

Medway Council
Meeting of Children and Young People Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 11 December 2012

6.35pm to 8.55pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Baker, Clarke, Cooper, Craven, Gilry, Iles, Irvine, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Mackness, Price, Purdy, Royle (Chairman), Smith, Tolhurst and Turpin

Co-opted Members with voting rights on educational issues only:

Kwashie Anang (Parent Governor representative) and
Samantha Collins (Parent Governor representative)

Added members without voting rights:

Bryan Frost (Governor representative), Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative), Lauraine McManus (Teacher representative), Sam Tutt (Medway Youth Parliament representative) and Doyin Yahyi (Medway Youth Parliament representative)

In Attendance: Perdita Blinkhorn, Substitute for Medway Youth Parliament representatives
Rob Cadman, Political Assistant, Conservative Group
Stephanie Goad, Assistant Director Communications, Performance and Partnerships
Keith Gulvin, Youth Offending Team Manager
Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer
Chris McKenzie, Performance Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager
Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults Services
Jenny Robinson, Legal Advisor
Juliet Sevier, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement
Phil Watts, Finance Manager, Children & Adult Services
Councillor David Wildey, Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care
Jackie Wood, Interim Service Manager

630 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 27 September 2012 was agreed and signed by the Chairman.

631 Apologies for absence

There were none.

632 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman welcomed Samantha Collins as parent governor representative to her first meeting and Perdita Blinkhorn (substitute for Medway Youth Parliament) who was attending to observe her first meeting of the Committee.

633 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

634 Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools - Outcome of Consultation on Proposed Amalgamation

Discussion:

The Performance Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager gave a brief introduction to the report on the outcomes of the consultation for the proposed amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools.

He stated that the public consultation meeting had been well attended with representatives present from the two schools, parents, staff and governors. Only 8 written responses had been received to the consultation, 6 in favour and 2 objecting.

Reference was made to the importance of elected Members being able to listen to the views put forward at the public meeting and the view was expressed that the suggested amalgamation would be welcome and the hope was that it would have the added benefit of improving school results at Key Stage 2.

Decision:

The Committee recommended the amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools to Cabinet.

635 Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools - Outcome of Consultation on Proposed Amalgamation

Discussion:

The Performance Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager gave a brief introduction to the report on outcomes of consultation on the proposed amalgamation of Swingate Infant School and Spinnens Acre Junior School.

He referred to the public consultation meeting, which had taken place on 11 October 2012. He stated that the meeting had not been well attended but in

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

contrast a larger number of written responses had been received. 46 had been received and all but one of these had been supportive of the amalgamation.

Reference was made to the fact that there had been a meeting relating to autism at the school on the evening of the consultation meeting. The Performance Intelligence and Strategic Planning Manager stated that the date and time for the consultation had been agreed with the school.

Decision:

The Committee recommended the amalgamation of Swingate Infant School and Spinnens Acre Junior School to Cabinet.

636 Youth Justice Plan (Policy Framework)

Discussion:

The Youth Offending Team Manager introduced the report on the Youth Justice Plan, which he stated had been shared with partner agencies, and built on the success of the previous year.

He stated that the Management Board had set the targets for the service and all had been met bar one. The team had been able to reduce reoffending by 35%. He explained that there had been recent changes to the remand legislation in respect of young people which would mean an increase in the number of looked after young people known to the Youth Offending Team (YOT) as all remanded young people would gain Looked After Children (LAC) status.

He informed the Committee that the numbers of YOT clients in training or employment during one quarter of the year had been 100%, which was due to very effective partnership working. This also accounted for good results in the numbers of YOT clients in suitable accommodation.

The Youth Offending Team Manager was congratulated on the work of the Youth Offending Team and particular reference was made to some alley clearing work undertaken in Watling ward and the positive support given to the young people involved by their Support Worker, which he undertook to feed back.

In response to a number of questions he commented as follows:

- In response to a question relating to the employment figures set out on page 83 of the report the Youth Offending Team Manager undertook to report back with a more detailed explanation about the unemployment rates percentages. He did confirm that the statement in the final paragraph was correct, that 81% of YOT clients over the school leaving age were at the end of their order in Education, Employment or Training.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

- With regards to page 95 of the report he stated that work was ongoing to encourage young people who have finished their community work to continue it on a voluntary basis. This had achieved some success particularly around young people continuing to work in charity shops.
- In relation to page 85 of the report he under took to report back to Councillor Mackness further details about the youth crime in River ward but stated that the high incidence of youth crime there may be connected with the proximity to the High Street. He stated that he would raise the matter at the Community Safety Partnership initially to see if there were particular trends in relation to that area.
- Reference was made to the excellent work being undertaken at Cookham Wood Young Offenders Institute and while the work was costly it was effective and he hoped it could be used as a model for other institutions in the country.
- Emphasis was placed by Members of the Committee on officers making early contact with the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Commissioner to grow the share of finance received for work with young offenders in Medway based on the successes already achieved. Members requested details to be shared with them of the amount of bid put forward and the final sum offered. The Assistant Director, Inclusion and Improvement stated that there would be a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner in the following week but the final outcome may take some time to emerge.
- Discussion took place about street restorative justice, which sought to deal with youth crime in a less prescriptive way. Until the changes took place there was a definite sequence of caution, final warning then court action. The new system allowed more flexibility about applying this, which meant fewer young people ended up in the court. Members were keen that young people did not see this as an easy option.

Discussion:

- (a) The Committee congratulated the Young Offenders Team for the excellent results and recommended the report to Cabinet and Council;
- (b) Officers were requested to report back to the Committee by means of a briefing note on:
 - a more detailed explanation about the unemployment rates percentages on page 85 of the report;
 - further details of the youth crime figures relating to River ward once this had been discussed at the Community Safety Partnership to Councillor Mackness;
 - details of the amount of bid put forward to the Kent and Medway Police and Crime Commissioner and of the final sum offered.

637 Capital and Revenue Budgets 2013/2014

Discussion:

The Finance Manager for Children and Adult Services introduced the capital and revenue budget and responded to Members' questions.

The Director of Children and Adults responded to a question about how the necessary savings could be achieved over the longer term, bearing in mind the forecast budget gap was predicted to rise to £24m by 2015/2016. She stated that work was ongoing looking at ways of working more effectively and taking difficult decisions about what services were the most important and protecting those vital services for vulnerable children and adults. Some of these discussions were with the Medway Clinical Commissioning Group to investigate areas where joint commissioning or integrated working could bring about savings.

Decision:

The report was noted.

638 2012/2013 Council Plan Monitoring - Quarter 2

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Communications, Performance and Partnerships introduced the report on performance against the Council's key measures of success for the second quarter of 2012/2013 and responded to Members' questions.

In relation to C1 – children's participation in child protection conferences she stated that work was ongoing on this target to ensure that the young person's voice was heard in the most appropriate way.

In relation to CISRS1 LAC participation in Reviews she also confirmed that there was no particular problem for those young people who were in residential units having their voice heard in reviews any more than for other Looked After Children.

In relation to the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers, she stated that negotiations to develop a pan Kent framework were ongoing and she hoped officers would report to the Community Safety Partnership and to this Committee at a later stage.

She responded to questions on a number of topics as follows:

- NI 117 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training it was stated that this figure was higher than that shown in the report on Youth Offending as it covered all 16 to 18 year olds not just clients of the YOT;

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

- NI 148 care leavers in education, employment or training – this related to a very small group of young people and Members questioned why targeted work could not be done with them in the same way as YOT clients;
- Regarding the circulation of papers provided for the performance report which included lengthy performance tables on A3 paper, as this was provided for Members on several occasions: with the Cabinet agenda; in full for the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then again in a shortened format for each of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, it was suggested that a pilot is undertaken where one set of papers is presented at Cabinet and Members keep them for subsequent meetings. She also stated that, following a suggestion at Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, she would be producing a business case for e-access to agenda papers;
- LX5 working days lost due to sickness absence – it was stated that the selection of 8 days as a target flowed from the average per annum data and did not mean that the Council was encouraging staff to take sick leave. In relation to return to work interviews she emphasised that these were challenging but supportive;

The Director of Children and Adults responded to a query with regard to the Medway Domestic Abuse pilot launched in 3 wards (River, Gillingham South and Luton and Wayfield) by stating that it was too early to assess the success. A review would be undertaken in the New Year and it would need to be clear what outcomes were being achieved for what investment to make an evidence based decision on any future roll out. Further details could be made available to this Committee by means of a briefing note.

She also referred to NI 60 Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement by stating that there was a balance to be achieved between efforts on timeliness as opposed to quality of assessments undertaken. Following the publication of the Munro report it was stated that quality of service was vital. She did, however, undertake to look into the timescales to see what could be done to improve them.

Following a request from a Member, the Director of Children and Adults stated that for target C1 this was a national target and not one, which the Council could choose to change. She did, however, refer to the fact that the national minimum children's data set would be changing which would allow for some local negotiation.

Decision:

- (a) The report was noted:
- (b) A briefing note was agreed in relation to the domestic abuse pilot in the New Year.

639 Ofsted Inspection of Medway's Fostering service

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

Discussion:

The Interim Service Manager introduced a report relating to the Ofsted inspection of Medway's fostering service. She explained that there would be a new Inspection Framework for Looked After Children and young people leaving care in April 2013.

She then referred to the Ofsted inspection, which had taken place on 7 August 2012, the findings of which were published on 12 September 2012. The overall judgement was that Medway's fostering service was adequate although two of the judgements, outcomes for children and young people and safeguarding children and young people were judged to be good. She stated that the requirements from Ofsted had changed which made the inspection more challenging.

With regards to a target for the coming year she stated that it was hoped that 30 households could be recruited across Medway but explained the difficulty in recruiting with so many independent agencies in the area.

Responses to questions are summarised as follows:

- It was agreed that the action plan which should have accompanied the Committee report would be sent to the Committee and published on the website
- Personal development plans for foster carers were in place and were not static documents
- Work was being undertaken to encourage foster carers to arrange for their foster children to attend after school clubs and activities
- The permanency panel referred to in the report had met twice
- As far as recruitment of Members to the Foster Panel in addition to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care and it was stated that this would be checked with Democratic Services

A number of concerns were raised by Members of the Committee in relation to the drop in performance, which lead to the adequate rating by Ofsted. Members expressed their disappointment at the position of the service. The Director of Children and Adults stated that there had been some issues with regards to leadership of the service but that work was underway to recruit a number of staff in the directorate, including the area of fostering, and she hoped that a strong campaign to attract the right people to the Council.

In response to a further question about how many children are placed in foster care outside of Medway, and whether in particular any children are placed in Margate, she stated that she would send a briefing note to Members on the topic.

Decision:

- (a) The Committee thanked the Interim Service Manager for her report;

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

- (b) It was noted that there would be a briefing note with regards to details of the numbers of foster children placed outside of Medway, including in Margate;
- (c) The action plan referred to during the meeting should be circulated to all Members of the Committee;
- (d) Members welcomed the recruitment campaign being put together to appoint to vacant posts in the directorate.

640 Work programme

Discussion:

The Chairman referred to the invitation to all Members of the Committee to feed into him or the Democratic Services Officer ideas on topics for in-depth scrutiny for the following year by no later than 28 February 2013.

The Democratic Services Officer reminded Members that on appendix 2 of the report there was a template, which needed to be used to assist with selecting a topic for in-depth review.

She then pointed out that paragraph 6 of the report set out a proposal to move children's health from this Committee to Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She referred to the business of this Committee over the past two years, which reflected that children's health had not been considered very often.

Some Members felt that there were a number of topics which this Committee had not finished dealing with at this stage and they should remain with the Committee. The Democratic Services Officer explained that this should not be a problem on the basis that any changes would need to be agreed at Annual Council, which was some months ahead. This should allow the outstanding business to be concluded.

There was concern that the Committee did not have sufficient information on which to base a decision on the potential transfer and it was requested that this matter should be considered at the next meeting as a report containing all the implications of such a decision.

A request was made that an update on fostering should be considered in six months' time and the Chairman agreed to discuss this at the next pre-agenda meeting.

Decision:

It was agreed that:

- (a) An update on fostering in six months' time should be added to the work programme following discussion at the next pre-agenda meeting;
- (b) Briefing notes be provided at the end of each 2nd, 4th and 6th school term on the outcome of school Ofsted inspections and academy conversions;

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11 December 2012

- (c) A briefing note be provided to update the committee on the development of the health visiting service;
- (d) Members would notify the Chairman and opposition spokespersons of any potential topics for in-depth review by no later than 28 February 2013;
- (e) A report on the full implications of transferring children's health from this Committee's terms of reference to Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be added to the work programme for the next meeting.

Chairman

Date:

Rosie Gunstone, Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 01634 332715

Email: democratic.services@medway.gov.uk