

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 29<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2009

Present – Councillors Wild (Chairman), Rushton (Vice-Chairman), Ashcroft, Mrs. Brierley, Hornby, Iqbal (as substitute for Councillor Williamson), Mistry, Mrs Rothwell, R. Silvester, Mrs Swarbrick and White.

### Also in attendance

Ms. S. Schofield	- Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services and Committee Chief Officer Support
Mr. I.D. Mulholland	- Scrutiny Team Leader
Councillor Murray	- Executive Member for Looked After Children and Safeguarding
Ms. M. Asquith	- Director of Children's Services
Ms. J. Thompson	- Assistant Director for Positive Contribution
Mr. J. Livesey	- Assistant Director, Performance, Planning and Resources
Mr. S. Fazal	- Head of Inclusion and Engagement
Mr. A. Begley	- Business Process Improvement Lead Officer
Mr. D. Smith	- Policy Accountant

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Adia (Executive Member for Children's Services) and Williamson.

Councillor Wild in the Chair.

### **1. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd April, 2009 were submitted.

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Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

## **2. MONITORING OF DECISIONS**

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department reported that the Monitoring of Decisions Schedule was currently up to date and there were no outstanding matters from the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the position be noted.

## **3. COMMITTEE REMIT**

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which set out the powers and duties of the Committee for the 2009/10 Municipal Year.

Resolved – That the remit be noted.

## **4. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which set out details of the draft Committee Work Programme for the 2009/10 municipal year.

The report explained that an informal Committee Work Programme Event had been held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 at which members had received a presentation on the key issues relating to the remit of this Committee. Furthermore, a substantial debate ensued in order to try to set a robust programme which would deliver outcomes which would make a difference.

Members went on to discuss the draft Work Programme.

Councillor R. Silvester advised the Committee that the, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Scrutiny Panel had met on a number of occasions, including a very fruitful visit to Blackburn College.

The Panel had accumulated a large amount of evidence which it would begin to evaluate and form into its recommendations. It was currently anticipated that the Panel's final report and recommendations would be submitted to the August meeting of this Committee.

Members in their discussions referred to the need to invite appropriate partners to future meetings to assist in the Scrutiny Process and that should the final report of the NEET Scrutiny Panel include percentage figures, that the actual numbers involved be also included.

Resolved – (i) That approval be given to the Work Programme.

(ii) That the progress of the NEET Scrutiny Panel be welcomed.

## **5. ACADEMIES IN BOLTON UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services reported on the progress regarding the establishment of Academy Schools in Bolton.

It was explained that procurement for the new buildings in relation to both the Essa and St. Catherine's Academies would be complete by September, 2009. It was envisaged that works on site would commence for the Essa Academy in April 2010 and for St. Catherine's in June, 2010.

In terms of the proposed Academy at George Tomlinson, Members were advised that the DCSF had recently given their approval.

The Director also explained that it was also possible that the Children's Services Department would in this case take on more of the project management.

Resolved – That the progress of the Academies in Bolton be noted.

## **6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT VALUE FOR MONEY 2009/10**

Mr. Andrew Begley, Business Process Improvement Officer explained to the Committee the proposed value for money savings for the period 2009/10.

	£000's
IT Savings	500
Integration of Family Support Working	187
Homestart Contract	30
Education Social Worker posts	139
Positive Contributions	400
Inclusion and Engagement	50
Vacancy management/review of admin. Costs	250
Cash Limited Budgets	288
Capital Savings	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,940</b>

The Committee was advised that the total Strategic Budget Redirections amounted to £1,940,000.

The Children's Services Department had identified redirection options totalling £1,940,000, being options to meet the corporate redirection target totalling £1,870,000 and options to fund departmental demand led growth to fund two additional social worker posts of £70,000 as outlined above.

An explanation of each of the options was as follows:-

Information Technology Savings - £500,000

Savings totalling £500,000 in relation to the provision of information technology within the Department had been identified. The savings would be achieved through a mix of staffing efficiencies, improved methods of procurement and changes to the manner that the service was provided.

Family Support Senior Practitioners - £187,000

A reduction in the establishment of four senior practitioner posts within the Family Support Division of the Department would yield a saving of £187,000 per annum. This saving would be achieved through the assimilation of existing social worker vacancies elsewhere within the Department.

#### Homestart Contract – Family Support Element - £30,000

Currently £30,000 of expenditure was incurred on the Homestart Contract in relation to the provision of family support. This option related to the termination of that element of the contract.

#### Education Social Worker Posts - £139,000

The deletion of four social worker posts, currently being covered by temporary staff, would yield a budget saving of £139,000.

#### Positive Contributions Division - £400,000

A restructure within the Positive Contributions Division, coupled with a realignment of services, would facilitate a reduction in the budget of £400,000 per annum. The review would include maximisation of external funding sources, more efficient co-ordination of front line services and improve integration of information and systems.

#### Inclusion & Engagement Division - £50,000

A remodelling of management of services provided by the Inclusion & Engagement Division would result in savings totalling £30,000 per annum.

#### Vacancy Management/Review of Administration Costs - £250,000

A review of the manner in which vacancies were addressed within the Department, coupled with a review of the costs of administration, would yield savings of

£250,000 each year.

#### Cash Limited Budgets - £288,000

It was proposed that cash limited budgets across the Department would be reduced by £288,000 per annum, requiring divisions to identify ongoing efficiencies in relation to procurement methods and service delivery, thus maintaining existing service levels to the Department's clients.

#### Capital Savings - £96,000

Savings achieved through reductions in capital financing costs, emanating from long term debt repayments, would facilitate an ongoing budget reduction of £96,000.

Members in their deliberations discussed the possible impact of budgetary cuts on Educational Social Workers. It was indicated that there was some crossover with the work of Connections particularly in relation to the Duty Teams which needed to be worked through but this would not mean a reduced service thus making the Council vulnerable in the light of, Baby P, and the Leeming Report.

Resolved – (i) That the position be noted.

(ii) That details of the value for money savings for 2009/10 as now indicated be circulated to Members of this Committee.

## **7. ADOPTION AND FOSTERING INSPECTION**

The Director of Children's Services submitted reports which provided the Committee with up to date OFSTED Inspection Reports for both the Adoption and Fostering Services, which were carried out in May and June, 2009.

The report set out the main strengths and any areas for improvement. Overall both services were rated good.

In their discussions Members commended the work of the Children's Services Department in terms of the inspection outcome.

Resolved – That the outcome of the inspections be welcomed.

## **8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT DASHBOARD YEAR END, 2008/09**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided the Committee with an overview of performance in the Children's Services Department whilst highlighting the performance and improvement actions for the future.

Members in their discussions referred to the following issues:-

- Performance Indicator NI112, under 18 Conception Rates, and what was meant by the Performance figure of 48.23.
- Performance Indicator NI63 stability of placements of Looked After Children: length of placement, in terms of understanding the story behind this. It was explained that no one factor was responsible, such as relationship breakdown, in fact there was a plethora of data in this regard.
- Performance Indicator NI75, Achievement of 5 or more A\* - C grades of GCSE or equivalent including Maths and English in particular what the actual figures were. It was explained that the cohort was around 3,500.
- NI50, The Emotional Health of Children, particularly in relation to bullying which could greatly impact on a child's achievement. Members also discussed the need to be aware and reassured on the robustness of Anti-Bullying policies – what had been tested and proven.

Members also referred to the possibility of an in-depth Look at the effectiveness of Anti-bullying policies in schools.

- NI48, Care Leavers in Employment, Education or Training.

It was indicated that this actually involved a small number of children. There was also now a dedicated Looked After Children Team and additional monies had been made available for learning mentors.

Resolved – (i) That this Committee continues to monitor carefully the performance information as now submitted, periodically throughout the Municipal Year.

(ii) That in future, Performance Monitoring Reports should include actual numbers involved in addition to the percentage figures as now shown.

(iii) That Members of this Committee be notified of the Meaning of the 48.23 Statistic in relation to Performance Indicator NI112, Under 18 Conception Rates.

(iv) That the issue of an understanding and the effectiveness of Anti-bullying strategies in schools be incorporated into the, Be Healthy, focused meeting of this Committee in October, 2009.

## **9. CHILDREN'S SERVICES – FINAL OUTTURN REPORT**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented the final outturn position in respect of Children's Services portfolio for the 2008/09 financial year.

Members in their discussions referred to schools with budget surpluses and those without, in particular the justification for schools holding surplus monies. It was explained that all schools were aware of recommended thresholds.



Resolved – That the position be noted.

## **10. MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

The Committee received the extract of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:

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- a) Schools Capital Programme Policy Development Group held on 17<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2009;
- b) Executive Member for Children's Services held on 27<sup>th</sup> April, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2009;
- c) Children's Policy Development Group held on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2009;
- d) Executive Member for Looked After Children and Safeguarding held on 1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes of various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 3.30 pm and finished at 4.37 p.m.)