

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
20 JANUARY 2010
5.40 - 7.15 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Birch (Chairman), Ms Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Beadsley, Dudley, Kensall, Osborne, Mrs Ryder and Harrison (Substitute)
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative
Miss V Richardson, Teachers Representatives

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Mrs McCracken

Executive Members:

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children & Young People

Also Present:

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer
Martin Gocke, Acting Director of Children, Young People & Learning
Karen Frost, Early Years Manager
Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer

1. Election of Chairman

In the absence of the Children Service's and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairman and Vice-Chairman at the commencement of the meeting, the Panel nominated a chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED that Councillor Osborne Chair the meeting of the Children Service's and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

COUNCILLOR OSBORNE IN THE CHAIR

2. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members

The Panel noted the attendance of the following Substitute Member:

Councillor Harrison for Councillor Mrs McCracken.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 16 December 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

There were no matters arising.

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 received and noted the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel meeting held on 02 December 2009.

Arising from discussion the Panel noted the following points:

- the work of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel was an important area of consideration for scrutiny
- there was a need to recruit foster carers for children in the 11+ age group. A greater number of available foster carers would be likely to lead to an increase in the number of stable placements as there would be a greater range of choice when placing children in foster care
- Initiatives were currently taking place to increase awareness of the need for more foster carers.

7. **Review of the Early Years, Childcare and Play Theme Partnership**

As part of the agreed approach to the Overview and Scrutiny of Bracknell Forest Partnership, the Panel noted the completed questionnaire detailing the Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership's governance, performance management, financial management, and related issues.

The Panel received a presentation regarding the Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership (EYCCPP) outlining the development of the Partnership since its establishment in 1997, key duties, priorities and challenges for the future.

In 1997 the Early Years Development Partnership (EYDP) was formed as the result of a requirement from Government on all local authorities. The EYDP set local targets providing a focus for agencies to ensure provision for early years development was meeting required standards.

In 1999 the age range the partnership focused on was expanded to include children 0-14 years and up to 16 for children with Special Needs. The Partnership changed its name to reflect this becoming the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The Partnership's duties were to ensure all funding supported the delivery of the Government's Ten Year Strategy for Childcare and Choice for Parents: the best start for children. Funding should also support duties set out in the Childcare Act 2006 and Local Authorities requirements.

The key priorities for the EYCCPP were:

- Children's Centres
- Childcare Sufficiency and Access
- Outcomes Quality and Inclusion

- Graduate Leadership
- Every Child a Talker – from April 2010
- Play Strategy Development

Future work for the Partnership included the development of two further Children's Centres, extending the free entitlement of Early Education and Childcare, targeted funding for Two Year Old Early Education, securing graduate early years professionals and developing more accessible play opportunities for all children and young people.

There was a high level of trust between members of the partnership, its sub-groups and service providers. The EYCCPP's Terms of Reference and membership were reviewed on an annual basis.

Arising from discussion with the Chairman and lead officer of the Partnership the Panel noted the following:

- the provision for Two Year Olds focused on engaging with the most vulnerable children. 50 places were available across the borough for vulnerable children referred for extra development support.
- The Partnership received no direct funding, however it supported and advised the local authority who received direct funding for Early Years and Childcare and Play development.

The Panel thanked the Chairman and lead officer for presenting their partnership and congratulated the Early Years, Childcare and Play Partnership team on a partnership which has progressed from strength to strength creating additional capacity for the delivery of projects for children in the Borough and ensuring resources were targeted in important areas during the current economic downturn.

COUNCILLOR MRS BIRCH IN THE CHAIR

8. 2010/11 Draft Budget Proposals

The Panel received extracts from the proposed 2010/11 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme reports relating to Children, Young People and Learning which were presented to the Executive on 15 December 2009.

The Acting Director of Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) introduced the budget proposals which included detailed information on service pressures and developments, key decisions, fees and charges, risk areas and contingency.

The Council had faced significant pressure in delivering services within budget in the current financial year due to the impact of the recession. Loss of interest and reduced income from Council investments such as Easthampstead Park Conference Centre and revenue generated from car parking charges meant in year savings had been identified to reduce potential overspend. In year savings identified by the CYPL Department amounted to £397,000.

The Department was facing service pressures of £100,000 from a Council total of £1,524,000. Service economies from the CYPL Department would account for £516,000 from a total savings of £3,243,000. Risk areas identified by the Council amounted to £1.7 million.

The Panel noted that the schools budget was separate from the Children, Young People and Learning Department's budget and was not included in the proposed 2010/11 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

A pressure of £100,000 was anticipated from new requirements resulting from the Lord Laming Report in respect of the protection of children in England for all referrals from professionals to have an initial assessment.

Proposed savings for the Department included recharging some costs to the Schools Budget which were appropriate and had been initially agreed by the schools. The increased charges in the Schools Budget would not impact on individual schools in the borough.

A small number of staff currently funded from revenue budgets would be funded from external grants. The student finance function was moving from the local authority to the Student Loans Company. As a result the Council would be reducing its support in this area which meant redeployment of a member of staff to avoid a redundancy. In total the proposed budget savings for the CYPL Department would be £745,000.

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

- The provision made for the Pay Award did not include Teachers Pay Award which would come from the Schools Budget.
- The Extended Schools funding would end in March 2011, however it was anticipated that the drive and support for the provision would move to the schools.

The Acting Director of CYPL introduced the proposed fees and charges for the Department in 2010/11. Individual fees and charges had been examined with any increase limited by inflation. In the majority of cases there had been no significant increase, however the Education Centre's charges had increased as it was judged that this would not reduce the Centre's use.

The Panel considered the proposed Capital Programme 2010/11 – 2012/13. The total request for Council funding was £8,069,000, with CYPL requesting £1,065,000 of Council funding.

External funding - Primary Capital Strategy for Change amounted to £7,396,000 which included funding for Jennets Park Primary School development and Extended Schools, Children's Centres & Early Years. Other external funding items amounted to £18,326,000 which meant a total Capital Programme for the CYPL Department of £26,787,000 in 2010/11.

Arising from the subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- External funding for the Playbuilder Project was £590,000. The Panel requested an update on the Playbuilder project to monitor progress.
- The Department was committed to the Capita One upgrade. Further details of the Committed Capita One (EMS) upgrade were requested by the Panel, particularly increased costs associated with software migration, the increase in implementation costs and annual maintenance charges.
- The external funding shown in the proposed Capital programme were amounts which the Department expected to receive having been successful in grant application.

- Concern was expressed regarding the development of new youth facilities in South Bracknell. The Panel requested further details on the provision of the youth facilities, to include details on when and where the money was to be spent and the expected date that facilities would be available for use.
- There were no proposed redundancies and no proposed increases in staffing levels in the CYPL Department.
- The Acting Director of Children, Young People and Learning was confident that enough savings had been made in the proposed budget to allow services to continue at a high standard without overspend.

The Panel thanked the Acting Director and noted that any further queries could be sent electronically for a response.

9. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Panel noted the items on the Executive Forward Plan relating to Children's Services and Learning.

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be held on 24 March 2010 at Bracknell & Wokingham College.

CHAIRMAN