

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 Friday, 16 January 2009 in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

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, Mrs T Dean (Substitute for Mr M J Vye), Mr R W Gough, Mrs E Green, Mr W V Newman, DL, Mr M J Northey, Mr J D Simmonds and Mr R Tolputt

CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES: The Reverend N Genders and
The Reverend Canon J L Smith

TEACHER ADVISERS: Mr T Desmoyers-Davies and Mr J Walder

ALSO PRESENT: Mr L B Ridings, Mrs A D Allen, Mr M C Dance and
Dr T R Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Abbott (Interim Joint Managing Director, CFE), Mrs J Ackroyd (Trust Development Manager), Mr P Brightwell (Policy & Performance Manager - Looked After Children), Dr I Craig (Interim Joint Managing Director, CFE), Mrs P Draycott, Ms S Dunn (Head of 14-24 Innovation Unit), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview)), Mrs S Morris (Head of Strategic Planning & Review), Mr G Ward (Director Resources), Mrs K Weiss (Head of Policy & Performance) and Mrs J Wainwright (Director Commissioning (Specialist Services))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

146. Minutes of the meeting - 13 November 2008

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2008 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

147. Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Champions Board - 3 December 2008

(Item A4)

(1) Mrs Allen, Chairman of the Children's Champions Board, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2008.

(2) In response to a question from Mrs Angell, Mrs Weiss confirmed that the Kent Safeguarding Children Board was currently being chaired by the Vice Chairman, and a new Chairman would be elected at their meeting on 9 February 2009. She also

confirmed that the fostering services annual external inspection had shown that the service was performing well and had met all requirements.

(3) Ms Wainwright gave an explanation of how the educational psychologist service defined a “critical incident” and a “sad event”.

(4) Mrs Allen referred to a critical incident that had occurred in her areas and expressed appreciation for the care and support that had been given in the school.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Children’s Champions Board held in 3 December 2008 be noted.

148. Notes of the meeting of the IMG on the Medium Term Plan - 20 November 2008

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the notes of the meeting of the IMG on the MTP held on 20 November 2009 be noted.

149. Children, Families and Education Budget Monitoring 2008/09

(Item B1)

(1) The Committee received the third report on the forecast outturn against budget for the Children Families and Education (CFE) Directorate for 2008/09. It also included a further update on the movement in schools’ reserves based on their half yearly monitoring returns.

(2) Mr Abbott answered questions from Members which included the following:-

- In relation to the reduction in spending on mainstream schools Mr Abbott confirmed that this was partly a result of a reduction in the number of pupils but also there were savings from the Freedom Pass which were reflected in the Medium Term Plan.
- Mrs Dean requested a briefing on the net savings/costs of the Freedom Pass when it has been rolled out across the county.
- It was explained that the different categories for Asylum seekers was based on the categories of grant funding.
- Mr Abbott set out the work that was being done to lobby at national level regarding the shortfall in funding for Asylum Seekers in Kent.
- In relation to the overspend on the Dartford Campus, Mr Ward explained the complexities of the scheme which had led to this situation.
- In response to question on what could be done to mitigate the length of time that a school was vacant prior to being demolished or sold on, Mr Ward stated that a balanced judgement was taken on the cost of demolition verses the cost of maintenance of the site if it was not possible for a local community use to be found.
- Regarding the £1.4m overspend for SEN travel, there had been an increase in numbers, but part of the overspend was also due to fuel costs. It had not been possible to deliver the full saving as some parents did not want to take up alternative arrangements. Work was being carried out with commercial services to put this service on a sound footing in the coming year.

- Mr Abbott explained that the underspend on early years education shown on page 35 related to the voluntary/independent sector. There was requirement that any underspend from this Discretionary Schools Funding would be rolled forward to the Funding Forum for them to make a recommendation to Cabinet on how this should be spent to benefit schools.
- Mrs Angell requested further information regarding the drop in quarter 3 in the number of client weeks of foster care (p38 in papers)
- Page 25 - in relation to the extra cost for Independent sector residential care it was explained that £1.5m had been put into next years budget. One of the issues with this budget was the increase in the number of secure placements which was driven by the courts and therefore outside this authorities control.
- Mrs Green requested further info in relation to the legal costs of children's social services (court fees etc) and the historical budget shortfall that surrounded this.
- It had been reported in the local press that Kent's foster service payments were amongst the lowest in the Country. Mr Abbot explained that the press were referring to the 2007/08 figures which were out of date. The payments for foster services in 2009/10 would exceed the national minimum. This had been built into the budget for 2009/10 and therefore would not be a pressure.
- Mr Simmonds would be supplied with details of the funding KCC received for Looked after Children and the funding that London Authorities receive per child.

RESOLVED That the projected outturn figures for the directorate and the position on schools be noted.

150. Budget 2009/10 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/12 (Item B2)

(1) The Committee considered the Children, Families and Education Directorates Draft Budget proposals set out in the Draft Budget 2009-10 and the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2009-2012 and also the report which specifically relating to the key areas of these documents for this Directorate. Mr Dance and Officers answered questions from Members about the following issues:-

(a) LAC (Looked after Children) and Personal Education Allowances

(2) In response to a question from Mrs Angell on the funding shortfall to required to fully satisfy the commitments in the LAC pledge, Mr Abbott explained that when the funding was announced by government, £100m was to be allocated nationally, KCC estimated that it would receive £2m and the pledge was funding on that basis with some additional KCC funding. However, the grant received was £700K, therefore increased additional funding was allocated in the budget so that KCC could fulfil the pledge. Mr Abbott undertook to provide Mrs Angell with details of the additional funding.

(b) Income to be generated by C, F & E units

(3) In response to a question from Mrs Angell, Mr Abbott stated that the £402K was what two units believed could be raised as income through charging schools.

(c) Freedom Pass

(4) Mr Abbott explained that the Directorate did not receive an income from the Freedom Pass but in the budget there were savings, which should be generated from a reduction in the number of season tickets that the Directorate needed to purchase, the savings were based on the figures from the pilots and discussion with Commercial Services and E & R.

(d) *Practical Cooking Spaces in schools*

(4) In response to a question from Mrs Angell, Mr Ward stated that there were seven Kent schools which would receive a grant of £300k each for this purpose. He undertook to supply Members with the details of which schools would receive this grant.

(e) *Special Schools – major investment deferred*

(5) Mrs Angell expressed concern about the delay that would be caused by the decision to defer major investment in six special schools where work had not commenced and for this work to be funded from Building Schools for the Future (BSF). Mr Dance explained that this decision had been taken to make best use of existing capital resources. This had been discussed with the relevant Head Teachers. Work was being done to support the individual schools to find building that they could use in the interim. He emphasised that rolling out the special schools review was his highest priority.

(6) In response to a request from Mrs Dean, Mr Dance agreed to visit West Malling Primary School and look at the accommodation for pupils.

(7) In response to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Ward confirmed that the Special Units did not automatically fall with BSF, however, some secondary school units would be picked up under BSF.

(8) Mr Ward undertook to let Members have a list of the six special schools concerned.

(f) *Corporate Loan (MTP – page 50)*

(9) In response to a question from Mr Gough, Mr Abbott explained that the Corporate Loan was a means of smoothing cash flow in the MTP by the use of a small corporate loan.

(10) RESOLVED that that the Budget 2009-10 and Medium Term Plan 2009 to 2012 for the Children, Families and Education portfolios along with the responses made to the questions from Members be noted.

151. Interim Joint Managing Directors update

(Item B3)

(1) Dr Craig gave a verbal update and, with Mr Abbott, answered questions from Members.

Children, Families and Education Directorate - the interregnum

(2) Dr Craig explained that currently he and Mr Abbott were Interim Joint Managing Directors and he set out the other arrangements that were in place prior to the new Director being in post.

Annual Performance Assessment (APA)

(3) A paper was due to be submitted to Cabinet shortly setting out the results of the APA., the service had achieved “good” in all five “every child matters” category which was a marvellous result.

Safeguarding review

(4) Dr Craig reminded Members that the Chief Executive had commissioned a review of safeguarding in children’s services in Kent. The budget for 2009/10 included an extra £1.5m to increase the number of front line social workers.

GCSE results

(5) Dr Craig referred to the GCSE results what had been announced in the national press the previous day. He stated that the figures were incorrect and the Department for Children, Schools and Families had acknowledged that this was due to inaccurate loading of data by their contractor. This would mean an increase in the scores shown for Kent schools.

Abolition of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

(6) Mr Abbott referred to the Governments intention to abolish the LSC and transfer their funding to Local Authorities and two new Quango’s. KCC expected to be part of a sub national group with Medway Council, a transition group had been established and it was expected that shadow arrangements would be in place by April 2010.

National Challenge

(7) Dr Craig referred the “national challenge” group of schools. Although school did not have to hit the target of pupils achieving 30% A* to C grades until 2010, a list of school that had not hit this target had been set up, this included 30 Kent schools, it appeared that once a school was on this list, even if it achievement level improved they would still remain on the list. The Department of Children, Schools and Families (CSF) published on its website what action each school was proposing to take to achieve the target.

(8) RESOLVED that the update be noted and that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the abolition of the Learning Skills Council.

152. Half-year monitoring 2008/9

(Item B4)

(1) The Committee received a report which summarised the 2008/9 half-year monitoring results for the annual Business Unit Operating plans, the Equality and Diversity monitoring and included the Managing Director summarises of progress to date.

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

- Ms Morris undertook to send Mr Northey a detailed action plan showing the what was being done to address the gender gap in achievement between boys and girls
- Mrs Dean requested information on what actions were being taken to close the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.
- It was requested that a briefing paper be sent to Members on the BSF Programme as mentioned on page 57 of the report
- The access issues and catchments areas relating to the location of some Children's centres was raised

RESOLVED that (a) the report be noted, (b) a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the gap in Foundation stage profile outcomes for three Sure Start areas (referred to on page 68 of the report) and progress in other Sure Start areas and (3) a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on vocational apprenticeships.

153. Children, Families and Education Directorate Risk Register

(Item B5)

(1) A report on the current risk register for Children Families and Education Directorate for 2009-2010 was submitted to the Committee.

(2) RESOLVED that the contents of 2009-2010 CFE Risk register be noted

154. Children, Families and Education Directorate Equalities Action Plan

(Item B6)

(1) The Committee considered a report which summarised progress against the CFE Equalities Action Plan (2008-10).

(2) RESOLVED that the contents of report on equalities and diversity activity in the directorate and Kent Children's Trust be noted and a further report on progress be provided at the end of the year.

155. The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and Academies Programmes (Item B7)

(1) The Committee received a report on setting out the current position with regarding BSF and the Academies programmes. Members asked question and made comments which included the following:-

- Ms Morris undertook to supply the figures for the declarations of the communities to potentially to be served by the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Academy to Mrs Dean.
- Mr Ward explained the reason for the change in the scale of the waves for BSF by the Government. The impact of this for Kent was that it changed the number of waves for the area, there would now be two waves for each District and there was an emphasises on authority's being in a position to deliver the programme.
- In response to a question on the changes to the waves for BSF, Mr Ward explained that this change would hopefully bring schemes forward as Kent was able to demonstrate to central government that it was able to deliver scheme in the timescale.
- Mr Dance confirmed that the outcomes from the Special Schools review were not part of the original BSF, but advantage was being taken of BSF.
- In response to a question from Mrs Green on timescale for the Portal Special School, Mr Ward stated that due to objections from Thanet District Council other options for its location had been considered, the agreement of the school governors was currently being sought, but it was still the intention to locate the school in Thanet. It was anticipated that this would be resolved in the next 4 to 6 weeks. Progress would be subject to Cabinet agreeing to proceed with wave 4 of BSF .which it was anticipated would happen within the next couple of months. Using BSF funding would increase the budget available from £20m to £50m under BSF.
- Mr Ward confirmed that around £60m had been committed out of a budget of £85m for the Special Schools Programme.
- Rev Cannon Smith would be sent a copy of the KCC's criteria for sponsorship of Academies
- A list of the Academies and the KCC governor on each of the following the staffing changes in C, F & E Directorate, would be sent to Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

156. Local Children's Services Partnerships (LCSPs) Sub-Committee – Update (Item B8)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the establishment of the LCSP Sub-Committee.

(2) RESOLVED that the establishment of the LCSP Sub-Committee and the feedback from the informal meeting be noted.

157. The Kent Secondary Strategy

(Item B9)

(1) The Committee received a paper which set out progress to date on the Kent Secondary Strategy and outlined plans to facilitate further debate around secondary reform in Kent. The “Transforming Learning” section of the Secondary School DVD was shown to Members and they were also given a copy of the DVD.

(2) Dr Craig answered questions from Members which included the following:-

- In response to a question on the figures for falling rolls in Secondary Schools Dr Craig explained that the only figures currently available were those for 2008 which showed a capacity surplus of 6.58% . However there was a wide variation within the county, for example it was only 2% in Tunbridge Wells but 18% in Sevenoaks. The preferred route for dealing with this variation was via the BSF programme although it was acknowledged that it may be necessary to deal with some areas by establishing federations and amalgamations. This would have to be addressed over the next few years and talks were currently being held with schools.
- In response to a question on why America has been selected for the Headteachers visit in a few years ago which was referred to on the DVD; Dr Craig replied that the visit focused on IT and KCC’s work with Microsoft. As part of that visit Microsoft hosted a conference to show Headteachers the technology that they were developing.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

158. Information, Advice and Guidance, Careers Education and 14 – 19 Diplomas

(Item B10)

(1) The Committee received an update report on the current developments relating to 14-19 provision. The focus of the report was to give details of on-going work that involved information, advice, guidance, careers education and 14-19 Diploma implementation across the county.

(2) Members made comments and asked questions that were answered by Ms Dunn which included the following:-

- In response to a request for an assurance that despite the economy climate KCC would go ahead with the implementation of the diploma programme. Ms Dunn explained that although there was a get out clause in the Act which related to the cost of transport, KCC had a duty and were committed to provide an entitlement to young, subject to transport cost not mitigating against that. Even in situations where transport costs were prohibitive there were other ways eg use of IT to deliver the entitlement.
- The issue of ensuring that carer’s advice in schools especially those that were academically orientated was impartial was mentioned. Ms Dunn stated that a key priority for the innovation unit was to establish an area prospectus to

ensure that young people had access to this advice. A website was being created to help provide this information to young people. Under proposed legislation schools would have a duty to provide impartial information and the local authority would have the ability to challenge the advice given by schools, if it was not impartial.

- The importance of careers advice leading to what was best for the pupil rather than the school was emphasised.
- A view was expressed that careers advice should be funded so that it could be started earlier for example in year 10 to give opportunity for a more informed choice to be made.
- The auditing of careers libraries in schools by Connexions was mentioned and specifically what happened if the audit found the library to be inadequate. Ms Dunn stated that Connexions gave a very small sum to schools for this library, the local authority were made aware of schools that did not pass the audit and worked with them to address this.
- In response to a question on the importance of ensuring that the skills subjects offered matched the skills need in the locality, Ms Dunn stated that officers were working on intelligence relating to the job market in areas to influence the curriculum offer.
- Regarding a question on why the only diplomas available in Kent Thameside in 2009 were hospitality and hair services, Ms Dunn explained that in Gravesend course on construction and engineering were provided leading to vocational qualifications rather than a diploma. The report contained details of diploma provision only.
- Ms Dunn confirmed that the pattern that they were seeing in relation to the spread of take up was a third each for Vocational, Academic and the apprenticeship route. These were early figures and would be moderated in a year's time and especially in the economic down it was anticipated that these figures were likely to change.
- In response to a question Ms Dunn stated that the selective sector had shown an interest in level 3 diplomas in construction, engineering and creative media.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted

159. Proposal for Kent's Corporate Parenting Framework (Item B11)

(1) The Committee considered a report which outlined a proposal for Kent's Corporate Parenting framework as a means for ensuring that Kent was effective in orchestrating the delivery of services that led to better outcomes for children and young people in and leaving care.

(2) In response to a question Mr Brighwell stated that an interim Children in Care Councils would be in place by April 2009 in accordance with the national

requirement. He also explained the particular challenges for Kent which included children placed in Kent by other Local Authorities. He set out the three things that would be looked at when assessing the effectiveness of the Council. All children in care in Kent would be contacted to see who wanted to be involved and these would form an interim council to decide what a Council will look like. The process would take some time as Kent was responsible for 4% of the total children in care population and therefore it would take time to establish something meaningful. Also there was a need to take account of groups such as those placed by Kent outside of our area as well as those placed in Kent by other Local Authorities. The running costs of the Council were estimated at £30K, this was being funded from a review of money allocated to Kent's Pledge which had identified savings thought work with District Councils and other agencies.

(3) Mr Brightwell confirmed that work was being undertaken with foster carers to support young people to enable them to attend and be involved with the Children in Care Council. It would be for groups such as the Children's Champions Board to negotiate their relationship with the Children in Care Council.

(4) RESOLVED that (a) the revised Terms Of Reference (TOR) for LAC Strategy (at Appendix 3) and the revised Terms of reference for the Children's Champion Board (Appendix 4) be noted, (b) the Kent's Corporate Parenting Group/Forum be represented by the Children's Champion Board and a sub-structure of KCT (see section 3), and (c) the proposed framework and implementation plan for Kent's Children in Care Council (section 4) be agreed

160. SACRE Annual Report

(Item B12)

(1) The Committee received a paper which presented the Annual Report (2007-08) on the work of Kent's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and informed Members of key developments in the field of religious education and collective worship.

(2) RESOLVED that the Kent SACRE's annual report 2007-08 and the key developments being taken forward by them be noted and the work of the Kent SACRE be endorsed.

161. Select Committees update

(Item C1)

(1) A report was submitted which updated Members on the work of the Select Committee on Provision of Activities for young People and invited suggestions for future topic reviews.

(2) RESOLVED that (a) note the update on the Select Committee on Provision of Activities for Young People; and (b) Members email suggestions for potential Select Committee Topic reviews, to the Democratic Services officer for consideration by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 28 April 2009.