

Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 2 March 2015.

PRESENT

Mr. L. Spence CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. Kaufman CC	Mrs. C. M. Radford CC
Mr. P. G. Lewis CC	Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr B. Monaghan	Mr. E. D. Snartt CC
Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC	Mr. G. Welsh CC
Mr. J. Perry	

54. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2015 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

55. Question Time.

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

56. Questions asked by Members.

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

57. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

58. 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.

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

Mr L. Spence CC indicated that, whilst this did not amount to an interest to be declared at this meeting, he felt it relevant to report that he sometimes worked for an academy within the County.

59. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

60. Presentation of Petition: Melton Sure Start Children's Centre Programme Budget Cuts.

A petition had been received on behalf of Lead Petitioner Natalie Brimecome-Mills signed by 31 local residents, in the following terms:

"We the undersigned petition the Council to reconsider budget cuts to the Melton Sure Start Children's Centre Programme and acknowledge its invaluable commissioned services, already in place."

In response to the petition, the Chairman read out the following statement:

"In 2014/5 the total budget for the children centre programme for Melton was £617,755. This included £123,000 of management costs that were paid to Melton Borough Council.

In 2015/6 that budget will be £389,376. This includes management costs of £20,235 which will be borne by Leicestershire Council.

This cash reduction is £228,380 or 37%. However, if the management costs are excluded, the reduction in services amounts to 25.4%.

There will be some impact on universal services as the programme becomes more targeted on children and families with identified needs. However, the Programme will continue to employ a team of Family Outreach Workers alongside specialist workers, who will support children's development and address family's needs. There will be a 0-2 pathway of services for vulnerable families that will support parents with their knowledge and parenting skills to improve outcomes for children. Volunteering opportunities will be promoted with the parent's forum supported to shape the programme.

At the same time there has been some new investment in services in Melton for the Supporting Leicestershire Families service with a locality manager and additional team leader which amounts to an investment of £85,000.

If members are happy for me to do so, I shall ask that a response be sent from the Director to the Lead Petitioner reflecting the comments I have just made."

RESOLVED:

That a letter be sent from the Director to the Lead Petitioner summarising the points outlined in the Chairman's statement.

61. Change to the Order of Business.

Having sought and obtained the consent of the Committee, the Chairman agreed to vary the order of business from that set out in the agenda.

62. Update on Local Authority Arrangements for Ensuring High Quality Education in Leicestershire.

Prior to this item being presented and discussed, the Chairman welcomed to the meeting Dr. Ian Ridley from the "Save our Schools, Oadby" group, who had requested the opportunity to speak on the age range changes which were out for consultation currently in Oadby and were referred to in Appendix A to the report. The Chairman stated that it

had been agreed to accommodate Dr. Ridley's request on the basis that a consultation process was currently underway and any subsequent debate of the views expressed could compromise the Council's position prior to submitting a formal response. For this reason, it was confirmed that, arising from Dr. Ridley's statement, his comments would be noted and the full report would then be debated by the Committee.

Having tabled a short note (a copy is filed with these minutes), Dr. Ridley outlined the following key points:

- The group had circulated over 11,000 leaflets in Oadby and the neighbouring villages and collected a petition with over 1,300 signatures which would be submitted to the governors. Dr. Ridley was happy to make this information available to the Committee, should it wish to see it;
- The group was not opposed to age range changes, but rather wanted to retain the present school system in Oadby, which was regarded as "outstanding" by Ofsted. There was a danger that under the new proposals with the number of 16-18 places being reduced places would be filled at schools outside of Oadby and travel to and from the town would therefore be increased.

In response to the comments made, the Director stated that any consultation about age range changes at an academy should take place without any comments made from the Local Authority – the consultation was with parents and the local community. The academy would then present for a consideration a Business Case to the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Education Funding Agency. In a maintained school, the governing body would similarly consult with the parents and local community, and would then be required to submit a business case to the Council who would then consider this based on a number of set criteria, such as: whether it would improve outcomes for children, the number of families who had responded to the consultation as a percentage of the local population, the views of local members and communities and the likely impact on pupil numbers. It was noted that the improvement of outcomes for children was the most significant of these criteria.

The Committee then considered the report of the Director of Children and Family Services concerning the current arrangements for ensuring that schools are performing well and are appropriately monitored, supported and challenged and an update on the current landscape with regard to academies and age range changes. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Local Authority had a critical role in ensuring strong relationships between schools to enable them to offer each other effective support at times of need;
- It was set out in legislation that the Local Authority had a role to make "arrangements" for school improvement but was not required to "deliver" the improvements in isolation. The Council maintained a constructive dialogue with academies to ensure they were performing. It was felt that the LEEP had been an asset in this regard;
- Performance data for schools was made available by Ofsted. It was not currently felt that there was anything to gain by the Council publishing this information on its own website, though the suggestion for signposting to the information provided by

Ofsted was being considered;

- The Council was able to issue a warning to the governors of those schools that were not regarded as performing adequately. This had only been required on one occasion thus far;
- Though it appeared from the report that results at Key Stage 4 had dropped, it was confirmed that the assessment process had changed and that this was not presently taken account of in the results given;
- It was noted that the asterisks marked against some schools in the list provided on pages 33 and 34 denoted those academies that would be merging;
- 18% of governor posts were currently vacant across the County, though it was felt that this was not a true reflection as many schools were in the process of reconstituting to a smaller size. The Governor Development Service was active in supporting a recruitment process to fill any vacancies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

63. Q3 Performance Report.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Children and Family Services and the Chief Executive concerning an update of Children and Family Services performance at the end of quarter 3 of 2014/15. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- It had been agreed with the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Committee that the next quarter of performance reports would include a greater amount of context to enable better scrutiny of the data provided;
- Concern was expressed at the high number of three year olds with decayed, missing or filled teeth when compared nationally (paragraph 23 of the report). It was noted that Public Health were responsible for this area and had been carrying out a commissioning campaign from August in order to tackle this issue. It was known that the health of children was a major contributory factor to good achievement at school;
- In response to concerns raised about the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation (61% - Appendix A, page 17), it was noted that this reflected a data inputting issue which the Authority was seeking to address. It was believed that the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation was more likely to be around 85%, though further scrutiny of this area was welcomed;
- It was known that waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Appendix A, page 19) was an area of concern. The Director was leading a partnership initiative to tackle this issue. It was suggested that this might be an issue that the Committee look at in more detail when this work was completed;

- A suggestion was made for further scrutiny of the Government's "Progress 8" Measure and the individual outcomes of children in the County;
- The performance results as a whole seemed to suggest that Leicestershire was performing averagely when compared nationally. It remained an aspiration of the Department to make it the best achieving education service with the highest performing children in the country. It was felt that it would be helpful to share with members more detailed comparisons of performance with other similar authorities in order to present a more balanced picture.

RESVOLED:

That the report be noted.

64. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 1 June 2015 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.40 pm
02 March 2015

CHAIRMAN