

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

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

At a Meeting of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Durham on Thursday 16 December 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

Councillor J Blakey in the Chair

Members of the Committee

Councillors Armstrong, Bailey, Dixon, Iveson, Martin, Stradling and Wilkinson

Co-opted Members

Mr Dunn

Faith Community Representatives

Mr P Mackie and Mr M Davison

Other Members

Councillors Barker and Williams

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Paylor, Maslin, Wilson, Holroyd, Robinson, Lethbridge, Brookes, C Potts, Mr Pye and Mr McCaughey

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 October 2010, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

A7 Progress Report on the Primary Age Free School Meals Pilot in County Durham

Mr F Jassat, Overview and Scrutiny Manager advised that the free school meals pilot would be evaluated and the findings be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.

A2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Blakey declared an interest in Item A6 Consultation – Schools Admission Arrangements and Item A7 Minutes from Children’s Trust Executive Board.

Mr P Mackie declared an interest in Item A6 Consultation – Schools Admission Arrangements

Mr N Martin declared an interest in Item A6 Consultation – Schools Admission Arrangements

A3 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from co-opted Members or Interested Parties

A4 Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Annual Report 2010/11

Ms G Hopper, Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services gave a presentation on the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Annual Report 2010/11 (for copy, see file of Minutes).

The Governance arrangements had been reviewed in response to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and had strengthened the challenging role of the LSCB’s. There was an emphasis on clarity about relationship between LSCB and Children’s Trusts. As a result of changes in guidance, Durham LSCB planned to appoint its first Independent Chair in the next few months.

The performance framework set out specific areas of the Board’s work for scrutiny and demonstrated a high priority placed on LSCB on ensuring improvements in performance. One of the big successes was engaging with GPs. The Primary Care representative had previously worked as a GP and had brought about significant changes in GP contribution.

Thresholds, policies and procedures had been reviewed and developed as well as an increase in the range and delivery of training. A number of activities and achievements were outlined.

Priorities for the coming year included hidden harm, domestic abuse, neglect, sharing information, ensuring response to working together and missing from home, care and education.

One of the challenges for the LSCB was identifying the key safeguarding issues and holding the Children’s Trust to account for how it would address the issues identified.

Overview and Scrutiny could be involved in its challenge, transparency and efficiency of services delivered by the Council and NHS. The LSCB monitored progress against the annual plan and agreed priorities quarterly. Such information was available and could be shared regularly with Overview and Scrutiny as required together with other available performance information.

Councillor Dixon queried if the changes in the PCT would have an effect on engaging with GPs. The Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services explained that under section 11, the Council and other partners had a duty to safeguard children but GPs did not. There was however an increasing commitment on the part of GPs to contribute and it was hoped that with the changes it would become part of their practice.

Mr P Mackie commented that head teachers were unable to obtain the relevant information from health relating to pupils in their care. The Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services explained that in the last 18 months, sessions had been delivered to 1600 practitioners to emphasise the importance of sharing information.

Councillor Armstrong queried what was to happen to section 8 agency contributions. The Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services advised that the child death review funding was likely to come to an end. Health made the decisions on how it was expended and would still be required to respond to child deaths in line with national guidance. With regard to agency contributions to the LSCB, every partner had agreed to make the same level of contribution as in previous years.

Councillor Barker commented that information was not shared with Headteachers locally or reports shared with governors. The Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services explained that the focus around information sharing in this context was about specific safeguarding concerns around children. All professionals needed to share information as one incident on its own may not mean anything but collated information from a number of perspectives might create a very different picture when put together.

RESOLVED that the LSCB Annual Report, be noted.

A5 Children and Young People's Services Forecast of Outturn 2010/11 Quarter 2

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Finance, Children and Young People's Services which provided details of the Children and Young People's Service revenue and capital outturn forecast for 2010/11 based on information at the end of the second quarter of the financial year (for copy, see file of Minutes).

CYPS managers continued to work on a package of in year savings, to counter pressures on Safeguarding and Specialist Services which combined

with potentially higher school, college and LAC transport costs could produce a budget overspend of as much as £2.4m by the financial year end. Details were given of the CYPs expenditure and capital budget.

The Head of Finance explained that the current projected reduction on DfE grant would exceed £10m, which would have a huge impact on services. Information had been received from DSG for funding for 2011/12 as follows:

- Pupil premium for every child entitled to a free school meal would be £430 per pupil and be worth £6m
- School developed formula capital reducing by 80%
- Harness and technology grant disappearing altogether
- Dedicated Schools Grant would have no inflation or any mainstreaming grants
- Minimum funding guarantee set at 1.5%

DfE White Paper had suggested a change in the national funding formula, 6th form funding to be same as colleges, more delegation, remove the balances claw back mechanism, remove financial standards and £1.1bn efficiency savings over 4 years.

The grants situation was much more difficult than had been anticipated. The Council had planned on £5m reduction but it was more than double that figure.

Councillor Armstrong requested that a presentation be given on implications of the MTFP once all the information from the settlement had been digested.

Councillor Wilkinson queried how much schools had in balances. The Head of Finance advised that in the previous year there had been approximately £12m, gross school spend was in excess of £3m.

Mr Mackie queried why the limit to balances for schools was being removed. The Head of Finance explained that he suspected the reason was because the settlement to school was cash flat and they wanted to give schools maximum flexibility.

The Chair queried how the cuts would affect school governor support services. The Head of Finance advised that there would be some reshaping or restructuring.

Mr Davison commented that the pupil premium was difficult to understand. With the removal of the ICT grant it would be difficult for headteachers and governors to manage.

The Head of Finance advised that the amount of grants to integrate was over £50m. If the standard formula was used there would be some large turbulence. Some discussion had taken place with the Schools Forum.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the report, be noted.

COUNCILLOR ARMSTRONG TOOK THE CHAIR

A6 Consultation – Schools Admission Arrangements

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services which gave details of the consultation on school admission arrangements and to invite comments (for copy, see file of Minutes).

Until the 2009/10 school year, with the exception of Durham Johnson Comprehensive School (DJCS), secondary schools in the County had admission arrangements that, after children in public care, were mainly based on giving priority to children living in associated transport areas. The tie-breaker was 'pupils who lived nearest to the preferred school'.

The Whinney Hill site closure meant that the school would no longer be the nearest for children living in certain villages and therefore the DJCS governing body asked that arrangements be changed and designated associated transport areas. Cabinet made a decision in 2008 that there should be areas of associated transport for the school and listed the relevant communities.

There were objections to the Schools' Adjudicator for 3 consecutive years and the objections were outlined in the report.

The Local Authority was seeking views as to whether DJCS should continue to have the same oversubscription criteria as for all other community and voluntary controlled schools or a revised set of criteria altering the distance criteria as detailed in appendix 2 and 3.

Modelling based on September 2010 admissions showed that the new proposals would give a higher priority to those living in Bowburn, Coxhoe, Parkhill and Sherburn Hill. The communities not having as high priority as currently would be Bearpark, Belmont, Esh, Gilesgate, Hett, Langley Park, New Bracepeth and Ushaw Moor.

Councillor Martin advised that he was a Governor at Durham Johnson and the governing body was confused as to the last Schools' Adjudicators report. Maps had been requested for parents to show the nearest school. Walking distance was not clear and some routes that were used, parents felt were unsuitable for children. He added that it was difficult for parents to understand what the impact would be for them.

Mr Mackie explained that the Admissions Forum had taken a view on the proposals and clarity was an issue. They felt that every child in County Durham should have the same right to go to any school and should not vary from communities. The proposals were giving certain areas something other areas did not have.

Councillor Blakey commented that the parents in Bowburn were confused by the tie breaker and she did not know why some other areas had been included. Changing the criteria would have a knock on effect on children in Bowburn. If parents opted for an alternative school then they had to fund the transport costs.

Councillor Armstrong explained that the Schools' Adjudicator had commented that noone should have special advantage. The system worked for the rest of the County and felt it should be the same throughout.

Councillor Martin referred to sibling links and explained that as the child moved through the years, the communities currently attending the school would disappear. Pupils would be replaced by communities in the north and would change the pattern of admissions in other schools.

Councillor Blakey queried if modelling had been done across the County and if the knock on effect was known. Mrs M Clare, Head of Access and Inclusion Services advised that modelling had been carried out to see the effect of proposing the new criteria for the whole county. This showed major disruption would be caused in some areas, for example some pupils in Spennymoor would not be allocated a place in Spennymoor schools. The effects of adopting the new proposal for Durham Johnson School had been modelled on a current cohort. Sherburn Hill was identified as a new community with similar priority to Bowburn. Further work was to be done to see whether there might be any further implications for other communities becoming a similar priority. (It should be noted that 15 have been identified subsequent to the meeting and would be included in the Cabinet report that the Service Grouping would produce following the consultation).

RESOLVED that Members make individual comments to the Scrutiny Team or direct to Schools Admissions.

A7 Minutes of Children's Trust Executive Board Meeting held on 7 September 2010

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Children's Trust Executive Board held on 7 September 2010.

Mrs C Payne, Head of Strategic Commissioning gave an update from the meeting of the Board which discussed the review of the Children's Trust, Common Assessment Framework, Integrated Services Developments, Local Children's Board activity and Pre-reprimand disposal. The pre-reprimand disposal scheme had received national recognition for its work.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

COUNCILLOR BLAKEY TOOK THE CHAIR

A8 Visits to Sure Start Children's Centres

Mrs A Whitton, Overview and Scrutiny Officer gave a presentation on the visits to Sure Start Centres (for copy, see file of Minutes).

Members were advised that there had been 6 working group meetings that had taken place over a 13 week period. All information gathering was now complete and a draft report would be considered by the working group in January to formulate recommendations.

Emerging issues from the evidence were the need for a communications and outreach strategies, cost effective delivery of training courses/programmes, Children's centres to provide service hubs to children, families and carers.

In conclusion, it was explained that Sure Start County Durham provided a wealth of services to children under 5 years, their families and carers. To ensure that the service continued through stringent times, Children's Centres must provide a smarter service, operating in a more cost effective and efficient manner. By opening up the remit of Children's Centres to cover a wider age range and other community groups would put the work of the Centres at the heart of the community.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that 8 Children's Centres were visited and breastfeeding sessions, sensory sessions, adult learning and childcare session were witnessed. Cluster Managers, family workers, health visitors, admin staff and parents/carers were spoken to and most centres offered the same activities and training courses/programmes. Details were given of the numbers of children on the database and the full time equivalent of staff for the centres that were visited.

Members queried the variances of children to staff ratio. The Overview and Scrutiny Manager explained that a value for money review into Sure Start was ongoing and the staffing ratios had been identified as an anomaly.

Councillor Armstrong referred to a study conducted by Durham University into Sure Start which conflicted with the findings of the working group.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.