

Medway Council
Meeting of Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

Monday, 12 July 2010

6.35pm to 8.15pm

Record of the meeting

Present: Councillors: Andrews, Avey, Baker, Kenneth Bamber, Carr, Clarke, Gilry, Gulvin, Kemp (Vice-Chairman), Maisey, Maple, Royle (Chairman), Smith and Sutton

Added members without voting rights on education issued only:

Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative) and Pat Wozencroft (Governor representative)

In Attendance:

Helen Buckingham, Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Medway
Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults
Councillor Jane Etheridge
Keith Gulvin, Youth Offending Team Manager
Sally Morris, Assistant Director, Commissioning and Strategy
Keith Morrison, Virtual Headteacher, Learning & Achievement
Juliet Sevier, Assistant Director Inclusion
Simon Trotter, Assistant Director Learning and Achievement
Councillor David Wildey, Portfolio Holder for Children's Social Care

151 Record of the meetings

The record of the meetings held on 19 May 2010 (Joint meeting of all Committees) and 27 May 2010 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

152 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Val Goulden, Jim Grogan (Roman Catholic Church representative), Canon John Smith (Church of England representative), Lauraine McManus (teacher representative), Clare Murray (LINK representative) and Sam Tutt (Youth Parliament representative).

153 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

The Chairman announced that there were no urgent items but that he would take agenda item 9 (Ofsted inspections) after agenda item 5 (Work programme) at the request of officers.

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154 Declarations of interest

Councillor Gilry declared a personal interest in any discussion that may take place during the course of the meeting with reference to the Medway NHS Foundation Trust (Medway Maritime Hospital) as she sometimes worked there.

Councillor Gulvin declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (Youth Justice Plan) as a member of her family worked for the Youth Offending Team.

Pat Wozencroft declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Ofsted inspections) as she was a governor at Riverside Primary School.

155 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator outlined the work that had taken place since the last committee meeting, as set out in paragraphs 3 to 8 of the report. Members were also advised that the date shown in recommendation 11.2 should read "February 2011".

Decision:

The committee agreed that:

- (a) the work programme is amended as set out in the attached appendix;
- (b) the committee's meeting in February 2011 is a themed meeting on the effectiveness around prevention work to reduce young people's experiences of bullying;
- (c) a briefing providing an update on education policy is provided at 5.30pm before the next meeting of the committee on 9 September 2010;
- (d) the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee is informed that the committee received a report in relation to raising attainment for looked after children and that the Child Protection Monitoring Group will continue to scrutinise the clusters of indicators relating to the support provided by the council for vulnerable children.

156 Ofsted inspections

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Learning and Achievement, introduced the report setting out the differences between the overall Ofsted inspections in Medway between 2009 and 2010. The committee was advised that from 1 September 2009 there had been a change in the inspection framework and judgements before that date used different criteria to those inspected since that

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date. This had resulted in a tougher inspection regime that was reflected in inspections statistics nationally.

The committee was also advised that there had been three key developments with schools causing concern and these were:

- pairing the school with a stronger school, resulting in most of them showing good progress;
- the Local Education Authority was intervening quicker and making radical actions by changing the leadership of the school;
- enhanced monitoring of primary schools on a risk-assessed basis. Since this had been set in place, the results of the inspections had significantly improved.

Members welcomed the concept of pairing schools together which clearly showed as a successful strategy and noted that even under the new framework the vast majority of schools gave no cause for concern.

The committee expressed concern about the uncertainty of the capital funding for Medway's three academies, especially as they were at a such advanced stage of being implemented, as this could have such a detrimental impact on all those involved. The Director of Children and Adults advised that the government had recently advised that Medway's academy rebuilds were 'under discussion' and the academy sponsors were completing a submission as the first response to this announcement. This meant that the funding for the rebuilding works at the academies was not yet secure.

The committee also expressed concern over the monitoring visits of Warren Wood Primary School & Language Unit, Spinnens Acre Junior School and St Margaret's CEV Junior School as they showed inadequate progress. Officers responded that the council's own monitoring currently showed that St Margaret's in particular was now making good progress and the Local Authority was taking further steps in the other schools to secure rapid improvement. Members asked that in the future another column was added to the report to show dates of Local Authority visits.

The Headteacher representative asked if there were any lessons to be learned that largely the schools under notice to improve or special measures were often primary or junior schools in areas of high deprivation? The Director of Children and Adults responded that this was broadly true, although there were also good and outstanding schools in those areas. Officers agreed that it was an area that required further investigation and discussion and that recent developments in which schools were providing more support for each other were very positive.

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Decision:

Members requested:

- (a) that a letter is sent from the Chairman of the committee to the Secretary of State for Education expressing the committee's extreme concern at the potential loss of funding for the three academies in Medway, especially as they were so close to implementation. The committee also wanted young people due to attend the academies to have aspirations for their future which would be let down if the academies no longer went ahead;
- (b) that a copy of the letter to the Secretary of State for Education should be sent to the three local Members of Parliament.

157 Child Development Centre update

Discussion:

The Deputy Chief Executive of NHS Medway gave an update on the future location of the Child Development Centre. Since the last briefing in September 2009, work had been carried out to identify a new site and the recommendation was to have a central site with various satellite centres around Medway, referred to as the 'hub and spokes' model. This had been agreed in principle but consultation was required on the practical issues for users.

The consultation process had begun and NHS Medway had spent a lot of time listening to concerns being raised. Users and their families were presently being asked what type of service they would like and Medway Council's Assistant Director, Commissioning and Strategy, chaired a board overseeing this consultation.

NHS Medway proposed to bring a revised proposal to the committee for consideration in October 2010 which would take into account the views of families and provide other information on sites in Medway.

The committee requested that NHS Medway kept consideration of their estate strategy under close scrutiny during this change of location, to ensure that any suitable locations were not disposed of prior to being considered for this service.

Decision:

The committee noted the report and agreed to add the report to the work programme for the meeting on 20 October 2010.

158 Youth Justice Plan

Discussion:

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) Manager gave a presentation setting out the context of the plan and the team's main priorities for the forthcoming year. Two extra papers were circulated to Members setting out the latest performance indicators (as stated in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 of the report) together with information of the team's achievements in 2009-2010 which had been judged as 'good' by the Youth Justice Board.

The committee asked whether contingency plans were being considered for any potential national financial proposals and changes to funding and/or legislation.

Officers responded that recent legislation had actually strengthened the YOT position. The new government seemed keen to move away from the current custodial model towards re-habilitation schemes and there might be the possibility of Local Authorities being given the budget to manage custody of offenders in the future. YOT funding came from a variety of sources and it was a realistic risk that the YOT would be expected to take a share of national cutbacks. The senior management of the team had already been re-organised and officers were now examining re-organisation possibilities for the next level of staff in the team.

Members asked that a glossary of terms was added to the document for ease of use.

Decision:

The committee agreed to recommend:

- (a) that a letter is sent by the Chairman on behalf of the committee recognising the good performance and hard work of the Youth Offending Team;
- (b) to Cabinet and full Council that the Youth Justice Plan 2010-2011 is adopted.

159 Looked after children attainment

Discussion:

The Virtual Headteacher, Learning and Achievement, gave a presentation with further information on the provisional 2010 attainment of Medway's looked after children and the action being taken to drive improvement in this area. Officers emphasised that the data referred to a very small proportion of children within Medway and this made it very sensitive to the slightest of changes in numbers and/or attainment.

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Members asked about one-to-one tuition which officers said had made significant improvements but anecdotal feedback to councillors had indicated that once the child returned to normal classes they did not continue to improve. Officers responded that national statistics did not show this to be the case and Medway's own figures also disproved that. The children made sustained progress, although this did not discount further one-to-one sessions in other subject areas.

Decision:

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the attainment of looked after children (together with the updated figures in the presentation);
- (b) inform the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee that this matter had been looked into and no further action was suggested.

Chairman

Date:

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