

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 11 November 2013.

PRESENT

Mr. L. Spence CC (in the Chair)

Mr. K. Coles CC	Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC
Mr. J. Kaufman CC	Mr. J. Perry
Ms. K. J. Knaggs CC	Mrs. C. M. Radford CC
Mrs. M. Lawson	Mr. E. D. Snartt CC
Mr. P. G. Lewis CC	Mr. G. Welsh CC
Mr B. Monaghan	

Also in attendance

Mr I. Ould CC

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2013.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

17. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

18. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

19. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

20. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Ms. K. Knaggs CC, Mr D. Snartt CC, Mr L. Spence CC, Mr G. Welsh CC Mr J. Perry and Mr B. Monaghan declared personal interests in matters relating to schools as they had family members who taught in Leicestershire.

Mr L. Spence CC and Ms K. Knaggs CC indicated that, whilst this did not amount to an interest to be declared at this meeting, they felt it relevant to report that they were employed by academies within the County.

Mr Snartt CC declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, 'Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2012/13', as Chairman of the Charnwood Community Safety Partnership which currently had a Domestic Homicide Review in progress.

21. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

22. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

23. Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board - Annual Report 2012/13.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Service which presented the Annual Report of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) 2012-13. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted the report was a joint report of the Safeguarding Children Board and the Safeguarding Adults Board. This was the first time a joint Annual Report had been produced following the decision to align the work of the two Boards in January 2012. This was also the first time that the report had been presented to the Committee for its consideration.

The following points arose from discussion:

- i. The report identified that attendance at Board meetings by some agencies had been 50% or lower. The Committee considered that the strength and effectiveness of the Board depended on the involvement of all partners which included their attendance at meetings. The Committee noted that the Board employed an Independent Chairman who actively addressed low attendance by writing to the Chief Executive of organisations when attendance had been below that expected;
- ii. The Board ensured it and partners had robust safeguarding arrangements in place by conducting data analysis to investigate patterns and trends and audits to check that practitioners understood and complied with their safeguarding responsibilities in their day to day work. From this, a Master Action Plan had been developed which listed any actions identified for improvement. Implementation of those actions would be monitored by the Executive Group;
- iii. A key function of the Children's Board was to undertake Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and ensure lessons from local and National reviews took place;
- iv. To address a common criticism arising out of SCR in respect of a lack of communication between agencies, the LSCB had put in place a data sharing protocol which outlined arrangements for the sharing of data between agencies and for the aggregation of information for the Board. This protocol was kept under

regular review and was available to all agencies via the Board's website;

- v. In response to several high profile cases, since 2009 there had been an upward trend of safeguarding cases, both nationally and in Leicestershire, resulting in higher numbers of children subject to child protection plans. However, following the establishment of the Strengthening Families Team within the Children and Young People's Service in 2012, these numbers were now beginning to fall. Targeting families early on had meant that less children went on to suffer significant harm and, therefore, the need for child protection plans had also fallen. Reductions were expected to continue through the work of the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme and the introduction of Targeted Early Help, as part of the First Response Service in April 2013;
- vi. The Board had developed a Performance Management Framework in order to capture and consolidate performance data from all partner agencies. This would enable the Board to monitor outcomes more effectively and to measure performance against its Business Plan. The Committee requested that a copy of the pilot Performance Management Framework be presented to a future meeting for its consideration.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That, once completed, officers be requested to present a copy of the pilot Leicestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Performance Management Framework for the Committee's consideration.

24. Results of the Consultation on the Future of Oakfield School.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Service, the purpose of which was to set out the results of the consultation on the future of Oakfield School and to ask the Committee to comment on the proposed recommendations which would be presented to the Cabinet for its consideration on 20 November and 13 December 2013. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The following points arose from discussion:

- i. The merger of primary and secondary provision on the Oakfield site had not been successful. The Committee supported the view that alternative arrangements needed to be established to secure improvements for the future, particularly at secondary level;
- ii. Behaviour partnerships supported a flexible approach to managing exclusions which meant arrangements could be established to best meet the individual needs and interests of the child;
- iii. The success of secondary behaviour partnerships, which were now well established across Leicestershire, had been evidenced by the reduction in the number of secondary permanent exclusions which had fallen from 120 per year in 2006 to 26 in 2009, with numbers remaining static ever since. The Committee noted that improved GCSE outcomes had also been seen for children in

alternative provision;

- iv. The Committee was reassured that to enable the Authority to monitor each individual child and the outcomes being achieved through alternative provision at Key Stage 3, it was intended that a service level agreement would be put in place between the County Council and each secondary behaviour partnership, as had been done for Key Stage 4;
- v. The Committee noted that Ofsted would continue to monitor any arrangements being put in place and its views would be fed back to members of the Committee;
- vi. Ceasing Key Stage 3 provision at Oakfield PRU would not impact on the ability to school those children currently being educated offsite; secondary behaviour partnerships often used alternative premises, such as libraries, other community buildings or the premises of alternative education providers, where these had been deemed suitable by the local authority. However, to ensure those children currently using the facility were not adversely affected by the changes, the Committee suggested that, in the short term, focused checks be undertaken, both of the children and their families;
- vii. The Committee considered that devolution of Key Stage 3 to secondary behaviour partnerships would be a natural extension of the work they already successfully undertook. It was accepted that the partnership arrangement at primary school level was more complex, particularly due to the number of schools involved;
- viii. The Committee supported the proposal to look at alternative sites in Leicestershire for the primary provision, as a stand-alone facility. Various alternatives would be considered and the Committee supported the possible use of local sites which would better support the needs of the child and their family, in particular reducing increased travel demands where possible;
- ix. The Committee considered that if improvements could be achieved at primary level, this would in turn impact on a child's engagement at secondary level. The Committee further considered that the work of the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme would, in the long term, help bring about further improvements by addressing problems early on.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made by the Committee be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet.

25. Ensuring Education Excellence in Leicestershire: Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership Monitoring Report.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Service which presented the first monitoring report outlining the progress made in implementing the Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership (LEEP) and the performance of schools and inspection outcomes. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The following points arose from discussion:

- i. There was a strong desire from schools to work in partnership through the LEEP. All schools in Leicestershire were currently represented. However, to ensure this continued, the operation of the LEEP would need to be supported with evidence of it achieving positive outcomes;
- ii. The Internal Audit Service had been conducting a review to assess the local authority's approach for securing improvement through the LEEP and to ensure this was sufficiently robust. This would be completed early next year and the final report would be shared with the Committee in spring 2014;
- iii. The £350,000 funding allocated in the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy in February 2013 was not a school improvement budget. Such funding had been allocated to support the development of the partnership with a view to encouraging schools to work together to secure improvements and thus making the best use of the resources now allocated directly to them for this purpose;
- iv. Separate funding in the sum of £248,000 had been allocated by the County Council for Schools Causing Concern. This had been carefully targeted to those local authority maintained schools judged to be inadequate or at risk of an adverse inspection and therefore requiring the most support;
- v. Information about the LEEP had been distributed to all School Governor chairs and briefings had been held to ensure details of the partnership arrangements were widely available. It was requested that further efforts be made where possible to distribute information by email direct to school governors who were not always kept informed if they were unable to attend governor meetings.
- vi. Details of the LEEP had been made available to schools on the Education Information Service (EIS) and it operated a webpage and an inbox through which queries could be raised or requests for information made. For the future, it was proposed that specific contacts would be established for schools requiring support which would be made widely available;
- vii. Neither Ofsted nor academies were obliged to notify the local authority of any concerns raised following an inspection. However, the LEEP offered the opportunity for details of any concerns to be shared and addressed collaboratively. The LEEP approach supported the view that schools were best placed to support other schools experiencing difficulties;
- viii. The Authority would not provide direct support to an academy in need of assistance, as it no longer received the funding necessary to do this. However, as part of the LEEP, the Authority would promote academies to work in partnership to provide such support and would offer direction and guidance where possible;
- ix. In response to members questions about the role of academy sponsors, the Committee noted that:
 - The Department for Education directed the local authority to seek a sponsor for any school judged to be in special measures in line with statutory guidance. That sponsor then became accountable for that school;
 - A school had to be judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in order for it to be able to sponsor another school. If during the sponsorship that school was subsequently judged by Ofsted not to be 'outstanding', another sponsor would need to be found.

The local authority would continue to broker support and would be accountable until the point of conversion;

- A large proportion of schools in Leicestershire had been rated good or outstanding. The Authority was therefore keen to encourage, wherever possible, for a Leicestershire school to sponsor another Leicestershire school causing concern. This would help to keep relationships strong within the LEEP as schools improved;
- It would be the local authority's role to hold a sponsor to account and it had therefore been keen to establish links early on with possible sponsors coming into the Leicestershire area. The Authority was in discussions with external sponsors (which could be another school or a private company) and some of these discussions had been positive in terms of their desire to work with the LEEP.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that the outcome of the Internal Audit Service review of the Authority's approach for securing school improvement arrangements for Leicestershire would be reported to the Committee in the Spring of 2014.

26. Ensuring Education Excellence In Leicestershire: Performance of Leicestershire Schools.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children and Young People's Services, the purpose of which was to inform the Committee of the Key Stage statutory assessments, GCSE and Post 16 examination results in the context of attainment over a number of years in comparison with national and statistical neighbour results. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that, in future, this information would form part of the Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership performance report.

The following points arose from discussion:

- i. Leicestershire was performing significantly better than national and statistical neighbours at Key Stages 1 and 3. However, such increased performance was not being seen for Key Stages 4 and 5, although performance had improved broadly at both levels and was in line with national figures;
- ii. It was noted that the need to change schools at Key Stage 4 was one of the possible factors that contributed to the drop in performance at this level. However, academies were now able to change their age range intake and the view of many schools' was that this would bring about improvements in this area. The Committee noted that it would be able to monitor the impact of age range changes made by academies through future performance reports;
- iii. The Committee considered that some analysis should be undertaken to look at the differences being seen in performance between Key Stages 3 and 4, the possible reasons for this and how this might be addressed. The Committee requested that a further report be presented at a future meeting on this issue, with consideration also being given to the merits of establishing a member Review Panel to consider

this in more detail;

- iv. Data relating to young people not in education, employment or training had shown that Leicestershire was performing better than its statistical neighbours. Details of the number of young people entering higher education or an apprenticeship were not currently collected, but the Committee considered that this would be useful to provide an overall picture over the long term;
- v. The Leicestershire Education Excellence Partnership had approached the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership to look at how employers could engage better with young people to ensure they were better prepared for work and to more clearly identify what they, as employers, would be looking for in a future employee. This work would be undertaken through the City Deal on Apprenticeships.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That the Director of Children and Young People's Services be requested to provide a further report to a future meeting of the Committee on the differences being seen in performance between Key Stage Three and Key Stage Four, the possible reasons for this and how this might be addressed, including the possibility of a member Review Panel.

27. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday 20 January 2014 at 2.00pm.

28. Announcements

Leicester Cathedral Gardens

The Chairman reported that Leicester Cathedral Gardens would be redeveloped as part of the preparation for the burial of Richard III and the County Council would be commissioning a new work of art to mark its contribution. Five artists had been invited to prepare proposals and drawings of the proposed sculptures were on display in the members lounge. The Chairman encouraged members to take some time to look at the five submissions and highlighted that there was also facility for members to register their preference.

Charlie Palmer's Retirement

The Vice Chairman announced that Charlie Palmer, Head of Strategy for Vulnerable Groups in the Children and Young People's Department, would be retiring shortly. He felt sure that members of the Committee would wish to place on record the appreciation for Charlie's dedication and hard work over the years and his contribution to helping young people in Leicestershire, particularly those who were disadvantaged. Charlie was also wished a long and happy retirement.

2.00 - 3.45 pm
11 November 2013

CHAIRMAN