

Minutes of the meeting of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2013 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Bradburn (Chair)
Councillors Alexander, Bramall, McLean, Miles, Small, Wales, Webb and Zealley
Dr Chakrabarti (Co-optee)

Officers: M Bracey (Assistant Director [Education, Effectiveness and Participation]), A Farr (Head of Productivity and Troubled Families Co-ordinator), W Spurgeon (Assistant Director [Integrated Support and Social Care]), E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Also Present: Councillor Dransfield and 2 members of the public

CYP20 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the Select Committee meeting held on 11 December 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CYP21 STRENGTHENING FAMILIES – THE MILTON KEYNES APPROACH

‘Strengthening Families’ was the approach taken by Milton Keynes Council to the Government’s Troubled Families programme, which was announced in December 2011, with the aim of helping families with a multiplicity of long lasting problems to improve their lives.

The Committee received a very comprehensive report and presentation about this programme from the Head of Productivity and Troubled Families and the Assistant Director (Integrated Support and Social Care) and noted that:

- The Troubled Families programme was a national initiative scheduled to run for 3 years until the end of March 2015;
- Funding in Year 1 (2012-13) had been front-loaded to get the scheme up and running but after that payment would be by results;
- Milton Keynes was aiming to build an on-going resource so that the project could continue once the government funding ceased;
- Qualification for assistance as part of the scheme was based on 3 nationally set criteria to which local filters, at a council’s discretion, could also be applied;
- In Milton Keynes 123 households so far had been identified as meeting all three national criteria or 2 national and one local criterion. However, the Government estimated that there were 425 families in the area who would qualify for assistance;

- The number of families being helped was increasing and the Council was actively working to identify families, some of whom had been known to the Council for a long time. It expected to have identified 50% of the Government's estimate by the summer of 2013;
- Schools were the least active section of the community to identify problem families as they were afraid that, in many cases, it could undermine their relationship with these families;
- Three new Children and Families Practices would be operational in Milton Keynes from September 2013;
- The work was being co-ordinated by a Project Board, which had, initially, met on a monthly basis but was now meeting bi-monthly;
- The Children's Social Care team were working alongside families to provide practical help, particularly with domestic activities and creating routines to maintain them;
- The Youth Offending Team and the Probation Service were also involved in identifying, and where appropriate, supporting families, as part of the programme;
- There was a range of challenges involved in delivering effective and sustained outcomes including sharing information between agencies and ensuring a joint agency approach to new ways of working;
- The Council was training its own staff in order to ensure that they had the right skills. The Council saw this as a long term initiative and did not want to waste the resource;
- Typically workers will have a caseload of between 12-14 families at any one time;
- Although the Government's initiative was only a 3 year programme, the Council saw this as an on-going project and it may be 5-10 years before any long term success was discernable.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Head of Productivity and Troubled Families and the Assistant Director (Integrated Support and Social Care) be thanked for their input into the meeting and commended for the comprehensiveness of their report and presentation.
2. That officers involved in the Strengthening Families programme be requested to look at best practice activities being exhibited by other local authorities and partners, together with what is being done well in Milton Keynes, in order to achieve a better performance under the National Performance Framework.
3. That officers involved in the Strengthening Families programme be requested to continue to work in collaboration with all partner agencies involved in the said programme.

4. That, subject to inclusion in the 2013/14 Work Programme by the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee, the Committee reviews specific performance data from the local performance framework later in the year to ensure that objectives are being achieved as part of the child poverty agenda.
5. That, following the announcement of his planned retirement, the Assistant Director (Integrated Support and Social Care) be thanked for his service to the Council and input into the work of the Select Committee over the past three and half years.

CYP22 RAISING THE PARTICIPATION AGE

From 2015 the government was increasing the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training. Young people currently in Year 11 and below would be affected by this change.

The Committee received and considered a report from the Assistant Director (Children and Families – Education, Effectiveness and Participation) on the work underway across the Local Authority to enable Milton Keynes to respond to this change. During the discussion the Committee noted that:

- This was not about keeping young people in school, but ensuring that they continued to have access to appropriate learning or training facilities until the age of 18;
- The Government had now dropped the element of enforcement which had been part of the initial proposals for the scheme;
- 141 young people would be affected by the changes in September 2013, rising to 214 in September 2015;
- The Council needed to ensure that young people stayed in learning / training because they enjoyed it, recognised its value, encouraged them to find their niche and life and to improve their future prospects;
- The scheme would also include young people who received recognised workplace training up to the age of 18 and those who took up proper apprenticeships;
- An increasing number of young people were staying on at school post-16 because they wanted to, regardless of the increase in the Participation Age. However, schools were concerned about the disengagement of pupils who felt forced to stay on because there was no alternative and were looking at ways of engaging with them;
- Provision for these pupils needed to be both engaging and demanding. There was a proportion of young people who, although very bright, were not in education or training post-16 because they

did not find the programmes on offer stimulating or interesting enough;

- At this the stage the Assistant Director (Children and Families – Education, Effectiveness and Participation) was not aware of any developments in post-16 distance learning.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Assistant Director (Children and Families – Education, Effectiveness and Participation) be thanked for his report and input into the meeting.
2. That, subject to inclusion in the 2013/14 Work Programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, the Committee receives an updated report, including figures on part time learning, on Raising the Participation Age at its meeting during spring 2014.

CYP23 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING

The Committee received the annual report of the Lead Member for Children and Learning which included an assessment of the successes and limitations of 2012/13 and the challenges facing the provision of Children's and Young Peoples' services in 2013/14 and noted that:

- Schools in Milton Keynes are continuing to improve – 70% (ie 75 out of 108) of schools in Milton Keynes were now rated as good or outstanding;
- There was a real and rapid growth in the birth rate in Milton Keynes and there was a pressing need for more primary school places either by building new schools or expanding existing ones;
- The Council's scheme to only expand the best schools was proving to be very successful and the concept was being looked at by the Department of Education;
- Some schools were 'expanding' onto new sites in different locations such as Walton High developing a second site in the Oakgrove area. The criterion for which areas a school could expand into was a 3 mile radius for secondary schools and a 2 mile radius for primary schools;
- The expansion of schools took a lot of time and effort by governing bodies and senior leadership teams and often required capital funding. There was no confirmed figure for capital maintenance although the Lead Member had written to the government for clarification;

- The Lead Member considered that there was a correlation between the Ofsted rating of a school and the quality of its governing body. Where schools received an Ofsted rating of satisfactory or below the governors would be expected to undertake an appraisal to see if they had the right mix of skills to drive the school forward. Where necessary the Council would provide training for governors in order to develop their skills;
- The Governing bodies of schools that needed to improve would also be challenged and asked how they planned to implement the necessary improvements;
- However the Lead Member recognised that it would be necessary to work continually with all schools so that those which were currently outstanding remained outstanding as Ofsted raised the level of what it considered to be outstanding qualities in schools;
- The Corporate Director Children Services was concerned at the low number of elected Members who were school governors; currently only third (17) of elected Members were school governors and she would like to see this number increased. However, it was noted that 5 of the 9 members of the Select Committee were already governors;
- The transition of the Council's day nurseries to good or outstanding providers in the private sector was now complete;
- The transition of play centres to other providers, on the same basis as the nurseries was still to be done;
- Child poverty remained an issue but the Lead Member hoped that the Strengthening Families programme would eventually make a difference in helping people to turn their lives around;
- There were issues around the adoption and fostering service but the Council's approach was to do what was best for the child concerned rather than worry about performance indicators;
- School improvement in academies was still an issue as the Council had no direct control over the activities of academies;
- An increasing amount of Special Needs education was being delivered in mainstream schools. The gap in attainment between SEN pupils and ordinary pupils was closing. In 2010 the Council took a new approach to providing Special Needs education which has delivered a significant improvement. The achievement was real and in the academic year 2010/11, the gap between those with SEN and all other learners at the end of KS4 closed by 11%, which was above the national benchmark;

- Schools were now responsible for their own budgets, including spending on Special Needs provision, and the Council had little influence over how they were spent;
- There had been an improvement in the management of the budget for children's social care, even though the large number of families moving into the area sometimes put a strain on the service;
- There was a lower than average number of looked after children in Milton Keynes and this was due to the success of the work done by the Council as part of the various preventative programmes currently in place;
- There were no plans to close Children's Centres but a rationalisation of their management structures was necessary and the Council needed to be creative in their use;
- There was a need to ensure that the School Improvement Team continued to be adequately resourced so that the advances achieved so far could be maintained. The Lead Member had written to the members of the Schools Forum asking them for a contribution from their budgets to support this. Resources were particularly required to fund the training of school governors;
- Work needed to be done to encourage private sector providers to expand the provision of free pre-school education of 15 hours per week to 20% of the most deprived two year olds which the Council had a statutory duty to offer from September 2013. This would increase to 40% with effect from September 2014.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Lead Member for Children and Learning be thanked for his frank and comprehensive report and for his continuing support for the work of the Children and Families Service Group.
2. That the Assistant Director (Children and Families – Education, Effectiveness and Participation) be requested to provide the Committee with further information about the extra funding for sport in primary schools, how much each school would receive and when it is likely to be received.
3. That the Lead Member for Children and Learning be requested to circulate to the Committee the reply he had received from the Minister of State for Education in response to his query concerning capital maintenance funding for schools in Milton Keynes.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9:38 PM