

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Wednesday 27th January 2010 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Vickers (Chairman)
Councillor Ms Boleyn (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Attwood, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Greenaway, Hanif, Nottingham, Ms Partridge and Mrs Rogers; Mr Jones, Mrs Lees, Mrs Roe, Mr Taylor and Reverend Wickens.

OFFICERS

Interim Director of Finance (as Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of Children's Services, Assistant Directors of Children's Services ((Performance and Partnership) and (Children's Specialist Services)), the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Development Manager, Chief Executive's Directorate and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

42 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Crumpton, Mrs Coulter and Wright and from Mrs Verdegem and Mrs Ward

43 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Member declared a Personal or Prejudicial Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of any item on the Agenda for this meeting.

44 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12th November, 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed.

45 **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor Attwood was serving in place of Councillor Wright for this meeting of the Committee.

A joint report of the Director of Children's Services and Interim Director of Finance was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2010/11 and medium term financial strategy from 2010/11 to 2012/13 for the services provided under the Terms of Reference of this Committee. In presenting the report to the Committee, the Lead Officer to the Committee, as Interim Director of Finance, made a correction to the heading of the table in paragraph 22 of the Report to substitute the figures "£000s" for the figure "£m".

In commenting on the report, the Director of Children's Services referred to the refocusing of the Children's Services Budget, as identified in particular in the "Pressures" and "Savings" sections of the report. The Director also drew attention to the financial implications of the significant increase in referrals of children to the Local Authority arising from the Baby Peter case and the consequential financial impact of this in terms of looked after children, Court Supervision costs, and associated matters.

In responding to a question, the Director confirmed that funding for Building Schools for the Future was ring fenced. In reply to a further question, the Director indicated that grant funding of voluntary organisations was to be looked at with a view to mitigating any duplication of work.

In reporting on a meeting held between the Director of Children's Services and the Labour Group's Spokesperson for Integrated Children's Services, on which a response was awaited, Councillor Ms Partridge gave notice that the Labour Group would reserve its comments for the full Council. Councillor Ms Partridge also wished to have recorded the concerns of the Labour Group regarding the possible impact of savings to be made under the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period from 2010/11 to 2012/13, for the services under the terms of reference of this Committee, be received and that no changes to the Cabinet's proposals be recommended.

Further to the request made at the meeting of the Committee held on 12th November, 2009, a report of the Chief Executive was submitted giving details of the development and implementation of Operation Stay Safe and to its progress in Dudley since its introduction in July 2009.

In presenting the report, the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Development Manager in the Chief Executives Directorate explained the background to the initiative including the extent of the legal powers available, the manner in which the initiative was being implemented and the results to date. In relation to the latter, of the 43 young people brought to Safe Centres to date, only two had been repeat contacts. Where young people had attended the Safe Centre, in the majority of cases parents had attended to collect their children, when they had received appropriate advice. The scheme had unveiled a concerning level of vulnerability amongst some young people who went out on a Friday night and details in this regard were set out in the report.

The report concluded that Stay Safe could be an effective tool in reducing Anti-Social behaviour, this being dependent on there being good communication with the general public and young people in particular, and that it was most effective when utilised alongside other preventative and enforcement measures, both on the night and between operations. While Stay Safe had currently been implemented only in part of the Borough, the Crime Reduction Implementation Group had decided an extension of the initiative for the whole borough would be explored.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and in the presentation given by the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Development Manager, be noted.

POSITION STATEMENT ON DUDLEY'S PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

A report of the Director of Children's Services were submitted advising the Committee of progress made in respect of the Special Educational Needs Strategy, which had been approved in July, 2005, the future direction of Special Educational Needs Services and the provision proposed in light of the changing circumstances of Building Schools for the Future, integrated working, extended schools and children's centres.

The report itemised the elements of the Strategy which were now complete, or had the necessary momentum to be completed within a prescribed timescale; indicated aspects of the original Strategy that remained in progress; and set out the aspects of the original Strategy that were now redundant. Certain developments had been identified as being integral to the development of a flexible continuum of provision for children with special educational needs and these were set out in paragraph 15 of the Report now submitted. The report also summarised the role of the Special Education Implementation Group in co-ordinating the work of each of the key elements of the Strategy.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the Report, and the current position on the Special Educational Needs Strategy, be noted.

49

DUDLEY M.B.C – VISION 2025 – INCLUDING BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE; SUBMISSION OF READINESS TO DELIVER STATEMENT

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on progress made in preparing the Building Schools for the Future submission.

The submission date of the Readiness to Deliver document had been deferred by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to 29th January, 2010. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that the document was ready for submission and would be sent by the revised date. The report also indicated that consultation would take place for the next stage of the DCSF process, which would be the remit meeting.

Reference was also made in the report to the Council's plans for the Central Dudley Township, when available, as being critical to the final information included in the Readiness to Deliver Document in light of the intervention review to be undertaken by the DCSF.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the progress to date endorsed and supported.

50

16 -19 FUNDING TRANSFER – TRANSFER ARRANGEMENTS AND RISKS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted setting out the arrangements made for the commissioning and funding of 16-19 education and training on 1st April, 2010 with regard to which Local Authorities would be able to join up commissioning of all services for all young people up to the age of 19 (or the age of 25 for persons with learning difficulties). Details in respect of this responsibility were given in the report. The report also indicated the risks to the Council both in terms of costs associated with staff transfer and the delivery of the commissioning function and the successful delivery of the Commissioning Cycle, which would be in three phases.

In presenting the report, the Director of Children's Services drew particular attention to members of staff who would be transferring to the Council from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), details in respect of the workloads and expertises of whom were currently awaited from the LSC. The Director also drew attention to the National Commissioning Framework which would cover the commissioning, allocations and funding cycle for delivery in the 2011/12 academic year.

RESOLVED

That the report and the information contained therein be noted.

51 DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES – COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the judgements regarding Children's Services in the Comprehensive Area Assessment published in December, 2009. While, overall, the Directorate had been judged as good, several areas required further improvement and these were indicated in the report now submitted.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

52 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Quarterly Corporate Performance Management Report on the activities relating to the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Children's Services for the second quarter of 2009/10 was submitted.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

53 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as specified below and, in all the circumstances, the public interest in disclosing the information is out-weighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure.

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A</u>
Information, Advice and Guidance	1 and 3

INFORMATION ADVICE AND GUIDANCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee about current developments in the provision of information, advice and guidance to young people.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

CHAIRMAN