

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
18 JANUARY 2012
7.30 - 9.45 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Gbadebo, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kensall, Mrs McCracken, Sargeant and Mrs Temperton

Ms S Cauchi, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative
Ms C Mitchell, Children's Social Care Representative

Executive Members:

Councillor Kendall, Executive Member for Education

Also Present:

Councillor Leake

In Attendance:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer
Sandra Davies, Community Safety Officer
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Dr Janette Karklins, Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Andrea King, Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Manager
Steve Lambert, Learning, Development and Commissioning Manager 14 Plus
Martin Surrell, Senior Adviser (Secondary Education)
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Performance & Resources
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

27. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 5 October 2011 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

28. 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.

29. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

30. Public Participation

No submissions from members of the public submitted under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny had been received.

31. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The Panel noted the minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 28 September 2011 and 14 December 2011.

The Panel was informed that the work of the Life Chances Team which had been launched in September 2011 was progressing well.

32. 2012/13 Draft Budget Proposals

The Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented a report on the key themes and priorities for the Children, Young People and Learning Department as outlined in the Council's Draft Budget Proposals for 2012/13. The key themes included draft budget pressures, draft budget savings, draft budget net position, capital spend, staffing implications, and fees, charges and other income.

It was reported that the Department was subject to budget pressures of approximately £1million which were due to an increase in the number of looked after children and an increase in the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans. In addition the Department had also had to identify savings of approximately £1.6million for the 2012/13 financial year.

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

- The Youth Service was currently subject to a modernisation programme and part of this work would involve more centralised provision of youth services and the development of more targeted services
- The majority of responses to a recent survey of 5000 young people had found that the majority of them would prefer to access activities via alternatives to the traditional youth centre set up
- Although a number of the smaller satellite Children's Centres would be closed the reach of the remaining Centre's would be extended
- The identification of vulnerable families requiring additional support would continue to take place as it did currently and follow up support would be provided by the main Children's Centres rather than the satellite centres
- The removal of support from the Early Years Graduate Leader and Training Programmes would impact on early years providers however a core service would remain and providers would be able to buy in additional service provision through a Service Level Agreement
- From September 2012, responsibility for the universal provision of careers advice and guidance would pass to schools. The Connexions contract would be re-let for the provision of a targeted service from September. Secondary schools would be able to buy into this service if they wanted to
- A core offer for the provision of the Education Psychology Service would be available to schools with additional services being made available through a Service Level Agreement
- A significant amount of work had been taking place to embed the Child Poverty Strategy into the day to day work of the Department

It was acknowledged that the budget reductions would be challenging however it was stressed that the Borough had a large range of voluntary sector providers who were very skilled and able and that this would go some way to mitigate their impact.

The Panel thanked the Director for her report and noted the draft budget proposals.

33. Quarterly Service Report and Service Plan 2011/12

The Panel received an update in respect of the educational outcomes of the 14 -19 curriculum. The update included an overview of: the curriculum offer in place, exam performance and apprenticeships. School performance tables and a written note of the update would be circulated to the Panel.

Arsing from the Panel's questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Funding for diplomas had been removed by the Government and providers were no longer offering diplomas as an option. Students who had commenced diplomas when they had been introduced had been able to complete them before the funding had been withdrawn
- The Department continued to work with schools to help them broaden their offer to young people and as part of this a vocational offer based on the BTec qualification had been developed
- The outcome of the Wolf Review into vocational education was awaited. It was expected that this would set out which vocational qualifications could be used to count towards the 5 GCSE performance measure
- While there was no longer a requirement to provide all 16 year olds with work experience all secondary schools in Bracknell Forest had opted to continue offering work experience to their students. It was stressed that the absence of funding for this would mean the offer would be reviewed each year
- While both the English Baccalaureate and vocational qualifications were being accessed the number of students discontinuing post 16 courses was an indication that the mix of courses available was not quite right. Work was taking place with schools to identify measures that could be developed to reduce these numbers e.g. through the introduction of a foundation year of study after their GCSEs to help students prepare for AS and A level studies
- Work was taking place with providers to increase the range of apprenticeships that were available
- Provisional GCSE exam results showed an improvement on last year's figures with the following results:

	<u>2009/10</u>	<u>2010/11</u>
Percentage gaining grades A*-C in English	69	72
Percentage gaining grades A* -C in Maths	64	67
Percentage Gaining at least 5 A* - C in any subject	77	87

- Post 16 performance was similar to performance the previous year and inline with national averages with 86% achieving 3 or more A' Levels
- Exact performance figures would be circulated when they became available
- Employers were raising concerns about the level of softer skills that those leaving education possessed for example communication and personal skills and this was an area that was being looked at by the Economic and Skills Development Partnership

An update was given in respect of the number of young people accessing the youth provision in the Borough. It was reported that the numbers participating in youth service provision had increased year on year for the past three years and approximately 5,500 had participated between January and December 2011. Exact figures would be circulated to the Panel.

34. **Annual OFSTED Assessment of Children's Services in Bracknell Forest 2011**

The Panel received a report presenting the outcome of the Annual Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services.

It was reported that the overall judgement was that the Council's service was performing well and Children's Services had received an overall grading of 3 out of 4, with a Grade 4 being the highest rated grade. The inspection had identified a number of areas of strength as well as a number of areas for development. The development areas identified had been included in the Joint Strategic Plan for Looked After Children and action to address them was underway.

As part of their inspection, Ofsted had scrutinised the work on safeguarding that had been carried out by the Panel and commended its excellence.

The Panel congratulated the Department on the result of the inspection.

35. **2010/11 Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer for Children's Social Care**

The Head of Performance Management and Governance presented the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service for 2010/11.

The IRO Service played a key role in assuring the quality of the local authority's care planning for looked after children. The annual report identified areas of good practice and highlighted areas for development within the service for looked after children and was used to support the continuing development and review of the local strategy for looked after children.

It was reported that since the last annual report additional resources had been secured to develop the capacity of the IRO Service and enhance the service given. Areas of good practice identified in the report included: 100% of reviews being carried out within timescales, effective communication systems in place for Children's Social Care when notifying the IRO of changes, high levels of children participating in their own reviews and a commitment to continue to improve the opportunities that young people have to contribute to their reviews.

The Service had come under close scrutiny during the recent Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services inspection. Inspectors had subsequently reported favourably on the service offered.

The Panel noted the report.

36. **Common Assessment Framework Report**

The Panel received a report on the review of the Common Assessment Framework carried out by a Working Group of the Panel.

The Lead Member of the Working Group commended the report to the Panel and thanked officers for the support that the Working Group had received throughout the course of the review. The Working Group had met Ofsted inspectors during the review and the Panel was advised of the inspectors' favourable comments concerning the review. Some minor amendments were to be made to the report before it was finalised.

RESOLVED that the report of the review of the Common Assessment Framework be sent formally to the relevant Executive Member.

37. **Briefing on the Education Act 2011**

The Panel noted a report providing an update on the provisions contained within the Education Act 2011.

38. **2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Panel was invited to comment on its draft work programme for the Panel in 2012-13.

The Chairman advised that the small group of members undertaking an independent review of school meals had completed the review, the findings of which had informed the re-tendering of the school meals contract. A brief account of their work had been produced in leaflet format and would be circulated to the Panel.

RESOLVED that a Working Group consisting of Mrs S Cauchi and Councillors Mrs McCracken, Mrs Temperton and Ms Hayes be established to review school governance.

39. **Executive Forward Plan**

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

40. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 16 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(1) Information relating to any individual

41. **Local Safeguarding Children Board - Serious Case Review Report**

The Panel received a report providing an update on the recent Serious Case Review initiated and overseen by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The review had been overseen by an independent chairman. The report written by an independent author had been submitted to Ofsted on 12 September 2011. Although Ofsted had judged the review as being of an adequate standard. The outcomes of the review were embargoed until criminal and care proceedings associated with the case had been completed. Further updates would be given to the Panel in due course.

The Panel noted the report.

CHAIRMAN

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