

**LIFELONG LEARNING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL
04 JULY 2007
(7.30 - 9.35 pm)**

Present: Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs Barnard, Mrs Beadsley, Burrows, Mrs Fleming, Mrs McCracken and
Osborne

Ian Sharland, Parent Governor Representative, O&S Commission
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Association Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Ryder
Gordon Anderson, Church Representative

Also Present: Ruth Burgess, Head of Libraries and Information
Andrea Carr, Policy Officer
Tony Eccleston, Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Education, Children
Services & Libraries
Allison Fletcher, Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services &
Libraries
Martin Gocke, Assistant Director of Education, Children's Services &
Libraries
Fiona Heston, Senior policy Officer
Sue Hills, Democratic Services Officer
Alex Walters, Assistant Director, Education, Children's Services &
Libraries
David Watkins, Assistant Director, Education, Children's Services &
Libraries

1. **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Birch be elected Chairman of the Lifelong Learning & Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2007/08.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Ms Whitbread be appointed Vice Chairman of the Lifelong Learning & Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2007/08.

3. **Substitute Members**

The Panel noted the attendance of the following substitute members:

Councillor Mrs Fleming for Councillor Mrs Ryder

4. **Chairman's Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed David Watkins, Assistant Director, Performance & Resources, to his first meeting of the Panel.

For the benefit of new members, introductions were made around the table.

5. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Lifelong Learning & Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Panel held on 1 March 2007 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

7. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items.

8. **Education, Children's Services and Libraries Department - Principal Functions and Key Issues**

The Director of Education, Children's Services and Libraries gave a presentation on the principal functions and key issues relating to the Department and identifying areas where overview and scrutiny activity would assist the Department.

The Panel noted that –

- The Department was organised into four areas, each with an Assistant Director – Performance and Resources, Learning, Achievement and Libraries, Access and Inclusion, and Children's Social Care.
- The four key roles of the Department were to champion, commission, challenge and collaborate.
- In October 2006 Andrew Adonis and Beverley Hughes wrote that primary and secondary school results in Bracknell Forest were among the most improved in the country.
- Children's Services had been judged good by OFSTED in all five outcomes.
- The reduction in teenage pregnancy in the borough was the third highest nationally.
- Two important partnerships were the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The Director tabled the 2007 supplement to the Children and Young People's Plan 2006-2009, following the first annual review of the Plan. The supplement –

- described the positive progress made in the past year in achieving some of the priorities in the Plan,
- looked at some of the issues which had arisen, and

- considered new areas for development and how it was intended to move forward in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people living in the borough.

The presentation would be emailed to all members.

9. **QUARTERLY OPERATIONS REPORT (QOR)**

The Director of Education, Children's Services & Libraries introduced the QOR for the fourth quarter of 2006/07 and drew particular attention to :-

- (i) The Youth Justice Plan for 2007/08 which was submitted at the end of April 2007.
- (ii) The work of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.
- (iii) The work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, including the appointment of the Local Authority Designated Officer to oversee the management of allegations against staff in all member agencies and the appointment of named senior officers for this purpose within member agencies.
- (iv) The "Spring into Action on Bullying" conference with participants from schools, youth service, parents, young people and professionals.
- (v) The Silver Bus was off the road following vandalism in March. Youth workers continued to work in the area on foot. In response to a question asking for the bus to call at Harmans Water and Priestwood, Martin Gocke referred to existing youth centres in those localities. In response to a request to call at Crown Wood, Martin Gocke advised that areas of greatest need were targeted.
- (vi) The Freeways initiative provided for gay, lesbian and bisexual young people. The young people self referred. Publicity was available in leaflet form and on the website.
- (vii) There were plans to extend Learn Direct which promoted online access to learning resources in libraries.
- (viii) Targeted study support sessions for Nepalese children and young people were being held after school at Sandhurst School and the Pre-School Learning Alliance had been working with College Town Infant School to assist with Nepali children's literacy and reading skills and to offer general translation services.
- (ix) Good progress had been made in the development of a multi-agency Parenting Strategy.
- (x) The Bracknell Forest consortium had been unsuccessful in its application to the Diploma Gateway. Further development work was required in order to make a submission to a subsequent Gateway.
- (xi) Limited progress had been made on the development of a synchronised post-16 timetable, involving Brakenhale, Garth and Easthampstead Park Schools and Bracknell and Wokingham College. Good collaboration was required to match up timetables.
- (xii) The educational outcomes of looked after children continued to be monitored and the young people were encouraged to access leisure and sports facilities.
- (xiii) Three new headteachers had been appointed with four more still to be appointed. Teacher recruitment for the autumn term had been successful.

The Chairman thanked the Director for an informative report.

10. **Joint Area Review (JAR)**

David Watkins, Assistant Director, Performance and Resources, by way of a presentation, gave a progress report on the preparations for the 2007 JAR, copy of which is attached to these minutes.

The Annual Performance Assessment provided the Council's self assessment of how effectively local services for children were delivered against the five Every Child Matters outcomes. It was largely based on the review of the Children and Young People's Plan and would be used by OFSTED as evidence to provide the focus for a more in-depth view of priority issues and services through the JAR process.

Key issues already identified included –

- Supporting black and minority ethnic groups, looked after children, children with special educational needs/ learning difficulties and disabilities and 14-19 outcomes.
- Fostering and SEN good practice
- Community engagement
- Extended services
- Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service

A work programme was needed to improve these areas.

There was an adjournment from 8.20 to 8.40pm, after which the Director completed the presentation.

11. **Review of Libraries**

The Panel received and noted the response of the Executive Member for Education and Libraries in relation to the review of libraries undertaken by a working group of this Panel. Extracts of the working group's report providing observations/conclusions and recommendations were included in the agenda papers for ease of reference.

Ruth Burgess, Head of Libraries, gave a demonstration of the on-line library services.

Arising from questions asked –

- (i) This resource was advertised through normal channels.
- (ii) Ancestry.com would come within the borough's online services in September and would be advertised.
- (iii) Information on the numbers of people using the service to be emailed to the Panel.
- (iv) The Department was looking at the possibility of e-books.

12. **Overview and Scrutiny Activities and Work Programme**

Over the past three years the Panel had undertaken reviews on community and voluntary sector grants, school transfer, school exclusion and pupil behaviour policy, youth provision, and libraries. Some of these had been large pieces of work and the chairman indicated the need for smaller topics with shorter timescales. Suggestions for reviews this year were –

- (i) Extended schools and children's centres (jointly with the Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel).
- (ii) Teacher recruitment and retention.
- (iii) Partnership arrangements.
- (iv) Adult Learning.
- (v) One member suggested review of the exclusion procedures but it was felt that this had been covered in the recent review. It was thought premature to return to this topic so soon and it was suggested that it be put in the programme for 18 months time.
- (vi) Arrangements for safeguarding including internet and ICT safety.
- (vii) The Director suggested that the supplement to the Children & Young People's Plan would indicate where improvement in services was needed.
- (viii) Young carers (Adult Social Care O&S Panel had included this in this year's programme).

RESOLVED that

- (i) the activities of the Panel for the last three years be noted;
- (ii) the exclusion process be revisited and provision be made in the programme for 8 months time;
- (iii) a Working Group consisting of Councillors Burrows, Mrs McCracken and Ms Whitbread, and Mr I Sharland be appointed to look at the 2007 supplement to the Children and Young People's Plan and to choose one area for review;
- (iv) Councillor Mrs Birch be put forward for membership of a Joint Working Group with the Health Overview & Safety Panel on extended services and children's centres.

13. Community and Voluntary Sector Grants

Fiona Heston, Senior Policy Officer, updated the Panel on progress following the review of the community and voluntary sector grants. Issues that had arisen over the past year had been –

- (i) Delay in receipt of monitoring returns from grant recipients was currently being addressed.
- (ii) To improve the mechanism by which payments were made by making the trigger for payment the responsibility of the grant recipient.
- (iii) Recipients had requested earlier notification of their grant allocation, though this would be a problem for the Council.
- (iv) Although no negative feedback had been received, the process would be fine tuned this year.

The Panel noted the report.

14. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel noted the forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to Education, Children's Services and Libraries.

CHAIRMAN