

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee held on Wednesday, 30 January 2008 in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Mrs C Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mr A D Crowther, Mr J Curwood, Mr C Hart, Mr C Hibberd, Mr G A Horne MBE, Mr C J Law, Mr W V Newman, DL, Mr M J Northey, Mr M J Vye, Mrs A D Allen (Substitute for Mr R B Burgess), Mr T A Maddison (Substitute for Mr I T N Jones, DL) and Mr M J Harrison (Substitute for Mr R Tolputt)

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: Mr S Parr (Substitute for Dr D Wadman)

PARENT GOVERNORS:

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mr Bilous (substitute for Mr J Walden), Mr T Desmoyers-Davis, Mrs J Huckstep

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Badman, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education; Mrs M Hodges, Director Strategic Policy and Performance; Ms D Fitch, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

83. Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this meeting
(Item A3)

84. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board
(Item A4)

(1) In response to a question on Minute 78 it was confirmed that the legislative responsibility for the Kent Children's Trust Board rested with the Director of Children's Services and Mr Wells as the Lead Cabinet Member.

(2) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

85. Children Families and Education Budget Monitoring 2007/08
(Item B1)

(Item B1 - Mr K Abbott, Director, Finance and Corporate Services and Mr G Ward, Director, Resources were present for this item)

(1) Mr Abbott and Mr Ward answered questions from Members on the CFE Budget Monitoring report.

(2) Issues covered by Members included the following:-

- Page B1:5 – SEN Transport – in response to a question on how the survey of all users was undertaken, the Cabinet Member confirmed that all parents of SEN children had been written to directly explaining the options.
- In relation to the target in the budget of £870k for SEN transport an assurance was sought that access to schools for this vulnerable group would remain a high priority. The Cabinet Members confirmed that it was important to build in to the system as much flexibility as possible balanced with the needs of this vulnerable.
- In relation to the overspend of £104.6k for the out-of-hours service, Mr Abbott undertook to supply a written response to Mrs Angell.
- In response to a question on the Asylum Service and forecasted funding shortfall, Mr Abbott stated that there had been a seasonal variance in referrals. There were normally approximately 20 per month but in October this had increased to 70 a month and in January the figure was 67. This had created a pressure which looked like resulting in a £7m shortfall. Attempts were being made to secure government funding for this by working with other local authorities in a similar situation.
- Page B1:15 – Dartford Campus – in response to a question, Mr Ward stated that part of the challenge was that the scheme was the first of its type in Kent and had become more expensive than was first envisaged.
- Page B1:5 – In-house Residential Care overspend – Mr Abbott explained that part of the pressure related to secure accommodation and that 3 or 4 people in secure accommodation has stayed there all year which had led to this pressure.
- Regarding payments to BVI Providers for the free entitlement to 3 and 4 year olds funded from the DSG and the unallocated underspend, Mr Abbott confirmed that this would go back to the Schools Funding Forum and they would decide how it was to be redistributed.
- Page B1:3 – in relation to a question on Headship and ensuring that we had the best targeted approach, Mr Badman expressed concern regarding advertising costs in using the Times Education Supplement, of example this could result in a small primary school paying £5 to £10,000 for advertisements for Headteachers, other options were being considered. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that we had the best process for recruiting headteachers as leadership was key and was open to suggestions on how these processes might be improved.
- Page B1:18 – in response to a question on the delay in timescale for the processes to establish the Minster School (Academy), Mr Badman gave an explanation of the background to this slippage.

- In response to a question Mr Badman undertook to provide a written reply for Mrs Angell regarding the length of time that the Social Workers from Atlanta were required to stay.
- In response to a question on Looked after Children, Mr Badman confirmed that it was the ambition of the local authority to reduce the number of young people in its care and that the authority had been awarded a top rating for its adoption services.

(3) RESOLVED that Members of the Policy Overview Committee note the projected out-turn figures for the Directorate as at the second quarter.

86. Budget 2008/09 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2008-09 to 2010-11 (Item B2)

1. The Committee considered the Children, Families and Education Directorate's Draft Budget proposals set out in the Draft Budget 2008-09 and the Draft Medium Term Plan 2008-2011 and also a report circulated with the agenda which specifically related to the key areas of these documents for Children, Families and Education Directorate.

2. Mr Carter, Mr Dance, Mr Wells, Mr Badman, Mr Abbott and Mr Ward answered questions from Members which included the following issues:-

(a) Income 2008-09

3. In a response to a question from Mr Law on why the income for the two portfolios had not grown in comparison with the gross figure for funding, Mr Abbott briefly explained that one of the key issues with the Dedicated Schools Grant was that the creation of academies reduced this figure. Mr Abbott undertook to supply a detailed response to this.

(b) Council Tax

5. In response to a question from Mr Law, Mr Abbott explained that the majority of funding for education came from the Dedicated School's Grant and therefore there was no top up from the Council Tax.

(c) Dedicated Schools Grant

6. In response to questions from Mr Vye, Mr Abbott confirmed that in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant for the next three years, officers had been advising schools for over a year that this round of funding would be challenging. He stated that the teachers pay award would probably mean a 3%-4% increase on the pay bill which may vary locally. Mr Abbott went on to explain that the Ministerial Priorities money would be directed to schools in line with DCSF aims. He expressed the view that the funding for schools would be tighter in 2009/10 than during 2008/09 and he anticipated the need to work with schools to make sure that they did not go into deficit in the second year.

7. Mr Dance stated that the Schools Funding Forum was still considering how funds were to be divided and he undertook to let Members have the information from

the Forum when it was available. In relation to Ministerial Priorities, he stated that these were more flexible this year which was helpful.

8. Mr Badman expressed disappointment that the Ministerial Priorities funding was not hypothecated as it was an important tool to drive change.

(d) Strategic Management and Managing Directors Office and Democratic Services

9. In response to a question from Mr Hart, in relation to the figures for Strategic Management for 2008-09 of £1.8m on page 6 of the Budget Book and Managing Director's Office and Democratic Services of £1.949m on page 13 of the Budget Book, Mr Abbott explained that the Senior Management Team figure in the budget for Cabinet Members support, Occupational Health recharge to support schools. As part of the Revenue Budget Medium Term Plan process, officers were always looking for options for savings and as part of the normal monitoring process, these back office areas were particularly kept under review.

10. Mr Wells stated that Members had to bear in mind the size of the educational operation which was run and supported in Kent. He stated that he believed that in relation to the size of the budget, the figure for strategic management was not out of proportion.

(e) Development Opportunities

11. In response to a question from Mr Newman relating to how much of Capital Receipts arising from the sale of school land went to the school. Mr Ward explained that 100% of the money made from these sales (excluding fees and charges) went to the specific school to reinvest. He informed Members that in the past schools had the luxury of being able to borrow money from the local authority to enable them to replace facilities before the disposal of land took place. This was in effect an interest free loan to the school. There was now an expectation that if money needed to be borrowed in relation to the scheme, interest would be charged to the school or the local authority as relevant.

(f) Sponsorship of Academies

12. In response to a question from Mr Newman, Mr Ward referred Members to page 11 of the Budget Book which listed the different levels of sponsorship for the academies.

13. In response to a question from Mr Maddison on Dartford College Campus and the joint working between the Children, Families and Education Directorate and Communities Directorate in relation to the youth facility remaining on the site, Mr Carter confirmed that the new school would be happy to share their facilities when they were completed. He stated that 100% of the capital receipt from the Youth Centre site would go to Communities Directorate. It had been difficult to find a solution for the Youth and Community Centre and therefore the development of the school had to go ahead without this being resolved.

(g) Broadband Connectivity

14. In response to a question from Mr Harrison, Mr Ward confirmed that the Government grant for Broadband Connectivity had changed and it was no longer

necessary for matched funding to be provided. Funding had been made available to the authority to offer a core free broadband package to all schools. KCC had decided that to offer all schools a free core broadband service with the option to pay extra for more capacity. Therefore, to the school this level of service was provided free by KCC utilising a Government grant of approximately £5m per annum.

(h) Events Officer

15. In response to a question from Mr Harrison, on the dedicated events office support that the Directorate had rather than using the Corporate Events team, Mr Badman gave details of the level of conference's that the Directorate supported which required dedicated support.

(i) Academy Projects – Page 11 – Budget Book

16. In response to a question from Mr Desmoyers-Davis, Mrs Hodges replied that the process for establishing an academy was defined by the DCSF and no decision would be made on the establishment of any academy until the consultation and feasibility process had been carried out. There was no guarantee that the academy would be established until the Minister actually signed the funding agreement. Mr Ward stated that as the authority was aware of various proposals to establish academies that were going through their feasibility stage and therefore it was prudent to include provision for these in the budget.

(j) Portfolio Plans

17. In response to Mrs Angell, Mr Wells stated that he would look with his Cabinet colleague at ensuring that reference to the Every Child Matters outcomes, was reflected in both of the CF&E portfolio statements in the Medium Term Plan.

(k) Children Centres/Sure Start Funding

18. In response to a question from Mrs Angell relating to funding for the nine existing Sure Start Centres, Mr Wells stated that the original nine Sure Start Centres were well funded by Government and KCC was currently in a transition period of moving to a large number of children's centres which would not so generously funded as the original Centres. Mr Badman stated that as there were other children's centres in the area of the original Sure Start Centres, it was appropriate to spread the funding across all of the centres which would deliver integrated services including, for example, advice from the Department of Works and Pensions. Mr Badman mentioned that the Council had put £7m into the budget in addition to the Capital Grant received from Government to provide children's centres

19. RESOLVED

(1) that the Budget 2008-09 and Medium Term Plan 2008-09 to 2010-11 for the Children, Families and Education Directorate be noted along with the responses made to the questions from Members.

87. Half Year Monitoring

(Item B3)

(1) Members considered a report which summarised the 2007/08 CFE Half Year Monitoring results for the KCC Annual Plan 2007-08, the Annual Business Unit

Operating Plans, the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and included the Managing Director's summary of progress to date. Officers answered questions from Members.

(2) RESOLVED that the report and comments made by Members be noted;

88. Directors Update (oral report)

(Item B4)

(1) Mr Badman gave a presentation and answered Members' questions on the following issues:-

- Poverty
- NEETS & Young Adult Unemployment
- Timetable for the development of Local Children's Services Partnership
- Kent Children' Trust – Governance
- 14 – 19 education
- Learning Skills Council

(2) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the presentation be noted; and
- (b) a Members Briefing on the Children's Plan be arranged.

89. The Kent SACRE Annual Report (2006-2007)

(Item B5)

(1) Ms Draycott and Mr Bristow, Chairman of SACRE, answered questions on the work of Kent Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and key developments in the field of religious education and collective worship.

(2) Members' questions covered issues such as:-

- collective worship in schools;
- the RE curriculum in Voluntary Aided Church Schools;
- the social, racial harmony and cohesion agenda;

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Kent SACRE Annual Report 2006-2007 and the key developments being taken forward by the Kent SACRE be noted; and
- (b) the work of the Kent SACRE be endorsed.

90. Kent Children's Trust Draft Parent Support Strategy

(Item B6)

(1) Mrs White invited questions and comments from Members on the draft Parent's Support Strategy which had been developed on behalf of the Kent Children's Trust Board which sat under the Children and Young People's Plan. The

draft was intended for professionals working with families and currently work was going on to produce an Executive Summary and a parent-friendly version.

(2) Members asked questions and made comments around the following areas:-

- Page B6:19 – attention was drawn to the welcomed expanded access of the parent’s consortium but concern was expressed about the huge resource issue that this would create for a voluntary organisation and that support would be necessary.
- Page B6:20 –reference to “Free” Transport from the Freedom Pass”, it should be made clear that there is a £50.00 administration fee.
- Page B6:32 – it was agreed that Members would be sent further information on the national development of 'Parent Know How' when it became available.
- Page B6:6 – the issues of ensuring that children could access an NHS dentist was mentioned.
- The emphasis on fathers within the document was welcomed.
- It was noted that the parent-friendly version would be brought back to the Policy Overview Committee.
- The issue of how effective scrutiny engagement would take place within the local Children’s Service Partnership. It was noted that Mr Vye and Mr Hart were being invited to join the Kent Children’s Trust.
- Page B6:23 – it was important to ensure that we could evidence base or provide examples for the statement in the final bullet point.
- Page B6:28 – it was pointed out that the diagram was difficult to read. It was noted that this diagram would not be appearing in the parent-friendly version.

(3) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the development of the draft strategy and the views put forward by Members to inform the final version be noted; and
- (b) that it be noted that the parent-friendly version of this document would be circulated to Policy Overview Committee Members.

91. The Draft Strategy For Early Education and Childcare *(Item B7)*

(1) The Committee considered KCC’s Draft Strategy for Early Years Education and Child Care as part of the consultation process. To inform its development, comments and views of Members were sought. The questions asked and views expressed by Members included the following:-

- B7:7 – concern was expressed that long hours spent in Early Years settings may not be good for children. It was important that childcare provided was good quality and sensitive to the needs of the child and that there was a balance between the amount of time a child spent in a childcare setting and helping parents to work to lift them out of poverty.
- It was confirmed that in general the same organisations were represented on the Kent Children’s Board and the Kent Early Years, Childcare and extended Services Board (EYCESB). However the representatives on the Kent Children’s Trust Board tended to be from Chief Executive level whereas the representatives on the EYCESB tended to be more operational.
- It was confirmed that the draft was currently out for three months’ consultation and when all the comments were received, the final document would be produced and would be put forward to be formally adopted by the County Council during the Autumn of 2008.
- The importance of provision catering for diversity of children was emphasised.
- B7:43 – Mr Bristow requested a consultation question around “wants and need”.
- It was confirmed that the final version would be brought back to Members later in the year.
- B7:1 – it was suggested that the start of the Strategy should include a brief summary of the aims of the Strategy.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the development of the draft strategy and the comments made by Members be noted.
- (b) the amended strategy be circulated to members of the POC prior to its approval.
- (c) when more information on developing the flexibility of provision becomes available it would be brought to Members.

92. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children and Young Peoples Health in Kent
(Item B8)

(1) Ms Wiles presented a report which informed the Committee of the work undertaken jointly by KCC and Health on developing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children and Young People’s Health in Kent. The document would be used to support planning and commissioning at both County and locality level by the Kent Children’s Trust and demonstrated a developing partnership between Health and KCC. Ms Wiles undertook to let Members have the web address for the document.

(2) RESOLVED that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment be noted and its use as a tool to support the development of the Kent Children's Trust, and the commissioning of locality based children's services be endorsed.

93. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board held on 5 December 2007

(Item B9)

(1) Mrs Allen, Chairman of the Children's Champions Board presented the Minutes and reminded Members of their corporate parent responsibility. Mrs Allen highlighted an event that the Children's Champions Board had recently held with Looked After Children which gave them an opportunity to express their views of the system. Mrs Allen stated that it was hoped that there would be a presentation to full County Council on child pornography.

(2) It was agreed that Members would be supplied with information on the funding specifically targeted at Looked after Children as part of the pledge.

(3) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 be noted.

94. Select Committee - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated Members on the Select Committee Topic Review Programme.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the plans to monitor the recommendations of the PSHE Select Committee recommendations be noted; and

(b) the update on the topic review work programme be noted.