

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, 3 June 2008.

PRESENT: Mr C J Capon (Chairman), Mrs C Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mr D L Brazier, Mr A D Crowther, Mr J Curwood, Mrs E Green, Mr C Hibberd, Mr G A Horne MBE, Mr I T N Jones, DL, Mr C J Law, Mr W V Newman, DL, Mr M J Northey, Mr J D Simmonds, Mr R Tolputt and Mr M J Vye.

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: Nigel Genders.

TEACHER ADVISERS: Trevor Desmoyers-Davies and John Walder.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Dance, Cabinet Member for Operation, Resources and Skills (CFE), Mr C Wells, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievements and Dr T R Robinson, Lead Member for Children, Families and Education; Mr K Abbot, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Mr G Ward, Director Resources, Mrs M Hodges, Director Strategy Policy and Performance and Mrs S Morris, Head of Strategic Planning and Review.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs C Singh, Democratic Services Officer.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

105. Membership Changes *(Item A1)*

RESOLVED that Mr R Bristow had resigned from this Committee and had been replaced by the Reverend Nigel Genders. Mrs B J Simpson and Mr C Hart had been replaced by Mr A H T Bowles and Mrs E Green respectively; be noted. Mr Capon welcomed them to the Committee.

106. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2008 *(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

107. Matters Arising

(1) In response to Minutes 98(2) bullet points 2, 3 and 5, Mr Wells advised that he would need to speak with Ms Wainwright and confirm what action had been taken. Mr Badman added that LCSP's, 23, overlap the commissioning structure. Not all of the new appointments had been made. The contact details of all these new appointments would be forwarded to the Committee once they had been made.

(2) RESOLVED that the new contact details of the new appointments be forwarded to the Committee Members.

108. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board held on 21 May 2008

(Item A5)

(1) The Draft Minutes of the Children's Champions Board were tabled at the meeting and Members were given the opportunity to read the Minutes as they were not available at the time of dispatching the papers.

(2) Mrs Allen, Chairman of the Children's Champions Board, presented the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2008 and drew Members attention to the "outlying programme for Corporate Parenting" briefing due to be held on Friday, 6 June 2008 and encourage Members to attend.

(3) RESOLVED that the draft Minutes of the Children's Champions Board held on 21 May 2008 be noted.

109. CFE Budget Monitoring 2007/08

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Abbott introduced the report advising that due to the timing of this meeting, meant that the detailed reports on the final outturn position for 1007/08 would be reported to the next meeting of this Committee once the 2007/08 accounts had been closed and audited, therefore this report provided a very brief update based upon the most recent March "exception" report. He was forecasting a break even.

(2) A response to a request Mr Abbott agreed to forward separately the results of the final outturn position to the Committee outside the meeting.

(3) In response to a question, Mr Abbott advised that schools needed to take early action before the third year in the budget showed a deficit as the consequences of delaying any action would mean a long time to recover.

(4) RESOLVED that the projected outturn figures for the directorate as at the March "exception report be noted.

110. Directors update (oral report)

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Badman gave a presentation to update Members on the National Children's Plan and academies as requested by the Committee, using overheads.

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

The Children's Plan

- The Committee congratulated Mr Badman and the officers and the JAR Inspection results.

- In response to a question on whether more resource should be given to secondary schools or primary schools to improve attainment, Mr Badman advised that research evidence to children said that the quality of teaching made a difference. What influenced teaching quality was the size of the class and support. Within Key Stage 1 there cannot be more than 30 children. He felt that this should be reduced to 20, which would mean a third increase to the Revenue Budget. In response to where this money could be found from, he explained that the Government put £20bn into Early Years education that had not reached who is was meant to reach. There was a huge difference of provision for local authority schools based and private and voluntary sector schools. In reception and Years 1 and 2 you would receive the greater value.
- Members felt that the children’s claim should be presented to all Members of the County Council.
- In response to a point raised regarding the transfer of funds from the Learning Skills Council (LSC’s) to the County Council and what role the LSC’s would have with academies, Mr Badman advised that the LSC’s were a consultation with a view based on 16 year old provision, there had never been any other response than positive. The Learning Skills Council Consultation “Raising Expectation Enabling the System to Deliver” was extended to 9 June 2008. There was a fear that this would not bring about a major change with the effect of 16 plus year olds funding transfer. Mr Badman agreed to forward the details of the consultation to the Committee.
- In response to comments on the problems with children with no language and the issue of whether television in children’s bedrooms was a form of abuse, Mr Badman said he shared concerns regarding television and inappropriate television programmes before the watershed but felt that the opinion of televisions in children’s bedrooms being abuse would be on thin ice.
- It was agreed following a question regarding the collaboration of the CFE Directorate and housing officers as they take an holistic look at families to safeguard children, that a report be submitted the POC meeting in September.
- In response to two questions on what strategies there were to make school governing bodies more effective and the French system that Mr Badman had described meant that parents who opted out would not receive benefits, Mr Badman advised that the French system with the introduction of a family book had resulted in a greater take up of children receiving inoculations. The general feelings of governors and the feedback from teachers was that the structure for governors was written in 1976 and the role had now evolved.

Academies Update

- Mr Badman advised that academies were independent and would be monitored by Ofsted and the academies Governing Body.

- A Member suggested that the impact of the academies on other neighbouring schools in the area needed to be monitored. Mr Badman responded that he did not expect any migration of pupils to the academies. He agreed to forward a list of the Kent academies to the Members of the Committee.
- In response to a question, Mr Badman explained that the issue of teaching staff in schools transferring to the academies who wished to resign was not fixed by KCC, it was an issue for the Headteacher and governors, the terms and conditions were the same for those teachers.
- In response to a question, Mr Hodges explained that the percentage of academies finance from sponsors was £2m which were put into an endowment fund.

(3) RESOLVED that the presentation and comments made by the Members be noted.

111. Children's Trust Pathfinder Evaluation

(Item B3)

(Mrs M Morris, Head of Strategic Planning and Review, and Mrs J Ackroyd, Trust Development Manager were present for this item)

(1) The Committee considered a report that set out the progress made in developing Kent Children's Trust arrangements and highlights the introduction of local children's services partnership from September 2008.

(2) Mrs Hodges tabled the final draft of "The Pathfinder Journey Sharing the Learning" and advised the Committee that comments could be made via e-mail.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted and further updates at future meetings be agreed.

112. KCC Annual Plan 2008/09

(Item B4)

(1) The Committee received a report which sets out the background and process for publishing the KCC Annual Plan 2008/09 and a copy of the latest draft for Members to consider and make any appropriate comments on.

(2) Members of the Committee made comments which included the following:-

- In response to a question, Mrs Morris advised that the Bullying Strategy was aimed at children in Kent schools; bullying incidents against staff would be recorded under the Respect and Dignity at work scheme.
- In response to a question, regarding target differentials Mrs Morris explained that some of the targets were driven by national targets others were set by KCC.
- The Members sought clarity as to why the table headed "Service Performance" on page 113 did not include the number of special education

needs tribunals as a formal target. Mrs Morris advised that this was not a national indicator.

- In response to a question, Mrs Morris advised that monitoring would be undertaken regarding who was using the children's centres. Once all the planned children centres were established they would meet the national criteria for accessibility and be available to all sections of the community (although in some rural areas of Kent this would be achieved through outreach work from the Children's Centres).
- A request was made and agreement was given to the results of Key Stage 2 for 2008 being forwarded to the Committee to consider the rate of improvement from 2007.
- In response to a request, Mrs Morris agreed to forward to the Committee details of how many extended schools there were in the County.

(3) RESOLVED that the arrangements for publishing and approving the KCC Annual Plan 2008/09 be noted.

113. National Indicator Set

(Item B5)

(1) The Committee considered a report that provided information on the development of the new National Indicator Set and in particular those indicators that fell into the remit of this Committee.

(2) The Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:-

- In response to concerns at the levels of achievement being kept at Key Stage 3, Mr Wells explained that this issue needed to be looked at carefully as the selective school system operating in Kent could distort the results.
- In response to a request, Mrs Morris agreed to forward details to the Committee of the number of Sure Start Children's Centres currently in existence and planned in Kent.

(3) RESOLVED that the comments made by the Members of the Committee and report be noted.

114. Risk Register for CFE

(Item B6)

RESOLVED that the current Risk Register for Kent Children Families and Education Directorate as agreed by the Governors and Audit Committee on 7 March 2008 be noted.

115. Participation and Consultation report

(Item B7)

- (1) The Committee received a report on the developments regarding participation and consultation with the public.
- (2) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

116. Building Schools for the Future *(Item B8)*

- (1) The Committee were given the opportunity to consider the current position with regard to Kent BSF Programme.
- (2) The Committee was advised that Mr Vye, Mrs Angell and Mr Dance, Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement had met and that comments made by the Audit and Governance Committee in July would be discussed at a further meeting of the Group. The outcome of these discussions would be reported at the next meeting of this Committee.
- (3) The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:-

- In response to concerns that the general re-build, refurbishment expectations would mean school fields being sacrificed to pay for the physical and technical infrastructure programme. Mr Ward explained that ICT was a national requirement for BSF. ICT would be by way of outsourced services. How expensive this became would be relevant upon whether it was to be a 24 hour, 7 day per week access, to be provided on site with the certainty the repairs were made within 20 minutes. There would be no disposal of paying fields to finance this. Any contract of £6m both parties were ensuring everything was secure over 25 years, and everything would be detailed in the contract.

- (4) RESOLVED that the comment made a Member of the Committee and the report be noted,

117. National Year for Reading *(Item B9)*

- (1) The Committee considered a report that highlighted the process in planning for the NYR in Kent and its significance to the FE Directorate and encouraged Members to champion NYR.
- (2) The Committee were given the opportunity to make suggestions to inform the planning of the NYR, which included the following:-
 - School Library books were generally aimed at the GCSR curriculum, could the schools be encouraged to supply books on hobbies, sport and biographies for example.
 - There was a need for large print books for people with visual impairments and dyslexia.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Committee support for the NYR in particular recognition of the importance of literacy skills in Kent's economy and community wellbeing be noted;
- (b) the Members suggestions in paragraph 2 above be noted; and
- (c) the "Legacy Beyond 2008" including the role of the CFE Directorate would play now and in the future be noted.

118. Select Committees update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report that gave an update on the Select Committees for Alcohol Misuse, Accessing Democracy and Autism.

(2) The Democratic Services Officer gave a verbal update on the outcomes of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee meeting held on 23 May 2008, as follows:-

- An additional Research Officer would be recruited for the Policy Overview Committees, interviews to be held on 5 July 2008;
- Interviews were due to be held to replace the Research Officer for Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2008;
- Agreement had been given to the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager to prepare a business case for a Democratic Services Officer;
- Agreement had been given for the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager to prepare a bid for a graduate from the Graduate Programme;
- Agreement had been given for "Provision of Activities for Young People" to be next Select Committee Review;
- The Environment and Regeneration bid for a Select Committee on Future Rail Services in Kent, which whilst the Committee recognised its importance could not be resourced from existing resources. The Committee had asked to explore with Environment and Regeneration and the Leader how a focused piece of work around the most immediate issues of this review, i.e. influencing the passenger timetable/gateway stations might be supported. A recent appointment had been made within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate and some successful candidates were asked whether they would be able to support this piece of work. Environment and Regeneration would fund this position. The research and writing of the report was still to be resolved.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and oral update be noted.