

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LEARNING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
16 SEPTEMBER 2009  
7.30 - 9.26 PM**



**Present:**

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

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillor Dudley  
Mr G S Anderson, Church Representative

**Executive Members:**

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children & Young People  
Councillor Kendall, Executive Member for Education

**Also Present:**

Andrea Carr, Policy Officer  
Martin Gocke, Acting Director of Children, Young People & Learning  
Penny Reuter, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care  
Bob Welch, Chief Officer: Learning & Achievement

**15. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members**

Apologies were received from Councillor Dudley.

**16. Minutes and Matters Arising**

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the addition of Church Representative Mr Anderson being shown as present, the minutes of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on the 10 June 2009 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

**17. Actions from Last Meeting**

The Panel noted the report which detailed information relating to primary school admissions, the 'Grow Our Own' project and the number of young people from Holly House and Rainforest Walk taking part in the Connexions' LEAP project requested by Members at the last meeting of the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel which had been previously circulated by e-mail.

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

- All schools in the Borough except College Town and Great Hollands had waiting lists. The waiting lists were fluid and changed throughout the three terms as pupils joined and left the schools.

- The number of primary school admissions appeals had increased this year to 50. There were two types of primary school appeal: the first, known as an infant class size appeal, occurred when the first choice school was full. The second type were appeals that occurred when parents wished their children to go to a particular school. The majority of the appeals had been unsuccessful.
- There were no children in Bracknell Forest that had not been allocated a school place for September 2009.
- It was likely that the waiting lists for schools were a result of children being on a waiting list for their preferred school whilst they attended their second choice school.

#### **18. 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.

#### **19. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

#### **20. Performance Monitoring Report**

The Acting Director of Children, Young People and Learning presented the Performance Monitoring Report (PMR) for the first quarter of 2009/10 for the former Social Care and Learning Department with a specific focus on Children's Services and Learning.

The PMR covered the end of the previous academic year and evidenced the Department's annual performance which was to underpin the Comprehensive Area Assessment as well as determine the performance ratings awarded by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted.

The Department had undertaken a range of developments which had provided improved outcomes for children and their families. This was considered to be impressive service delivery which out performed neighbouring local authorities, particularly given Bracknell Forest's limited resources.

Of particular note in the quarter were the significant developments in the Children and Young People's Plan which had been finalised providing the priorities for the Children and Young People's Trust over the next 12 Months. Five schools had full Ofsted inspections of these two were graded as outstanding, two were good and one was issued with a notice to improve. Officers were now working with the latter school to address the issues raised. The Aiming High for Disabled Children scheme had begun to make good progress particularly with the Dialogue Group.

The Social Care and Learning Capital Programme for 2009/10 included the creation of the new school buildings and facilities at Garth Hill College, construction of the new Post 16 Centre at Edgbarrow School and phase 1 of the redevelopment of Kennel Lane Special School.

It was suggested that questions from Members' regarding the PMR should be submitted in advance of future meetings which would allow officers to be better

prepared to answer them at the meeting and would reduce the need for follow up reports.

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

- A new virtual school had been established to collect data about children from minority groups across the Borough. The data collected helped to identify any special learning needs the children may require.
- The one-to-one tuition scheme was available for pupils who had made limited progress in meeting age related expectations. The scheme included tutors working in partnership with schools to ascertain pupils' learning needs and become familiar with the curriculum. Further details of the one-to-one tuition scheme including: the number of schools in the pilot and the success rate of the pilot, staff and resource levels and how long the funding would continue for was to be circulated to Members when the information had been compiled.
- 11 sites for development under the Playbuilder Project had been identified. An extensive period of consultation with children and young people had been undertaken during the planning for each of the sites. A newsletter which included details of the Playbuilder projects in each of the wards in the Borough was to be circulated to Members once available.
- At the end of June there were 41 children subject to a Child Protection Plan. Although the numbers could fluctuate it was expected that an average of 40-50 children would be on a Protection Plan at any given time.
- New posts had been recruited for in the Department. Many of these posts were fixed period posts which were funded by grants so were not increasing costs to the Council and could potentially enhance efficiency.
- There were 4 indicators on which child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) were measured. Each indicator was self assessed and ranked on a scale of 1-4. The Department was ranked 4 in 3 indicators and 3 in 1 indicator which gave a total score of 15 out of a maximum of 16.
- It was agreed that details of specific indicators would be given at each Panel meeting to enhance Members' understanding of performance against indicators. For the meeting on the 16 December 2009 details of NI 51, NI 62, NI 63 and NI 117, which related to CAMHS, looked after children and young people not in education, employment or training, would be provided.
- There were 27 permanent exclusions in the academic year 2008/09 which was an increase over the previous year. Further details of the year to year variation in the number of permanent exclusions from Bracknell Forest schools was to be provided.
- The Family Support Advisors initiative was to be expanded to include all schools that wished to be involved. Schools which had been working with the Family Support Advisors had reported back that this was a very positive development.
- Some difficulties had been experienced in appointing staff to some key specialist positions owing to the limited pool from which to recruit such staff and competition by other local authorities.
- Easthampstead Park School had very good examination results. College Hall Pupil Referral Unit had achieved its best ever exam results and was now fully staffed. Schools in the Borough had recruited well for the new term and now had very few agency staff. Clarity would be provided on whether all 50 newly qualified teachers were offered employment in Bracknell Forest Schools.

## 21. **Review of the Children and Young People's Trust 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 Children and Young People's Trust's governance, performance management, financial management, and related issues.

The Panel received a presentation regarding the Children and Young People's Trust outlining the purpose of the Trust, partnership working, changes to such trusts, key work areas, the Children and Young People's Plan, governance, commissioning and safeguarding arrangements, needs analysis and future challenges for the Partnership.

The Panel noted that the purpose of the Children and Young People's Trust was to improve the well-being of all children and young people, improving prospects for the future and redressing inequalities between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. The Trust was a local area partnership which brought together key local agencies, some of which were under a statutory duty to cooperate. The key focus of the Trust concerned outcomes and making these the best they possibly could be for children and young people.

New legislation was to be introduced which would place the Children and Young People's Trust on a statutory footing and change the way in which the board operated. There would be a strong emphasis on commissioning and performance, and safeguarding would be high profile.

Key work areas of the Children and Young People's Trust were:

- The Children and Young People's Plan which was currently being reviewed and rolled over. A new plan developed from the new legislation and guidance was to be in place by 2011.
- The governance of the Trust. The Trust would have greater focus on wider accountability arrangements and be held to account over the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan priorities and Local Area Agreement targets.
- Commissioning services for children, young people and their families.
- Safeguarding children.
- Local needs analysis to ensure that the plans and priorities of the Trust were relevant to local needs and priorities.

Future challenges for the Trust included the direction of policy, uncertainty of funding, implementation of joint commissioning and introduction of performance management systems.

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

- There were five outcomes from the Children and Young People's Plan annual performance assessment. Of the 5 outcomes 1 was rated excellent and 4 were rated good. The Trust planned to work with partners on all areas to improve outcomes.
- Performance management structures would be reviewed to make sure that the Trust was providing value for money.
- The Trust would be assessed on how well it worked with its partners.

- The Trust needed more engagement with young people and planned to arrange meetings to allow representatives from the Youth Forum, young carers and children with disabilities to attend meetings.

The Panel thanked the Children and Young People's Trust for their presentation.

## 22. **Nomination for Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group**

The Panel was invited to nominate one of its members to join the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group being established to co-ordinate Overview and Scrutiny of the Bracknell Forest Partnership and its Themed Partnerships.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs Birch be the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel representative on the Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Group.

## 23. **'Grow Our Own' Project**

The Panel received a verbal update in respect of the 'Grow Our Own' project further to the receipt of an overview of the project at the last meeting of the former Social Care and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel from the Chief Advisor: Learning and Achievement.

The Grow Our Own project was an intermediate labour market project in collaboration with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Section 106 monies were being used to fund the project which was based in the Open Learning Centre and therefore met the 'within 10km' criteria needed for use of Section 106 monies from certain planning developments.

It was hoped that the project would offer opportunities for young people, NEETs and older people. The Grow Our Own Project would be evaluated by the number of people it helped. The target was to provide 200 engagement opportunities for local people, engage with 40 businesses, provide skills training for 80 people and encourage people to return to education.

Whilst the Grow Our Own project was a joint venture with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, funds released by Bracknell Forest would be used for work in the Borough. The current budget was predicted to last for 2 years. The joint working with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead would be maintained to allow application for grant funding for partnership working.

The public would be informed of and engaged in the Grow Our Own project through publicity material available at the Open Learning Centre and through a link to a specific website that could be accessed on the Bracknell Forest Council's Website.

It was agreed that a progress report on the Grow Our Own Project including case studies of people who had benefited from the scheme would be brought to the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

#### **24. Working Group Update**

The Panel noted a report providing an update on the progress achieved to date by the Panel's Working Group reviewing 14-19 years education provision in Bracknell Forest.

Members of the Working Group were seeking the views of local employers on becoming involved in the delivery of the new 14-19 entitlement by way of a questionnaire. 5 responses had been received from a distribution of 100 questionnaires.

The Working Group were proposing to meet with school pupils to gain their views and to visit another secondary school before concluding their review and preparing a resulting report with recommendations.

#### **25. Executive Response to the Review of Children's Centres and Extended Services In and Around Schools in Bracknell Forest**

The Panel noted the response of the Executive to the review of Children's Centres and Extended Services in and around Bracknell Forest schools. The response was positive and thorough, providing a detailed explanation to each recommendation. Thirteen of the sixteen recommendations resulting from the review were agreed unconditionally, two were agreed in principle and the remainder related to an area where work was underway.

In response to some queries raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission when it considered the Executive response at its meeting held on 16 July 2009, the Panel received an update on the current position of Extended Services.

Arising from questions and comments the following points were noted:

- Only 5 schools in the Borough had yet to obtain extended service status. Many of the schools had only one or two aspects that they needed to complete to gain the status. The Council were only able to encourage and support schools in gaining extended service status as there was no statutory obligation for the schools to do so.
- There were new children's centre buildings under consideration in Crown Wood and Warfield. Funding would cease in 2011 and identification of appropriate sites and obtaining planning permission were issues.
- There were possible issues with the development of The Sycamores Children's Centre as particular trees would have to be removed for works to take place and funding remained available for a limited time.
- Recruitment of more family support advisors and extended services assistants would be pursued during the current term.
- Youth provision was being extended out into the community to improve the 'reach' of extended schools services.

The Panel thanked the officers for the considered response.

#### **26. Work Programme for the 2009/10 Municipal Year**

The Panel noted the agreed 2009/10 work programme for the Children's Services and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

It was agreed that the establishment of a working group to review the Council's plans and performance with regard to safeguarding children would be decided at the Panel's meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Members of the Panel were asked to consider any external representatives that they felt could be invited to join the new working group.

**27. Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Progress Report**

The Panel considered a report outlining the activities of all the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Commission during the last quarter and summarising significant national developments in overview and scrutiny.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the large number of working group reviews which had been completed warranting Members' congratulation and the results of feedback questionnaires scoring the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny reviews.

The Panel noted the report.

**28. Executive Forward Plan**

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

**CHAIRMAN**

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