group provisions had opened, two of which were in Paulton.

Councillor Liz Hardman commented that she was pleased to see that a new scheme had been set up to enable disabled children to access mainstream provision which had already removed access barriers for 20 individual children and their families.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to endorse the action plan arising from the final published Childcare Sufficiency Report 2011.

## 11 YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2010 - 11

The Youth Offending Team Service Manager introduced this item to the Panel. She informed them that the Youth Offending Team and its partners were able to report the lowest number of youth custodial sentences passed since the Youth Offending Team was established in 2000, together with a reduction in the percentage of all sentences resulting in custody. At the same time, re-offending after nine months reduced and engagement in education, training and employment increased.

She also wished to highlight to the Panel the performance of the Service against its National Indicators, in particular the low number of custodial sentences, the reduction in re-offending rates and the proportion of young people supervised by Youth Offending Teams who are actively engaged in suitable full time education, training or employment.

Councillor Dine Romero asked if data from the Children's Society was included within the report.

The Youth Offending Team Service Manager replied that it was not as the Council was not required to directly report that information.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to agree that:

- (i) The Youth Justice Plan 2010-11 has been delivered, including the improvements agreed following the Joint Inspection and the Care Quality Commission Inspection.
- (ii) Performance has improved against key National Indicators in 2010-11.

## 12 CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

The Acting Divisional Director for Health, Commissioning and Strategic Planning introduced this item to the Panel. She informed them that progress was being made to reduce the number of Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more, particularly by focussing on the effectiveness of individual case plans.

She added that the appropriateness of prescribed timescales for core assessments was considered within the work of the Munro Review Group (national review of social work and child protection) and Munro has recommended that the timescale is dropped and the focus is upon the quality of assessments as a continuous process.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Note the report and the actions being taken in respect of the reported performance.
- (ii) Request further performance reports from the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in order to maintain an overview of the Council, and partner agencies', child protection activity and performance.
- (iii) Note that future reports will seek to detail performance in relation to outcomes rather than process indicators.

## 13 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIES IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET - UPDATE REPORT

The Acting Divisional Director for Service Development introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that there now was a list of nominated Senior Officers from whom any school considering becoming an academy can seek definitive advice.

He added that there was also a compendium of all matters relating to the consideration of becoming an academy. This is for Governing Bodies and Head Teachers and brings together all sources of information into a single document.

In addition to the above two one day per week secondments for primary head teachers (Peter Mountstephen and Teresa Austin) began on 1 May. These are focussed upon researching existing collaborative models between schools to look for best/effective practice and understanding what services and what forms of service are most supported by schools.

He also highlighted that for 2011-12 the DfE 'top sliced' £425k from the grant settlement of the Local Authority. For 2012-13 the indicative top slice is £335k. However, the LGA has supported 27 Local Authorities in seeking a judicial review of the methodology used to calculate the top slice as a number of Local Authorities which have no academies have had their grant cut.

Peter Mountstephen commented that there currently appeared to be differing views between Primary and Secondary Schools on this issue with only one Primary

School wishing to become an Academy. He emphasised the need for all schools to think more about collaborative working and to use the expertise of officers within the Council.

Councillor Dine Romero asked what can the Council do to ensure the provision of particular services / subjects will not be lost when Schools become Academies.

The Acting Divisional Director for service Development replied that the Council will have very little direct power, but will seek to work with academies to ensure decisions are taken in the best interests of children and young people across Bath and North East Somerset.

Peter Mountstephen commented that with Saltford having now become a Teaching School this would enable greater local development. He added that there currently was a great deal of good practice in place and a will amongst the profession to continue to work together.

Councillor Katie Hall asked how many Secondary Schools had applied to become Academies.

The Acting Divisional Director for Service Development replied that four had already converted and that another five have made applications to do so.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked what role can the Council play in monitoring / maintaining standards at the Academies.

The Acting Divisional Director for Service Development replied that the performance data for the Academies would be available to the public, but again stressed that the Council itself would have little power to intervene.

Dawn Harris commented that the Fair Access legislation was set to continue and this would allow the most vulnerable pupils access to the services / school they need.

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

#### **14 CHILDREN'S SERVICES - DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT**

The Acting Divisional Director for Service Development introduced this item to the Panel. He informed them that in November 2010 the Council agreed to a fundamental re-structuring of the local authority based around three service groupings: People / Place / Resources.

In discussion with the PCT and GP Clinic Commissioning Group it has also been agreed that Public Health will form part of the new Department.

The Strategic Director for Children's Services has been asked to provide interim leadership to the new department. The interim structure will enable the Council and the PCT to continue to focus on day to day service delivery and the support and protection of our most vulnerable adults, young people and children.

He added that research and national guidance, particularly around NHS changes, will be completed by Autumn 2011 and it is intended to then launch informal and formal consultation on the re-structuring of the new Department. The consultation will start in January 2012 with a view to the new structure being in place between September 2012 and April 2013.

Councillor Dine Romero asked if the Council was required to have one officer whose sole position was that of Children's Services Director.

The Acting Divisional Director for Service Development replied that the national view was that it was desirable for that to be the case and stressed that due consideration had been taken before making the decision. He wished to add that a number of other Local Authorities are working in this same way.

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

## **15 CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE EARLY YEARS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY DEVELOPMENT & SCRUTINY PANEL**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced this item to the Panel. He explained that although he had received no official request to remove DAFBY (Democratic Action For Baner Youth) from the list of Co-opted Members he understood that work was ongoing to see if this was the best way in which young people could become involved in the democratic process.

The Chairman added that it may become necessary for Members of the Panel to be involved in visits to schools / youth groups in the future.

Peter Mountstephen suggested using School Councils as a way of engaging with young people across the area.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to:

(i) Agree that the current arrangements for non-voting co-opted Education members of the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel should be continued.

(ii) Note the current statutory membership.

## **16 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

The Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth addressed the Panel.

He informed them that he would be meeting with possible Academy sponsors for Culverhay next week.



He stated he was looking forward to receiving the winning presentations from the Primary / Secondary School Parliaments so that he could work through the recommendations.

He explained that he would be meeting with local Councillors very soon to discuss how the Radstock Youth Service could spend the £10,000 they have been allocated.

He told them he was currently working with officers on a draft Academies & Free School Policy.

The Panel thanked him for his attendance and the update.

## 17 CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTOR'S BRIEFING

The Children's Services Director having already sent his apologies to the Panel was not present to deliver his briefing. He offered to send the briefing to the Panel via email.

The Panel agreed to this proposal.

## 18 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Chairman introduced this item to the Panel.

Councillor Dine Romero asked for the Panel to receive a report on a number of issues in relation to School Meals, particularly their nutritional value, payment options and provision.

Councillor Katie Hall asked for an update report on the work of the Admissions Forum.

Councillor Ian Gilchrist asked if the Panel could receive a report on the subject of School Transport.

The Chairman asked for the work of the previous Panel to be sent to Councillor Gilchrist so that he may make himself aware of the study. She asked that if he still had a particular issue he wished to follow up then to contact her. She added that Panel Members could also approach her if they wished to request to take part in a Task & Finish exercise.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to add the items in relation to School Meals and Admissions Forum to their workplan.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**