

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 JUNE 2014
7.30 - 9.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Allen, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Temperton and Thompson
Ms C Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative
Rev N Parish, Church of England (Oxford Diocese)
Mr R Briscoe, Parent Governor Representative
Ms L Wellsted, Parent Governor Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers' Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Brossard, Gbadebo and Kensall

Executive Members:

Councillors Dr Barnard

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer (Overview and Scrutiny)
Jillian Hunt, DAAT Co-ordinator
Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
Christine McInnes, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement
David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
Bob Welch, Chief Adviser: Learning & Achievement

1. Presentation by Bracknell Forest Youth Council

Three members of the Bracknell Forest Youth Council (BFYC) were present prior to the commencement of the formal meeting and gave an update on the BFYC and its pilot assessment project of assessing youth provision in the Borough. The assessment scheme was entitled "Scores on the Doors" and the BFYC had coordinated an assessment pack to record their assessment which had been updated as they had used it. Three centres had been reviewed as part of this pilot, two in Bracknell and one in Sandhurst. A video clip was shown to the Panel which set out in a fun way the process they had adopted to carry out the assessments. The pack had been devised to be easy for other members of the Youth Council to use and to help ensure that all youth provisions were assessed using the same criteria. The Youth Council had their own Facebook page and the video clip was available to view on this and other social media, FSC, Z.

Following questions from the Panel, the Youth Council representatives confirmed that:

- Following an assessment of a youth provision feedback had been given to the provider.
- The report would also be shared with Bracknell Forest Council.

- The work of the “Scores on the Doors” was funded by the Council at the moment.
- The Expressionz website included outline details of the assessment programme.
- The assessment pack would be provided to the Council as a pdf version to share with Panel members.

The Panel thanked the Bracknell Forest Youth Council for attending the meeting and presenting about the “Scores on the Doors” assessment process. The representatives from the Youth Council then left the meeting.

2. **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Birch be elected Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

Councillor Mrs Birch in the Chair

3. **Appointment of Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor Brossard be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the 2014/15 Municipal Year.

4. **Substitute Member**

The panel noted the attendance of the following substitute member:

Councillor Thompson for Councillor Brossard.

5. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 5 March 2014 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

7. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

8. **Welcome**

Councillor Mrs Birch welcomed the new members of the Panel and introduced Miss Barrett, Children's Social Care Representative, and Mrs Wellsted, Parent Governor Representative, to their first meeting of the Panel. She also paid tribute to the work of Bob Welch, Chief Adviser: Learning & Achievement, as this was his last Panel meeting before he retired from Bracknell Forest Council. She thanked him for his work with children and young people in Bracknell Forest and the clear reports that he had presented to the Panel and wished him well for the future. She welcomed Ms

Christine McInnes who had been appointed as the new Chief Officer who was working with Bob Welch during a hand over period.

9. **Public Participation**

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

10. **Substance Misuse**

Jillian Hunt, Head of Drug and Alcohol Services at Bracknell Forest Council, was based at New Hope in Bracknell. She circulated some examples of drugs and drug equipment to the Panel so that they could have some idea of the different type of drugs in the local community. She presented information about parental substance misuse which showed a generational cycle as was expected. More than 100 children nationally contacted ChildLine each week with concerns about their parents' drinking or drug misuse; nationally there was evidence of parental substance misuse in over half of serious case reviews.

Jillian Hunt gave a full and concise introduction into young people and substance misuse, highlighting areas of concern in Bracknell Forest. The number of young people who presented themselves for treatment remained reasonably static at about 70 each year. The partnership working with other agencies such as the local police and the adult and young people's services within Bracknell Forest Council, continued to work well and practices were in place with a view to working in a 'joined up' process so that there was neither a crossover of, nor duplication of work.

There was concern that the number of people using amphetamines in Bracknell Forest was higher than the national average, reflecting the level of mephedrone use locally. There had been a 5% reduction in 2013/14, with the demographics of the young people using this drug, being young people from the age of 12/13 years, not having smoked tobacco or cigarettes prior to using amphetamines. A possible explanation was that the drug was being manufactured in Bracknell Forest. The composition of the drug could vary enormously and it could contain toxic substances. Mephedrone had now been classified as a class B drug, and was highly addictive from the outset and cheaper than buying heroin or crack cocaine. Jillian Hunt informed the Panel that there was a strategic group looking at the use of mephedrone and that use of this drug was also starting to increase in neighbouring authorities. Locally drug and alcohol misuse was a focus and was a priority of the Borough's Community Safety Plan and the LSCB Plan. The Youth Service was present in secondary schools each week and gave support by carrying out initial assessments.

Following a question from the Panel, Jillian Hunt advised that there had been a slight reduction in the number of drug misusers reoffending.

The team had previously received limited funding from the Department of Health for young people's substance misuse services. This funding was now part of the Public Health Grant, and other contributions were received from the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Youth Offending Service.

New Hope normally held an annual event at their premises in Market Street, Bracknell where people could drop in and meet staff, see the work that the team did and perhaps meet individuals who had benefitted from the work. Jillian Hunt advised that the service provided for adults was on a payment by results basis.

Councillor Mrs Birch thanked Jillian Hunt for her very full presentation and an overview of substance misuse in Bracknell Forest to the Panel.

11. Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel

The Panel received the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel held on 26 March 2014.

12. Quarterly Service Report

Bob Welch, Chief Adviser presented the Quarterly Service Report (QSR) for the fourth Quarter of 2013/14 (January to March 2014).

The Bracknell Forest primary schools production of 'Lest We Forget' commemorating the 100 year anniversary of World War I had been superb and Bob Welch wished to thank everyone who took part or helped organise the event. The production was on DVD and it was planned to create a book of the poems and art work produced by the children.

During the period of the report five schools had been inspected by Ofsted including Cranbourne Primary School which had been judged good and Crowthorne Primary School which was judged to be outstanding. Both these were improvements on previous inspection grades. Secondary school performance tables, published in January showed the continued upward trend in GCSE performance.

David Watkins, Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention, presented a report to the Panel on School Admissions 2014/15.

For primary school places there had been 1,512 placements, all of whom were Bracknell Forest residents. 97% had been offered one of their preference schools. 3% had been diverted to other schools in the Borough. There had been 43 late applications for primary school places, this figure reduced year on year which was pleasing. As of today there were 32 'spare' primary school places across the Borough. There had been 23 appeals lodged which Democratic Services who administered the appeals process, being independent of the education service. The appeals started the week of 16 June 2014.

With regard to secondary schools there had been 1,200 applications, all Bracknell Forest residents with 93% offered a place at one of their preference schools. The remaining 7% had been diverted to other schools in the Borough. There had been 37 late applications. As of the date of the meeting there were 120 'spare' secondary school places across the Borough. There was additional capacity at Easthampstead Park Secondary School to accommodate additional children from the Jennett's Park housing development. There had been 33 appeals and all had now been heard. One appeal had been successful indicating that the admissions process was robust and this was welcomed by the Panel. There had been 17 applications for grammar school places in other local authority areas with nine being offered places.

There was a waiting list for secondary school places in schools that were full and which was held for a year and families needed to re register if they wished to remain on the waiting list. There were two secondary school age young people who were on the waiting list. They had moved into the Borough late and could not be accommodated at the moment. Following a question the Panel were advised that if families did not apply at all for places this was followed up and, if appropriate, Education Welfare Officers would become involved.

The Panel wished to congratulate the Admissions Team on a successful admissions programme; they had responded to enquiries well and diffused potential difficult situations. The integrity of the decision making process had been upheld by the appeals process with only one appeal being allowed. It was noted that the provision of places was tight, and indicated that a new secondary school would be needed in any new housing development. There were an increasing number of pupils with additional special educational needs as well as those with potentially challenging behaviour. The Panel was assured that planning was in place to help address these potential issues.

This was the first year when on line admissions had been fully implemented, any software issues had been resolved before the system had gone live. The admissions process had been a success; feedback from families had been positive.

Following questions from the Panel, the meeting was advised that:

- The number of requests for Children's Social Care (CSC) records had increased in both volume and complexity. This was attributed to high profile cases of child abuse nationally which may have prompted individuals to seek copies of records held.
- Only secondary schools had been invited to the Health and Wellbeing Showcase event with five of the six secondary schools attending.

The Panel thanked David Watkins for his full report regarding school admissions.

As not all Members had received the QSR in advance of the meeting, the Chairman wished for this to be followed up.

13. Children and Families Act 2014

The Chief Adviser presented a report on the Children and Families Act which had come into effect at the end of March 2014. The Act covered a wide range of areas and had implications for the Council in terms of support provided for children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities and in the areas of adoption and flexible working. The benefits of the new legislation were to provide clearer information on all areas of support around children and young people. This included there being a single point of contact for parents. One of the main areas was around adoption of children with less delay. 'Fostering to adopt' schemes were being introduced and follow on of support post adoption would be provided. There would be resource implications which the department would monitor closely. Aspects of the legislation around SEN would be implemented from September 2014.

The Panel noted the report.

14. Creating Opportunities - A Joint Strategic Plan for Children, Young People and Families in Bracknell Forest 2014-17

The Panel considered the Joint Strategic Plan for Children, Young People and Families in Bracknell Forest 2014 – 2017. This was a concise plan that defined the work and strategic planning for children and young people in the Borough and was central to the work of the Children and Young People's Partnership. The plan identified six priorities which were considered to be essential in ensuring improved outcomes for children, young people and families living and growing up in Bracknell Forest. These included raising the attainment of children and pupil progress in all stages of learning; improvement in physical and mental health and wellbeing from

birth; the safeguarding and protection of children and young people; improvement of outcomes, strengthening of families with multi agency coordination and support and the reduction of poverty on children and young people. The Action Plan would be updated annually, with the Overarching Strategy being updated every three years. The Panel wished to thank all those who had been involved with the development of the plan.

The Panel were pleased to note that the number of permanent exclusions of school pupils had reduced. Areas for development in 2014-17 of particular interest were the increase in the number of referrals to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and raising awareness of the importance of vaccinations. A progress update would be submitted to the January 2015 meeting of the Panel.

15. School Places Working Group Report

The Panel received the report of the School Places Working Group review; Councillor Mrs Birch thanked Mr Briscoe who had been the Lead Working Group Member and who in turn thanked Andrea Carr for her assistance with the review. The Group had looked at the Council's arrangements for planning and providing for places for children in Bracknell Forest's schools including the school admissions process. Demand for school places increased year on year following new housing developments and an increased population within Bracknell Forest.

Admissions briefings for parents were well attended and were now generally held in local secondary schools as their halls had capacity for these meetings. The Panel considered that following the Admissions Team relocation to Time Square that the Admissions Whiteboard showing the current position with admissions should be displayed in Time Square offices. The Panel welcomed the succinct recommendations of the Working Group and agreed that the following recommendation be added:

- That a small business type card be introduced with bullet points on how to achieve a successful application that could be given to parents at Parent Briefings as a reference aid when they make their applications for school places.

The Panel endorsed the recommendations in the report of the School Places Working Group review; with the addition of the above recommendation.

16. Executive Forward Plan

The Panel noted scheduled Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions relating to Children, Young People and Learning. Locally the term 'Troubled Families' had been replaced with 'Family Focus'.

17. Time Square

It was suggested that the Panel should visit the Children, Young People and Learning department following its move to Time Square to become familiar with the department's location and facilities. The Panel noted that the refurbished Time Square offices would be officially opened by the Mayor of Bracknell Forest on 4 July at 1.30 pm.

18. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Children, Young People and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel was to be held on 10 September 2014 at 7.30 pm. A pre-meeting was to be held at 7 pm.

CHAIRMAN

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