

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
30 JUNE 2010
7.30 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Beadsley, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Osborne, Phillips and Mrs Ryder

Dr P Josephs-Franks, Parent Governor Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Dudley

Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative

Miss V Richardson, Teacher Representatives

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children & Young People

Also Present:

John Ainsworth, Administrative Assistant, Overview and Scrutiny

Lorraine Collins, Early Years, Childcare & Play Strategy & Development Manager

Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning

Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care

Bob Welch, Chief Advisor: Learning & Achievement

Mark Gittins, Head of Performance

Don McLaren, Head of Integrated Youth Support

Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Birch be elected Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2010/11.

COUNCILLOR MRS BIRCH IN THE CHAIR

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Ms Whitbread be appointed Vice Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2010/11.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the former Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 24 March 2010 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest relating to any items on the agenda, nor any indications that members would be participating whilst under the party whip.

5. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

6. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The Panel noted the minutes of the last meetings of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel, held on 17 March and 19 May 2010.

It was noted that regional commissioning of more local residential provision for children with complex needs was a positive example of the Council working with partners to provide services locally.

7. Annual Report - Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints

The Panel received the annual report of the statutory Complaints function for Children's Social Care, following approval by the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Young People.

The Complaints Service performed an important role in assuring the quality of response to children and young people or parents and carers who made complaints. The annual report supported the continuing development and review of the service and learning from complaints.

The report included details of the number and nature of complaints received by the department, and how learning from the complaints received was taken forward to improve practice where appropriate. The Panel noted that the volume of complaints was matched in number by the volume of compliments received by the service.

During the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, 27 complaints were received within Children's Social Care, of which 5 were upheld.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- 13 complaints had been received during the period in respect of safeguarding and had been referred to the Under 11s Service and the Duty and Service Team. The majority of upheld complaints were in relation to the quality of assessment.
- The complaints dealt with under the Complaints Procedure did not necessarily represent all the issues raised about the care provided. Many issues were raised by a child or young person with a social worker and were resolved immediately. These would not be logged through the Complaints Procedure but would be noted in the case files. Outside of children's social care case files were only able to be accessed by inspectors.
- A complaint had been received that the Foster Panel had been hostile to prospective carers. It was reported that in this instance the potential foster carer had not been fully prepared by their social worker for the interview and that often when unexpected matters were raised for which the potential carer was not fully prepared an emotive discussion may take place which could lead to disagreement. It was noted that this did not occur very often.

- Learning points had been taken forward from the Foster Panel complaint and processes had been put in place to ensure that the Foster Panel interview was as unthreatening as it could be to prevent putting off potential carers whilst still ensuring that carers would be able to meet all the requirements needed to become a foster carer.
- 25 staff had received training in relation to the Complaints Procedure and their role in the resolution of matters at the point of delivery. It was important that all children's social care staff received this training which was initially incorporated in to induction and continued through ad-hoc training which was undertaken when need was identified.

8. **Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer**

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented the 4th annual report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service which set out the work of the IRO Services over the period 1 September 2008 – 31 August 2009. The focus of the report was to inform the development of local strategies for meeting the needs of children who were looked after by the Local Authority.

The report included details of the number of Looked After Children Reviews that took place in the relevant period, child participation in reviews, the timing of reviews and a focus on practice improvement.

Arising from Members' questions and comments the following points were noted:

- The annual report was produced for consideration by the Executive Member for Children and Young People and was then presented by the IRO to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. The report was responded to by that Panel in November.
- The report covered key statistics in relation to how Bracknell Forest Council supported children and young people in the borough and was publically available.
- The level of turnover of social work staff had decreased. Staff turnover tended to fluctuate and was regularly monitored. Bracknell Forest currently had a number of vacancies, with recruitment to these posts underway.

9. **New South Bracknell Youth Facilities**

The Head of Integrated Youth Support presented a report which gave an overview of highlights in youth service work currently being undertaken, along with plans for services being delivered over the summer. An update on progress of the creation of a youth centre at Great Hollands was included, along with information regarding mobile provision utilised as a base for offering youth work in the borough.

The Youth Service continued to offer a wide range of activities and projects for young people across the borough, which ranged from universal activities through to more targeted provision. The Service aimed to encourage young people to engage in informal social learning opportunities. The Service operated 6 youth centres across the authority. The Panel noted that The Wayz Youth Centre now operated through a management committee by Berkshire Association of Clubs for Young People.

The summer was associated with a significant change in attendance patterns from young people. Each youth project consulted with their members on a regular basis and developed a programme of delivery based around the views expressed by young people.

The Youth Council, who managed the Youth Opportunity Fund, had released funds to allow young people to utilise vouchers to access a variety of purposeful activities over the summer period.

The Panel noted that 35 young people had completed a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award on the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, and there were now 150 young people registered for the scheme against 60, two years ago.

Building works to the premises which were to become the new Great Holland's Youth Centre had now begun after a delay due to necessary utilities works. It was hoped that the Youth Centre would be available for use in October 2010.

Arising from the subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- The new 'Silver Bus' would be a mini bus which would mean greater access across the borough. The service would be able to reach areas that currently had no youth provision with more ease. Whilst it was not possible for the 'Silver Bus' to cover every area in the borough efforts would be made to ensure it addressed the areas of most need.
- The 'Silver Bus' would be able to provide both universal and targeted services. The vehicle was very versatile with the provision inside the vehicle interchangeable. The new bus's smaller size meant that a higher proportion of youth service staff would be able to drive the vehicle.
- The Panel suggested that more should be done to open up community centres for use when the 'Silver Bus' service was located in the area.
- The Panel expressed disappointment that the junior service at The Wayz Youth Centre would not be provided during the summer, however it was noted that there would be a range of provision at the Centre over the period and it was hoped that this would be able to cover the loss of the junior programme.
- It was hard to estimate the number of children across the borough that took advantage of the opportunities provided by the Youth Service, however, it was thought to be around 20-30% of the targeted age range. The Youth Service were using social media to promote awareness of provision available.

10. **Playbuilder Project**

The Panel received a presentation from the Early Years, Childcare & Play Strategy & Development Manager on progress made to date on the Playbuilder Project. The project was funded by Central Government with the aim of working with children and young people to develop play spaces in their local area.

In the first year of the project, 11 play sites were identified and successfully developed in conjunction in Parish and Town Councils. Although there were some outstanding issues all 11 play sites were now open to the public. Outstanding issues included a slide at Sandhurst and a swing installation at Crowthorne that had failed to meet expectation. Officers were working with contractors to resolve these and any other outstanding issues.

Lessons learnt from year 1 of the Playbuilder Project that would be applied to year 2 works included:

- Past performance and case studies to form a % of the tender evaluation process,

- Commencement of onsite works at an earlier stage,
- Turf specified for all affected site areas,
- A strategy for implementing liquidating damages for failure to deliver within the agreed timeframe,
- Strategy for enforcement of damage liability,
- Contractors to make daily security and safety checks where sites were idle.

It was hoped that year 2 sites would continue to build upon the success of the Play Partnership and the positive working relationships with the Parish and Town Councils. In year 2 wider opportunities for residents to discuss plans and earlier support from the Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor would be incorporated.

In year 2 it was hoped that a waterspray area would be developed on Locks Ride and that an inclusive play area would be developed at the Look Out.

Arising from Members' questions and comments on the presentation the Panel noted the following:

- In year 1, funding for the project had been ring-fenced, however changes to the grants had occurred which meant funding in year 2 was no longer ring-fenced. It was suggested that members of each local community could be consulted on whether they thought that the funding would be best spent on developing a play space or if there were other more suitable applications for the funding. Full consultation would be required to assess need in each area.
- It was hoped that the majority of the 11 play sites identified in year 2 would be developed.
- Colleagues at Parish and Town Councils had been key to the successful development of the play spaces and would continue to take the areas forward.
- The Panel was very supportive of the inclusive play area that was planned for the Look Out. It was suggested that a second inclusive play area that could be easily accessed without having a car would be of benefit to residents. It was noted that inclusive play equipment had been used where possible across all play spaces developed.
- It was hoped that the experiences and learning points resulting from the Playbuilder Project would be feed in to all new planning in the borough to ensure play was incorporated in new development where possible.

The Panel congratulated officers involved in the Playbuilder Project on their excellent work and the well thought out processes put in place to ensure year 1 of the programme was a success. The Panel hoped to see the further development of play spaces across the borough during year 2.

11. Take Up and Organisation of School Meals

The Panel Chairman expressed a wish to establish a working group to undertake a review of the take-up and organisation of school meals in Bracknell Forest. It was hoped that the review would give a 'snapshot' of school meals across the borough and incorporate comments from school children, to encourage the take-up of school meals where appropriate.

It was thought that the review would be brief and focus on Members visiting schools in small numbers to have a meal with the children and speak to them about meals provided by the school. It was suggested that a proforma should be developed for

Members to allow a standard response that could be easily collated and compared to the experiences across all schools visited.

The Panel agreed that the working group would comprise: Councillors Mrs Birch, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Phillips, Ms Whitbread and Parent Governor Dr Josephs-Franks.

12. Working Group Update

The Panel received a report which gave an update on progress of the Working Group reviewing Safeguarding Children. The Group had met for the first time on 21 May 2010, when they had received a briefing from the Director of Children, Young People and Learning.

The Working Group had agreed that the review would focus on child protection. A programme of further meetings had been arranged which included speaking with services users.

13. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel considered the forthcoming items relating to Children, Young People and Learning on the Executive Forward Plan.

The Panel noted that the extension of the Connexions Contract, reference: I022436 had been withdrawn.

CHAIRMAN