

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Committee**

**Thursday, 9 September 2010**

**6.36pm to 8.55pm**

**Record of the meeting**

**Present:** Councillors: Andrews, Avey, Baker, Kenneth Bamber, Carr, Clarke, Gilry, Val Goulden, Gulvin, Maisey, Maple, Royle (Chairman), Smith and Sutton

**Added members without voting rights on education issued only:**

Jane Heyes (Headteacher representative), Lauraine McManus (Teacher representative), Richard Odle (Medway Youth Parliament representative) and Sam Tutt (Medway Youth Parliament representative)

**LINK representative without voting rights:**

Clare Murray

**Substitutes:** Councillor Brake

**In Attendance:** Zoe Barkham, Wellbeing Strategy Manager  
Helen Buckingham, Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Medway  
Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults  
Stephanie Goad, Assistant Director Communications  
Performance and Partnerships  
Karen Kennedy, Performance Manager  
Nicky Ling, Senior Public Health Manager  
Chris McKenzie, Head of School Organisation and Student Services  
Caroline Salisbury, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator  
Sarah Woods, Capital Project Manager, Capital Project Manager  
David Worlock, Independent Chairman, Medway Safeguarding Children Board

**298 Record of meeting**

The record of the meeting held on 12 July 2010 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct.

The Chairman informed Members that he had sent letters on behalf of the committee to the Department for Education and the Youth Offending Team as requested at the last meeting and that he had also received letters in response.

**299 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kemp, John Constanti (acting Church of England representative), Jim Grogan (Roman Catholic church representative), Elaine Watson (Parent Governor representative) and Pat Wozencroft (Governor representative).

**300 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Smith declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Barnsole Schools – location of new school buildings) as she was a governor at Barnsole Junior school. She advised that she would not vote on this item but would remain in the room during the discussion.

**301 Work Programme**

**Discussion:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the report highlighting the discussion that had taken place at the agenda planning meeting and the consultation on 'Safe and Sustainable Children's Heart Surgery' detailed in appendix 2.

**Decision:**

The committee agreed:

- (a) the work programme as set out in Appendix 1;
- (b) that a briefing note is provided giving information on the complaints and compliments received within children's social care in 2009/2010 and that a presentation is provided for the committee later in the year on the learning from the outcomes and on ways the Council explains to children and young people about how they can complain;
- (c) to note the current consultation 'Safe and Sustainable Children's Heart Surgery' and await further information.

**302 Medway Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2009/2010 and Business Plan 2010/2011**

**Discussion:**

The Independent Chairman of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board, David Worlock, was welcomed to the meeting. He informed the committee that he was also the chairman of Kent's Safeguarding Children Board, so this would allow appropriate partnership working between the boards. Mr Worlock advised that the report was a summary of the overall work of the board and that the report contained a weblink to the full documentation which set out the direction of travel for the board for the next few years.

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The Independent Chairman summarised the good practice that he had found in Medway and also set out some challenges for the future:

### Good practice

- Unannounced Ofsted inspection earlier in the year had been positive about the quality of the 'front door' social care service provided by the council
- The work at the secure centres was impressive and there had been real progress in the development of regimes to keep young people as safe as possible
- A pilot scheme of partnership working with the Family Nurse Partnership indicated a good outcome for the work with vulnerable mothers.

### Challenges

- The amount of work received had increased significantly (in line with the national trend)
- How to quantify whether the work carried out was really making a difference for young people and were their lives better for it?
- The impact of resource changes on keeping sensible caseloads for social workers and providing quality supervision in order to make good judgements
- Areas of concern included partnership working with mental health, domestic violence and substance misuse but in resource-driven times, partnership working was even more important.

Members asked about the issue of domestic abuse, as the report showed that not as much progress had been made in this area and that it was now a key focus for the board. The Independent Chairman responded that domestic violence was a major contributory factor as a risk for children. There were existing strategies and services but these had not been brought together in a co-ordinated way and there was insufficient direction for all the partners. The board aimed to make this more coherent and bring together the range of activities. A new strategy was being formed to cover this and the board's Business Plan had set the objective to review the effectiveness of domestic violence services in Medway.

The committee requested that the victims themselves were involved in the compilation of the new strategy as it was critical to interview the people who received the service. Members also requested that with the future challenge over availability of resources, safeguarding remained a high priority.

In reference to a case referred to in paragraph 3.1.5 of the report, the committee requested details of what the 'modifiable factors that could lead to the prevention of future deaths' were and officers undertook to provide that information.

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The Headteacher representative asked for an update in changes in children's social care structures and the review of thresholds. The Director updated the committee on both the proposed changes and the review of thresholds for social care and preventative services.

### **Decision:**

The committee agreed to note the report and welcomed a more corporate theme on Quality Assurance to measure output.

### **303 Review of healthy eating among children and young people in Medway**

#### **Discussion:**

The Chairman of the task group introduced the report highlighting the work carried out by Members and the visits that had been undertaken. He paid tribute and gave thanks to the hardwork and enthusiasm of officers working in the public health and wellbeing teams, together with the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator for helping to co-ordinate and compile this review.

The other Members of the task group added their own thanks to officers and commented on the tremendous efforts of Headteachers and catering staff in the schools they had visited which had been very encouraging, despite the difficulties in persuading parents that school meals were a good investment for their children's health. It was obvious that parents thought they were saving money by providing a packed lunch when in actuality fact the children were getting a much better balanced meal through the school especially as, in some cases, this was the only meal the child had throughout the day.

A Youth Parliament representative commended the report but advised that the key issues for him were the education of children and parents and the recommendation for a new planning policy to restrict fast food outlets from operating near to schools, parks and leisure centres.

The Labour group spokesperson advised that he thought the report had commendable aims but that there could be problems with implementation as it was only a month before the consideration of the Comprehensive Spending Review, which would undoubtedly have an effect on schools' extended services. The Director responded that this was correct but that the report gave details of what was working and the recommendations were not unreasonable. It also highlighted where more could be done, especially with regard to free school meals. The council needed to make it easy for parents to know if they could obtain free meals for their children and to make it simple and accessible once they knew they could claim them.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee agreed the recommendations, as set out below:

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1. The Cabinet is recommended to agree that: -
  - (a) the Contract Manager for school catering explore further options to provide low income families with information about free school meals and ask the Benefits Team if it is possible to include leaflets with this information when mailing out to claimants and for schools (headteachers in particular) to further encourage, where possible, families who qualify to take up the free school meals;
  - (b) school meal caterers are encouraged to promote school meals such as providing tasting opportunities to encourage children to try food without wastage, promoting school meals in Medway town centres and attending parent evenings;
  - (c) when new schools are developed in Medway the buildings are designed and built, where possible, to include dining room facilities to provide a relaxed environment for students to enjoy their lunchtimes;
  - (d) schools are developed to include food technology facilities which can also be used for extra curricular activities after school for students and the whole community to help teach young people and families how to cook easy, healthy meals on a budget and that when new schools are built they are designed to encourage activities outside P.E. lessons and provide space for storing bicycles;
  - (e) the Portfolio Holder for Children's services write to the Government to request that they maintain the national Healthy Schools programme, explaining its benefits;
  - (f) post the completion of current school reorganisations, all schools are encouraged to obtain healthy schools status, if the initiative is continued;
  - (g) the Youth Service explore with Medway Youth Parliament the possibility of 'healthy eating' being the subject of a future MYP conference;
  - (h) the Council investigate the possibility of developing a Supplementary Planning Document restricting fast food outlets from operating near schools, parks and leisure centres or at areas that are already highly concentrated with fast food outlets;
  - (i) schools are encouraged to enforce stay on site policies at lunchtimes to help ensure young people are only buying food in school, which is restricted to nutritional standards;
  - (j) the Council investigate the opportunity of adding a requirement for contributions to allotment provision, where appropriate, to the

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### Developer Contribution Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

2. NHS Medway's Health Improvement Strategic Change Group is recommended to agree that: -
  - (a) the Public Health Directorate work with Health Visitors and the Family Nurse Partnership to ensure they are referring and signposting to the breastfeeding peer support programme and Sure Start Centres which often provide sessions and support relating to breast feeding, weaning and healthy eating for young children;
  - (b) the Public Health Directorate be encouraged to develop the allotment in Gillingham using the best practice identified at the Windmill Community Allotment Project in Thanet and that it be used, along with the produce grown there, for community cookery programmes and learning to grow your own.
  
3. The Cabinet and the Health Improvement Strategic Change Group are recommended to agree that: -
  - (a) the Public Health Directorate work with early years providers who are delivering healthy eating related sessions to children and their families, to ensure they are delivering the correct nutritional information;
  - (b) the Healthy Schools Team and Public Health Directorate develop a more co-ordinated approach to working together with schools;
  - (c) Social Regeneration and the Public health Directorate work together to help provide families with information and support on how to eat healthily, particularly on a low budget. Some of this work should focus specifically to help young people to make informed healthy choices;
  - (d) the Youth Service work the Public Health Directorate and in particular, ensure youth workers access the Healthy Weight Team for their expertise in ensuring they are providing accurate, coherent advice on healthy eating and healthy lifestyles;
  - (e) the Public Health Directorate work with GPs in particular, but also leisure centres and schools, to be more proactive in either referring or signposting to public health services, such as MEND;
  - (f) all of Medway's leisure centres work more closely with Public Health, with particular focus on the following issues: -

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- (a) to make better choices on the healthy options in vending machines (learning from ways in which this has been done in schools and hospitals) and in the cafes;
  - (b) to offer and advertise free water;
  - (c) to ensure leisure centres are able to sign-post children, young people and their families to public health services for advice on nutrition and healthy lifestyles;
  - (d) to provide, where possible, space for Public Health Directorate to operate in leisure centres to give advice and guidance;
- (g) the Public Health Directorate are invited to participate in developing relevant and appropriate pages on the mixit website (<http://www.medway.gov.uk/mixitindex.htm>) to provide young people with further information and sign-posting about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.

### 304 Quarter 1 Council Plan Monitoring 2010/2011

#### Discussion:

The Director of Children and Adults introduced the report advising that it was important to continue to look at these indicators as the Ofsted inspection regime and 'the best start in life' priority remained in place, until any national changes were agreed to replace them.

The Director highlighted that as a testimony to the work in schools, permanent exclusions remained low and Medway was one of the top performers nationally. The mediation service to prevent homelessness had been successful this quarter and 91% of mediation had been successful. At the end of the first quarter, 22 young people were in temporary accommodation.

Areas of higher risk were outlined as a sustained and continued rise in referrals across all types of safeguarding and the management of this continues to be a risk. A further area of concern was care leavers in education, employment or training and the current achievement of 22% required a lot further work.

Members asked about the number of people affected by the NI148 targets (Care leavers in education, employment or training) and officers responded that for the first quarter of this year this applied to nine eligible children so a slippage of one or two children could affect the figures dramatically.

#### Decision:

The committee agreed to note:

- (a) the two stage process outlined at section 3.5 for reviewing the Council Plan to endure it responded to national abolition of the Comprehensive

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Area Assessment and accurately reflect the Council's priorities and targets whilst taking into account resources to deliver them;

- (b) the proposal to change Council plan actions and measures highlighted in Appendix 2.

### 305 Barnsole Schools - location of new school buildings

#### Discussion:

The Head of School Organisation and Student Services introduced the report advising that following a decision to amalgamate the two schools, Members had requested that a feasibility study was carried out and reported to this committee. He also advised the differences between the five options outlined in the report. The main barrier to ease of amalgamation was that the schools were sited either side of a main road.

Members informed officers that they were very concerned at any proposal that continued the practice of pupils and staff having to cross the road several times a day. They also gave examples of the traffic problems and excessive speeds in Sturdee Avenue. They also voiced concern over the Medway-wide problems of some parents parking outside of schools, totally ignoring any highways signs or legal requirements. Officers responded that whatever scheme was developed, highways planning and the addition of traffic calming measures would be a very high priority for this location.

The majority of Members stated their strong opposition to the proposed design of two entrances opposite each other in Sturdee Avenue, as shown in Option A. They advised that the traffic outside the school was already bad and currently there was only one entrance onto Sturdee Avenue and another on to School Lane. For those reasons, members highlighted Option E as a possible alternative option. Other Members, however, felt that the educational benefits of option A outweighed these concerns, and felt that concerns about traffic could be managed. Members asked officers to re-consider Options A and E, taking into account their comments.

#### Decision:

The committee requested that:

- (a) officers re-consider Option A and Option E taking into account the committee's concerns over highways issues and children's safety;
- (b) a report is submitted to the next meeting including indicative costings for each option;
- (c) that an officer from the highways section is invited to attend the next meeting to answer possible highway safety questions.



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**Chairman**

**Date:**

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