

APPENDIX 3

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

1. In compiling my report on the work of the CYPS Overview and Scrutiny Committee I feel I should start by extending the Committee's thanks to all the officers in the Department of CYPS who have contributed reports and information in support of our scrutiny function.
2. The Committee has met 6 times since the new Council was elected and has dealt with a wide array of issues and topics over the year, including some particularly controversial items surrounding the organisation and closure of schools in the County.

Schools

3. The recent work of the Committee has been dominated by the Building Schools for the Future programme in relation to the proposed closure of King Edward VII School in Melton Mowbray and the bid for funding to transform learning in Loughborough, Quorn and Barrow upon Soar areas. The Committee received reports, saw submissions from a variety of interested parties and heard from a Loughborough local member. It was clear that there was considerable concern locally regarding the proposals for Loughborough and, disappointing as it was to learn that the bid had been unsuccessful, the Committee hopes that lessons can be learnt before a further bid is submitted, which may then have a greater chance of success.
4. The Committee reviewed, at 3 separate meetings, the decisions and processes that led ultimately to Cabinet agreeing to close King Edward VII School in Melton Mowbray. Throughout this period, the Committee has been keen to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are put in place for the Post-16 Centre and that the needs of the pupils of Birch Wood Special School are not overlooked. At its meeting in February, the Committee received a presentation on demography, which helped clarify how the situation regarding pupil numbers in Melton Mowbray had developed. It is very sad that a school that had been expected to be viable had, in the end, to be closed but the Committee hopes that its scrutiny of the processes leading to this closure will help CYPS in planning the reorganisation of schools in other areas.
5. The Committee was also sad to learn that it had not been possible to turn around Holmfield Primary School after Ofsted had originally placed it in Special Measures. The Committee sought and has received assurances regarding the support for the pupils who will now have to change schools.

Safeguarding

6. Although issues around schools have dominated the business of the Committee, its role in safeguarding has not been forgotten. The Committee has received two reports on the arrangements for the Local

Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) following the decision to disaggregate the Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland LSCB and set up a LSCB for the County and Rutland.

7. Additionally, to assist it in discharging its responsibilities towards the most vulnerable children in the County, there have been three sessions of training on safeguarding matters offered to the Committee, delivered by Walter McCulloch, the Assistant Director for Specialist Services. This training was also made available to all members of the Council in recognition of members' responsibilities as corporate parents. I would also like to thank the Cabinet Lead Members, Mr Ould in particular, for their contribution to this training to improve scrutiny's effectiveness, as well as their general willingness to make themselves available to answer questions at meetings of the Committee.

Wider CYPS issues

8. The biggest issue facing the service and, indeed, the whole Council, is funding. The Committee had a chance to comment on the budget in January, as it always does, before Cabinet reviewed it and made its recommendation to the full Council. In particular, the Committee was able to give voice to the concerns being expressed across the County at the reduction in funding for the Arts in Education programme.
9. The Committee has been briefed on and shares the concerns of CYPS as it takes over responsibility for Post-16 education and will be keeping a watchful eye on progress with this over the coming year.
10. In relation to the Blaby Centre Referral Unit, the Committee has received information on the work that has been done since the Unit was placed into Special Measures. I am grateful to CYPS for arranging for myself, the Deputy Chairman and the Liberal Democrat Spokesman to visit the Centre and see the work it does first hand.

Review Panels

11. The Committee agreed to set up a Review Panel to look into the delivery of Sex and Relationships Education in the County and its impact on Teenage Pregnancy rates. The target in the LAA for reduction in teenage conceptions is currently rated red and this is an opportunity for scrutiny to contribute to the delivery of a partnership target. The Panel is nearing the end of its work and I look forward to seeing its report to the Committee in June.
12. In addition to this work, the Committee has received a number of briefing papers updating members on issues as diverse as External Inspection of Children's Services; The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services; Action taken to address excessive uncommitted school budget balances; and Procedures required for the closure of maintained schools.
13. As a Chairman who is new to the Council, and new to the Committee, I would like to express my personal thanks to the Director of CYPS, Gareth

Williams, to my deputy Chairman, Mrs Dickinson CC, to the Liberal Democrat and Labour groups' Spokesmen, Mr Wright CC and Mrs Fox CC, and to the Designated Lead Member for children and young people, Mr Ould CC, for all their assistance in the past year.



Mrs. Janice Richards CC

Chairman of the Children and Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee