

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Thursday, 21st June, 2007 at 6.00pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Nottingham (Chairman)
Councillor Ms Boleyn (Vice Chairman)
Councillors D Blood, Hanif, Hill, Ms Partridge, Ms Roberts and Mrs Rogers; Mr Jones and Mr Smith; Mrs Roe and Mrs Verdegem; Mr Billingham and Mrs Simms; and Mr Taylor

OFFICERS

The Director of Finance (as Lead Officer to the Select Committee), the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services), (Early Years Youth and Education Services) and (Policy, Performance and Information) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Coulter, Mrs Dunn and Wright; Mr Hatton and Reverend Wickens.

2 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor Lowe was serving in place of Councillor Mrs Coulter for this meeting of the Committee.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made in respect of any item to be considered at this meeting.

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 March 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE
COMMITTEE AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS, INCLUDING THE WORK
PROGRAMME AND WORKING GROUPS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR
2007-2008

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted setting out the Terms of Reference and procedural rules in relation to the Committee and seeking consideration of the work programme proposed for 2007-2008. The report also sought consideration of the Working Groups to be appointed in 2007-2008. Reference was also made in the report to other bodies with which the Committee was associated that impacted upon Children's Services.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Terms of Reference, Rules of Procedure and Protocol relating to the Select Committee be received and noted, together with the associated information referred to in paragraph 6 of the Report now submitted.
- (2) That the Work Programme for the Committee for 2007-2008 be approved as set out below, with the issues indicated being referred to the respective meetings of the Select Committee stated:

17 th September 2007	-	annual performance of the Partnership and Children's Trust
15 th November 2007	-	Looked After Children Building Schools for the Future
23 rd January 2008	-	School Performance Teenage Pregnancy Budget for 2008-2009
26 th March 2008 -	-	Review of Annual Policy Statements and strategy Documents
- (3) That the following standing Working Groups be appointed in 2007-2008, for the purposes indicated, and that the Lead Officer to the Committee, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to determine the composition and membership of the respective Working Groups in the light of Members' responses to the paper now circulated asking Members to state the Working Groups on which they would prefer to serve:

- Listening to Children and Young People Working Group – an informal group including a children’s representative and the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services to meet across the Borough and engage with and consult young people, on an ad hoc basis.
 - School Support Working Group – to ensure schools receive appropriate support and advice from the Local Authority.
 - Youth Provision Working Group – to look at matters relating to the area of youth provision.
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6

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

RESOLVED

That pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c) item number 10 on the Agenda (Inspection since Previous Meeting of the Committee) be considered as the next item of business.

7

INSPECTIONS SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Assistant Director of Children’s Services (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) reported orally on the OFSTED inspections of schools carried out since the previous meeting of the Committee.

Of the 22 schools inspected, 20 had received reports of satisfactory or better and two of improvement required. Improvement Plans for the two latter schools had been prepared and approved as fit for purpose by HM Inspectorate.

Of the two schools that had been in OFSTED category at the time of the previous meeting of the Committee, one had now been deemed as out of category and the other as satisfactory with many good features.

The Assistant Director of Children’s Services (Children’s Specialist Services) reported that responsibility for the inspection of certain regulated services had transferred from the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate to OFSTED and requested the Committee to consider arrangements for the consideration of inspection reports pertaining to those services.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information reported orally by the Assistant Director of Children’s Services (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) on the inspection of schools by OFSTED be received and noted.

- (2) That consideration of inspection reports by OFSTED on the regulated services transferred from the responsibility of the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate, as now referred to by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services), be referred to the School Support Working Group for consideration.
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8

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the details of the Annual Performance Assessment process for Children's Services for 2007. A diagrammatic overview of the process was also circulated.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Policy, Performance and Information) indicated the issues upon which the Annual Performance Assessment would make judgements and the timetable applicable. In this regard, local authorities were required to present a review of their Children and Young People's Plan and its associated needs analysis, or the latest plan, for consideration by inspectors by 14th June 2007, and the Assistant Director indicated that the documentation was being placed in the Members' Library. He indicated further that a report on outcomes would be submitted at a later meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the process in respect of the Annual Performance Assessment for Children's Services for 2007, as set out in the Report now submitted and the process overview tabulation, and as expanded upon orally by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Policy, Performance and Information), be noted and endorsed.

9

DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE REVIEW OF THE 2006-2007 YEAR

The draft annual report for the Committee for the review of the 2006-2007 year was submitted.

RESOLVED

That the draft annual report be approved for submission to the Council.

10

DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2006-2007

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted, under cover of which was set out the Directorate's Equality and Diversity annual report for 2006-2007.

Particular reference was made in the discussion to the data on racist incidents reported by schools, as set out in table 2 to the report. Further information in this regard was requested. Disappointment was expressed by some Members that only 93% of schools had returned the forms supplied in respect of this data.

A question was asked in relation to the funding arrangements for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service. The Director of Children's Services replied that since the discontinuation of Section 11 grant, there had been limited but diminishing government support with the funding gap being met by the Council. In view of the current financial constraints, however, funding for the service would not be possible in the current year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Equality and Diversity annual report for the Directorate of Children's Services for 2006-2007, be approved.
- (2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting giving a breakdown of areas where racist attacks have been taking place.
- (3) That the Director of Children's Services write to the schools concerned expressing the disappointment of the Committee that they have not returned their forms providing data on racist incidents.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Quarterly Corporate Performance Management report in respect of the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of the Committee for the fourth quarter of 2006-2007 was submitted.

In the question and answer session that followed the presentation of the report, the current position regarding Personal Education Plans was reported by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services). There had been an improvement in performance but, as the target for looked after children to receive a Personal Education Plan was 100%, this was not feasible in practice, since such children moved in and out of the care of the Local Authority constantly.

In relation to this issue, the Assistant Director explained the concept of the DfES initiative whereby each school would have a virtual Head Teacher with accountability for Personal Education Plans. Dudley was one of ten authorities engaging in a pilot scheme on the matter.

In relation to statistical information on school attendance, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services) reported that a new Principal Welfare Officer had been appointed and was looking at current practices with a view to securing improvement.

Reference was made to the two issues marked as 'Amber' in the 'Audit Commission Inspection' part of Section 5 of the report, in respect of which further information was requested.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received and the information contained therein noted.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services arrange for a report to be submitted to the Committee at a later meeting on the issues marked as 'Amber' in the 'Audit Commission's Inspection' part of Section 5 of the report.

The meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN