

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 Thursday, 13 November 2008 in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

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

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: The Reverend N Genders

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mr T Desmoyers-Davies, Mrs J Huckstep, Miss S Kemsley and Mr J Walder

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, Mr P B Carter, Mr M C Dance and Mr L B Ridings

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Abbott (Director, Finance & Corporate Services), Mrs J Ackroyd (Trust Development Manager), Mr G Badman (Managing Director of Children, Families and Education), Mr P Brightwell (Policy & Performance Manager - Looked After Children), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview)), Ms P Harris (Head of Service), Mrs M Hodges (Director Strategy Policy & Performance), Mr A Mort (Policy Manager), Mrs C Parsons (Director, Standards And Achievement), Mrs J Wainwright (Director Commissioning (Specialist Services)), Mr G Ward (Director Resources), Mrs K Weiss (Head Of Policy & Performance) and Mr D Whittle (Policy Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

135. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2008 (Item A3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

136. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board - 24 September 2008 (Item A4)

(1) Mrs Allen, Chairman of the Children's Champions Board, presented the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2008 and drew Members attention to the issue of child trafficking. She also mentioned the meeting with Looked after Children which had been held at Oakwood House and thanked Mrs Hodges for making funds available for this from her budget.

(2) RESOLVED that the draft Minutes of the Children's Champions Board held on 24 September 2008 be noted.

137. Financial Quarterly Monitoring Report 2008/09

(Item B1)

(1) The Committee received the second report on the forecast outturn against budget for the Children Families and Education (CFE) Directorate for 2008/09. It also includes a further update on the position on schools as requested by Members.

(2) In response to questions about the clawing back of reserves held by schools above 5%, Mr Abbott explained that KCC did look at why the school had built up the reserve and recognised that due to pooled budgets and the need to accrue funds over a number of years that these additional reserves were necessary in some cases. However, he pointed out that schools held nearly £20m in reserves for unspecified purposes. Also schools had been given 18 months notice to enable them to spend additional reserves wisely.

(3) Mr Ward confirmed that the Kent had received £32m for the Primary Capital Programme.

(4) RESOLVED that the projected outturn figures for the directorate and the position on schools be noted.

138. Medium Term Plan - 2009-10 to 2011-12

(Item B2)

(1) The Committee had before it an update report on the Autumn Budget Statement report to Cabinet on 15 September 2008 and any later announcements by Government departments. This was a strategic summary of the service enhancements and savings proposals for the next three years for the functions that the committee overviews.

(2) The Chairman invited the Committee to consider whether they wished to establish an Informal Member Group to look in detail at this report and to report back to the January meeting of the Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that an Informal Member Group (IMG) be established to look in detail at the Children, Families and Education Directorates MTP, the Membership of the IMG to be Mr Brazier, Mr Newman, Mr Northey and Mr Wells.

139. Managing Director's update

(Item B3)

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

- Policy and Democracy, including policy led budgets
- Challenges for the C, F & E Directorate

- Comprehensive Area Assessment
- Children's Trust

(2) Following the recent case of Baby P at Haringey, Mr Badman, Ms Weiss and Mr Brightwell reassured Members in relation to the way that KCC dealt with Child Protection matters, and the management safety procedures, including the Safeguarding Board, and answered specific questions from Members.

(3) The Chairman thanked Mr Badman for all that he had done for the children of Kent and asked that he send a copy of this final report to the Leader, Cabinet Members and the Chief Executive.

(4) On behalf of the Committee the Chairman also express thanks to Mrs Hodges and Mrs Parsons for the contribution that they had made to the work of the Committee

(5) RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

140. October Report to Cabinet Members 2008 Annual Update on the Performance of Kent Schools in 2008

(Item B4)

(1) The Committee considered at report which has been prepared to provide an annual update on the performance of Kent Schools in 2008. Mrs Parsons answered questions from Members.

(2) Mrs Angell asked that thanks be recorded to Mrs Parsons for the support that she had given to the Members Monitoring Group.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted

141. Update on Local Children's Services Partnership (LCSPs) Sub-Committee

(Item B5)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the current situation regarding the establishment of a LCSP Sub-Committee and also gives feedback from an informal meeting to discuss the early progress of LCSPs.

(2) In response to a question Mrs Ackroyd explained that the Sub-Committee would provide a regular opportunity for Members to look in detail at the LSCP's on an area basis including the local Children and Young Peoples plans for the Partnership. If a Member wanted to look at a particular plan she would share a copy on request.

(3) Mrs Ackroyd stated that the County Council when setting up the new Sub-Committee would decide whether to extend its membership to include Church and Teacher Advisor representatives.

(4) RESOLVED that the progress made to establish the LCSP Sub-Committee and the informal meeting of Members be noted.

142. Children and Young People of Kent Survey (NFER) 2008

(Item B6)

(1) The Committee considered a report which provided information about the 2008 Children & Young People Survey completed by NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research).

(2) Mr Mort answered questions from Members, on a number of issues included the perception of being bullied as opposed to the actuality and the effect of disruptive behaviour in the classroom on other pupils.

(3) RESOLVED that (a) the summary findings from the 2008 children and young people survey be noted ; and

(b) a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the support given by KAS and the Attendance and Behaviour Services to Head Teachers and class teachers in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

143. 21st Century Skills Agenda

(Item B7)

(1) Circulated with the papers for the meeting was the 'Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities' policy discussion paper which had been commissioned by the Leader and Chief Executive and prepared by Corporate Policy and the 14-24 Innovation Unit. The paper analysed the key skills and welfare issues facing young people aged 14-24. The paper provided the basis for a series of seminars held by KCC at all three main political party conferences in Autumn 2008.

(2) Mr Carter, Leader of the Council, attended for this item and set out the background to the production of this document, he informed Members that the next piece of work would be to look at whether the funding for 14/19 year olds was adequate.

(3) Mr Carter, Ms Smith and Mr Whittle answered questions from Members on this document, which included the following:-

- The success of vocations centres in helping young people to go from training into work.
- The importance of engaging with employers was emphasised.
- The numbers of young people dropping out of graduate courses before completion, and the need to encourage employers to support young people to gain degrees and professional qualifications whilst working.
- Issue of schools not making young people aware of all the options open in addition to going into the sixth form.
- The importance of showing that vocational education is a choice for all young people no matter what their academic ability.

(4) Members of the Policy Overview Committee are asked to note the policy discussion paper 'Skills for the 21st Century: No More Wasted Opportunities'.

144. SEN Transport and Transport Policy

(Item B8)

(1) Mrs Wainwright answered questions from Members on an update report on progress of the review of the Transport Policy, some on-going work to inform the Policy and identified some potential budget pressures. She advised that she was not aware of whether the high court judgement referred to in the report had been made yet.

(2) Mr Tolputt requested information on whether we were tied into contracts for transport that had been fixed with the price of fuel was at its highest and how often these contracts were renewed, Mr Harlock would be asked to supply this.

(3) Mrs Wainwright also reported that there had been an increase in reputable volunteers providing home to school transport for young people for a mileage allowance. She confirmed that these volunteers were CRB checked, it was hoped to encourage more volunteers to come forward. This gave young people the opportunity to have a regular volunteer driver rather than a number of taxi drivers.

(4) RESOLVED that the progress made on the Transport Policy, the outstanding matters and the potential budget pressures that may arise that would increase the expected spend be noted.

145. Select Committee update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the work of the Select Committee on Provision of Activities for Young People.

(2) RESOLVED that the update on the work of the Select Committee on the Provision of Activities for Young People be noted.