

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of A meeting of the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 25 March 2008.

PRESENT: Mr C J Capon (Chairman), Mrs C Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mr D L Brazier, Mr R B Burgess, Mr A D Crowther, Mr J Curwood, Mr C Hart, Mr C Hibberd, Mr C J Law, Mr W V Newman, DL, Mr R Tolputt and Mr M J Vye

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: Rupert Bristow and Simon Parr (Substitute for Dilys Wadman)

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms J Wainwright, Director Commissioning (Specialist Services) and Ms D Fitch, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

94. Rupert Bristow

The Chairman informed the Committee that this would be the last meeting that Mr Bristow would attend as the representative of the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education as he would be retiring shortly. He thanked Mr Bristow for the contribution he had made to Education in Kent and wished him a very happy retirement.

95. Minutes of the meeting

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment on page 48 – last line of paragraph 11:

“.....interest would be charged to the school or the Local Authority as relevant.”

96. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board

(Item A4)

(1) Mrs Allen, Chairman of the Children's Champions Board presented the Minutes of the meeting on 12 March 2008 and drew Members attention to the £1.5 million required to carry out Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

(2) Ms Wainwright gave an explanation of the reason for this figure for CRB checks which related to the need to carry out checks on a 3 yearly basis and also the increase in the number of people requiring enhanced checks as a result of the establishment of “contact point”.

(3) Ms Wainwright undertook to ensure that Mr Law was supplied with information from Social Care colleagues about the circumstances in which they would use an authorised practitioner (Minute no 2(g) refers).

(4) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board held on 12 March be noted.

97. Children Families and Education Budget Monitoring 2007/08

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

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the projected outturn figures for the Children, Families and Education Directorate as at the third quarter.

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

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

- Page B16 – Redundancy costs – In response to a question from Mr Tolputt, about redundancy cost which arose as a result of schools becoming academies, Mr Abbott explained that whilst academies were no longer the responsibility of KCC the Government would top slice a share of KCC's budget to fund the redundancies.
- Mr Abbott stated that once it had been rolled out across the County, he would expect the Freedom Pass to a saving in due course.
- In response to a question on the overspend on redundancy costs associated with closing schools Mr Abbott confirmed that these costs were planned for and estimated final cost could not be established until talks had been held with the staff concerned. Also some academies had been fast tracked which had had an impact on this figure.
- Mr Ward confirmed that the capital strategy took account of the Primary School Strategy. The Primary School Strategy had resulted in school closures and amalgamations requiring schools not being used to be secured in accordance with health and safety provisions.
- In response to a request from Mr Newman for an explanation of the projected variance in the spend on Crockenhill Primary School Mr Ward stated that the pre-tender estimates were as good as it was possible for them to have been. However, he highlighted the impact of international factors affecting for example the price of steel. When tenders came in with such a large variance above estimates officers looked at how to reduce costs.
- Mr Abbott confirmed that the claw back rules for schools were that primary schools could retain 8% of their annual budgets and secondary schools 5% although it was possible to retain more under specific criteria.
- In response to a question, Mr Abbott stated that the 16 + budget was in deficit. The authority had a no deficit policy and therefore discussions had been held various stages. As the deficit had been identified support had been put in place from KCC staff to get a plan to recover and pay the deficit, to achieve an in-year surplus within a three year period.
- In response to a question from Mrs Angell, Mr Abbott explained the full cost of the underspend of around £1.2m on payments to BVI providers for three

- and four year olds. This had reduced from the previous figure as there had been some increase in take-up.
- Mr Abbott gave an explanation of the corporate asylum reserve of £1.122,000 and confirmed that this was not additional money from Council Tax. It was the provision made in 2004/05. No provision was made in 2005/06 as there was an expectation that the Government would fund this.
 - Mr Abbott confirmed that the difficulty in recruiting educational psychologists was being faced by all local authorities. KCC had done what they could to alleviate this by developing training programmes but it was a national problem.
 - Mr Ward, in response to a question from Mrs Angell, explained that the ICT Refresh Programme was part of KCC's three year rolling programme, which provided officers with a basic desk top set up and monitor. However, the due to the nature of their work Advisory Service required additional equipment for use in their various work settings.
 - In response to a question from Mr Hart on seeking a clarification of how KCC set the target levels for Looked After Children Mr Wells replied that KCC's approach was to try not to take a child into care and to manage risk out in the community.
 - In response to a question from Mr Vye, Mr Abbott stated that the money for the 16 plus pledge was coming via a specific grant and therefore was secure. KCC was also putting in money to top it up.

(4) Mr Abbott undertook to supply the information on the following:-

- Direct Payments
- The deficit for 16+
- Leaving care underspend (and the cutting of two FTE posts)
- Proportion of LAC placed outside of KCC's area but within the geographical county and similarly the number placed by Medway Council in to the KCC area

(5) RESOLVED that Members of the Children Families and Education Policy Overview Committee are asked to note the projected outturn figures for the Directorate as at the third quarter.

98. Directors update (oral report)

(Item B2 – oral report)

(1) Ms Wainwright, on behalf on Mr Badman, gave a presentation to update Member on the Kent Children's Trust. The presentation focused on the introduction of Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSP's).

(2) Members asked questions which included the following issues:-

- In response to various questions from Members Ms Wainwright explained that there were staff that had been put "at risk". These were the existing Local Education Officers and existing Joint Commissioning Officers. The number of posts were being reduced from 31 to 23 although support would be needed for the Local Children's Services Partnership Managers. The new posts would require funding to be reinvested to support them.

- In response to a question about the Consortia, Ms Wainwright explained that the 12 District Children's Consortia had brought together some new partnership arrangements. However, the funding available for Children's Consortium (Performance Reward Grant) had ceased. All Consortia were aware of the change and work was in hand to ensure that good practise was not lost.
- Members discussed the perceived advantages and disadvantages of having 23 or 12 LCDPs.
- It was confirmed that the Local Boards would be the forum for discussion with Members on the LCSPs to reflect the District Council areas.
- In response to a point raised by Mr Bristow, Ms Wainwright agreed that due to the changes taking place it would be timely to issue a leaflet or information to refresh contact details.

(3) RESOLVED That the presentation be noted and that a full report be submitted to the June meeting of the POC on the final evaluation of the Pathfinders and that there be a regular update on LCSP's POC.

99. SEN Transport and transport Policy

(Item B3 – Mr C Feltham, Head of Additional Educational Needs and Resources, and Mr S Bagshaw, Head of Admissions and Transport were present for this item)

(1) The Committee received a report which provided information relating to SEN Transport and the review of Transport Policy following amendments to the legal framework included in the Education & Inspections Act 2006.

(2) The questions issues raised by Members included the following:-

- Mr Feltham confirmed that KCC officers did look at the way that other local authorities operated their transport policies and would bring Members to attention any innovative ideas that could be used in Kent.
- In response to a question Ms Wainwright explained that the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in effect removed the distinction between Special Educational Needs and mainstream school transport. She believed that this would not lead to additional expenditure but a fairer and coherent system across Kent.
- In response to a question about extending the Freedom Pass to escorts Ms Wainwright explained how it was planned to do this. The first working hypothesis was that any young person eligible for an escort for transport to school would also be eligible for a Freedom Pass for their escort. Although some young people did not currently have escorts as they travelled in individual taxis it was acknowledged that they might require an escort for weekend bus travel. She explained that it was anticipated that there would be a photo ID card for two escorts per young person. It was acknowledged that escorts may need to make four trips to take a child with SEN to their activity and that their escort pass could be used for return trips when they were not in the company of the young person.

- In relation to a question on transport for young people post-16 Mr Feltham confirmed that a young person with a Statement was supported up to the academic year that they had their 19th birthday.
- The point was made that the Freedom Pass was not the answer for everybody and that some people would still require free home-to-school transport as they could not afford the Freedom Pass.

(3) RESOLVED That the new duties on Local Authorities be noted and the proposal to draw up a new single Kent Transport Policy for Children, Families and Education be endorsed.

100. Personal Social Health and Economic Education - Strategy to Support Schools and Settings

(Item B4 – Ms S Lewis, Policy Manager and Mr A Foster, Lead Curriculum Advisor were present for this item)

(1) The Committee were given the opportunity, as part of the process for the Strategy, to comment on the document and to ask questions of officers.

(2) Members made the following points:-

- In relation to sex and relationship education Mr Bristow stated that some school policies were based on the Kent template. However, the template that he had seen did not have reference to marriage as an ideal and he did not believe it had enough emphasis on the importance of families. He also stated that the end of the document it would be wise to include the diocesan authorities as a contact point.
- It was mentioned that PHSE was about fostering self-confidence and developing relationships with communities. However, there was a tendency for schools to focus on obtaining good exam results.
- In response to a question about specific teacher training for PHSE Mr Foster confirmed that this was an issue. He had been in discussions with Christ Church University who were keen to support the strategy and put something into their programme for final year students. Currently PSHE training was carried out in service.
- It was mentioned that the addition of financial education within PSHE was an important positive step forward.
- The importance of having careers guidance information in Year 3 was emphasised.
- It was highlighted that it was very important for parents to be involved with this strategy and to be able exercise an opt-out of parts for PSHE if they wished.

(3) RESOLVED That:-

- (a) the development of a PSHE Strategy to support schools and settings be noted ;
- (b) the comment made by Members on the content of the Strategy be noted;
- (c) following the consultation exercise the revised strategy be brought back to next appropriate meeting of this Committee so that Members can consider how they might engage their local schools and communities in relation to

the strategy and support officers and partners with the implementation of the Strategy.

101. Kent Admissions Arrangements for Entry to School 2009

(Item B5 – Mr Scott Bradshaw, Head of Admissions and Transport was present for this item)

(1) Mr Bagshaw submitted a report which reminded Members that on 6 February 2008 Cabinet had determined the Admissions Arrangements to Primary and Secondary schools for 2009 entry. Some Admissions Authorities within Kent had objected to the proposed admissions arrangements and as a result KCC did not have agreement on coordination. In these circumstances it fell to the Secretary of State to impose a scheme and the DCFS were presently conducting a consultation with a view to taking a decision on the scheme by the end of May 2009.

(2) The issues covered included the following:-

- Mr Bagshaw, in response to a question, explained that there was a requirement for Kent to share information with other neighbouring authorities as there were 2,000 cross border movements.
- In response to a question Mr Bagshaw explained that the revised timing of the test had been established working back from the closing date for the Common Application Form. This would ensure that parents make their choice based on test results.
- Mr Bagshaw emphasised that officers were trying to give parents test information prior to them making a choice of secondary school but in order to do that it was necessary to move the test date.
- Questions were asked in relation to the new appeals code which meant that Members could no longer attend appeal hearings with parents as it was perceived that they may have a conflict of interest if it was a local authority school. Mr Bagshaw referred to the Choice Adviser Service which was an advice and help line for parents. It was not intended to replace the Members' role in relation to giving advice and support outside of hearings to parents. It was still possible for Members to advise parents informally but they could not attend the actual hearing with the parent's.
- Concern was expressed by Mr Parr that the Admissions Forum in Kent had not been given adequate time to discuss this issue and he did not feel that the Admissions Forum's views had been fully taken into account. Mr Bagshaw replied that papers were taken to the Admissions Forum and time was allocated to look at them. However, it was important that papers went forward quickly to the Secretary of State once it became clear that consensus could not be reached. He stated that opinion at the Forum was also divided on this issue.
- In response to a question from Mrs Angell, Mr Bagshaw confirmed that the DCFS could require KCC to go back to its original January testing system but he did emphasise that the proposal to move the date of testing forward took account of the schools admissions code.
- Mr Bristow asked if, for admissions arrangements the date of appointment could be used as date of residence. Mr Bagshaw advised that he believed there were some provisions of this nature for service personnel within the admissions code and that he and would seek to establish if similar arrangements for the clergy are appropriate.

(3) RESOLVED That:-

- (a) the developing situation in relation to the admission arrangements in Kent be noted.
- (b) the questions asked by Members and the responses be noted.

102. 14 - 19 Developments

(Item B6 – Ms Sue Dunn, Head of 14-24 Innovation Unit was present for this item)

(1) The Committee received a report which provided them with an update on significant 14 19 developments across the county. This included the continuing expansion of the 14-16 vocational programme, 14 19 diploma roll out, apprenticeships and Information, Advice & Guidance and Careers Education.

(2) The issues raised by Members included the following:-

- Ms Dunn confirmed that she was involved with the Economic and Regeneration Strategy and there was also involvement from the 14 24 Innovation Board. The Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Supporting Independence and Environment Highways and Waste were also involved. Mr Badman was also Chairman of the Skills Board. Therefore the 14-19 strategies were well connected to regeneration.
- In response to a question about PSHE Ms Dunn stated that young people were given information, advice and guidance which included the curriculum offer in school. It was important that young people had information, advice and guidance and so that they could make informed life choices.
- Regarding the National Skills strategy Ms Dunn stated that KCC proposed to use Building Schools for the Future and skills academies to establish programmes for developing skills and were looking for the best training providers to bring young people up to level 2 and 3.
- In relation to a question on skills required to work in the nuclear industry Ms Dunn stated that she was interested in looking at energy in the broader sense and the skill sets required including specific construction issues that arose in relation to nuclear plants.
- Ms Dunn responded to a question from a Member in relation to the apprenticeship target in 2010 and stated that attempts were being made to engage with District Councils.
- In relation to the specialist skills required for careers education in schools and ensuring that teachers had these Mrs Dunn emphasised the importance of raising the profile of careers education in schools as this was a strand of work that could not be delivered exclusively by Connexions. She stated that the challenge was to diversify the secondary school curriculum and to make sure young people had the right guidance at the right time.
- In response to a question Mrs Dunn stated that she believed that the transport issue would be significantly resolved by the Freedom Pass and

that schools should ensure that pupils were able to access provision off site.

- In relation to the funding expectations raised in the White Paper Ms Dunn stated that this was unclear and it was important that KCC contributed to the consultation process on this.
- In response to a question from Mr Hart, Mrs Dunn stated that the Building Schools for the Future programme would be specifically encouraged to use the maximum number of apprentices.
- In relation to a question on the engineering part of the curriculum Mrs Dunn stated that engineering apprentices had been directly offered places with British Aerospace.
- In relation to a question on what progress with young people who were NEETs (not in education employment or training) Ms Dunn stated that the 14-16 programme had more applied learning but a critical factor was enhanced advice and dedicated Connexions advisers with a robust programme to reduce NEETS. Areas such as Thanet were being targeted for this.
- In response to a question from Mr Vye relating the percentage and the profile of the cohort taking up vocational subjects Ms Dunn stated that the percentage of the cohort depended on the area. For example in Gravesend 25% of young people at Key Stage 4 opted for the new curriculum. In other areas the numbers were significantly lower. She had commissioned an academic piece of work to find out factors relating to the take up of vocational courses by young people.

(3) RESOLVED That the progress and priorities for 14-19 developments including expansion of the vocational programme and 14-19 diploma delivery by the 14-24 Innovation Unit be noted.

103. Surestart

(Item B7 – Mrs A Gamby, County Early Education and Childcare Officer was present for this item)

(1) The Committee considered this report which provided information regarding the approach to revenue funding for Sure Start Local Programmes (including Dartford) for 2008/9.

(2) In response to a question from a Member Mrs Gamby confirmed the following indicative allocations for 2008/09 based on 07/08 allocation:-

A	E
Cluster/LCSPS	Indicative Allocations for 2008/09 based on 07/08 Allocation %
Ashford 1	629,710
Shepway 1	645,453
Swale Urban	645,453
Dartford West	566,739

Dover	611,281
Canterbury City & Country	594,209
Gravesham	623,661
Thanet 1	604,575
Thanet 1	481,844
Totals	5,402,925

(3) RESOLVED That the report and the figures supplied at the meeting be noted.

104. Select Committees update

(Item C1)

(1) The report updated Members on the Select Committee Topic Review Programme including, the Select Committee on PSHE, the Select Committee Topic Review Programme and feedback on building capacity for Policy Overview Committees following the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 14 February 2008.

(2) RESOLVED that the report be noted.