

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

MEETING 17<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2010

Present – Councillors Adia (Chairman), Ashcroft, Ayub, Bashir-Ismail, Mrs Brierley, McKeon, Murray, Rushton, Mrs Rothwell (deputy for Councillor Mrs Swarbrick), Mrs Thomas and Wild.

Councillors P. Allen, M. Connell, Mistry and White attended with respect to Minute 17 as members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee.

### Also in Attendance

Mrs M. Asquith	- Director of Children's Services
Ms. J. Thompson	- Assistant Director
Mr. D. Grogan	- Assistant Director
Mr. J. Daly	- Assistant Director
Mr. D. Smith	- Policy Accountant
Ms. K. Kellett	- Head of Starting Point
Mr A. Jennings	- Democratic Services manager

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Mrs Swarbrick.

Councillor Adia in the Chair.

## **16. MINUTES**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

## **17. STARTING POINT**

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in the matter as Chair of the Management Committee for Starting Point Pupil Referral Unit.

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report that considered options for the future of Starting Point, which would then be submitted to Executive

Member Children's Services as a recommendation for consultation.

Members were reminded that Starting Point was a unique provision in Bolton for children who had recently arrived in Bolton from outside the UK and were new to the British educational system. Many children were refugees or asylum seekers, sometimes unaccompanied. Other children arrived from countries within the European community.

As Starting Point was registered as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) it fell under the Ofsted inspection framework, which viewed all PRUs as short stay schools and pupils were expected to make progress which could be measured and evidenced in the same way as other children in PRUs.

In January 2010, Starting Point was inspected and received a judgement of Notice to Improve. Although inspectors found that the Unit was strong in areas of pastoral care, engagement and development, they identified significant weaknesses in assessment, teaching and learning and leadership.

Consequently, it was evident that Starting Point could not continue in its current form as a designated PRU and Members were requested to consider alternatives.

It was proposed that the Council could either close the facility or apply to the DfE to de-register Starting Point as a PRU and reconfigure the support services offered to children and families. The name/brand Starting Point could be retained but its function would be different, with the focus on care, support and integration rather than education, which should be the responsibility of a mainstream school as soon as possible.

Other key functions concerned with helping children to succeed in learning would be carried out in schools, where the expertise, resources and staffing existed to deliver the sort of broad and balanced curriculum children needed.

If the de-registration option was agreed the following would need to take place:-

1. de-registration as a PRU.
2. re-set the objectives of Starting Point which would include:
  - induction, settlement and integration of newly arrived children and families;
  - transition to mainstream school; and
  - signposting, advice and guidance for children, families and schools.

3. agree the assessment process for children to provide consistent information to schools.
4. agree the teaching and learning activities to be carried out at Starting Point with a focus on 'accessing learning', particularly for older pupils.
5. agree transition timescales for entry to mainstream school with a range of 1-2 weeks (usual) and a maximum of 6 weeks (exceptional where complex needs were identified) in order to comply with legislation.
6. agree transition, transfer arrangements and post transfer, support activities to be delivered from Starting Point.

Further details of the above would be submitted to a future meeting of the PDG.

It was explained that closure would have implications for staff currently employed at Starting Point and that de-registration and re-designation would also have implications for the current staff group, as there would be a move away from teaching and learning to support.

The PDG agreed the de-registration and re-designation option and agreed the report's submission to the Executive Member.

## **18. BOLTON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report that set out proposals regarding savings relating to the Bolton Science and Technology Centre.

It was proposed that the teaching and learning facility should cease to deliver provision beyond 31 March 2011 and that no SLA should be offered to schools for 2011-2012 which in the main was driven by the need to significantly reduce the spend at the BSTC which in 2009-2010 ran at a loss of £251,000.

The Centre would continue to provide conferencing facilities and also provide accommodation for the reconfigured School Improvement Team and would deliver the 'Market Place' for schools.

This temporary proposed structure would enable the conference facility to continue delivering a service to its stakeholders. It was proposed that the

Business and Development Manager was sited at the Centre to temporarily support the day to day management from April 2011.

The Executive Member would be recommended to approve the report for consultation purposes with staff and trade unions and specifically to remove the teaching and learning function at the BSTC and reduce the current establishment within the team.

The PDG noted the report for submission to the Executive Member.

## **19. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report that set out the findings of a review of the Children with Disabilities Service to identify potential savings and efficiencies in the 2011/12 budget, and consequently proposals for consultation.

The Children with Disabilities Service was one of the services that made up the Staying Safe division of the Children's Services Department. At the present time the service was benefiting from a significant uplift in resources from grant funding of £911,200 per year which was due to end in March, 2011. This enabled the service to commission a range of short breaks across holidays and out of school as well as providing some uplift to core services.

An additional report would be submitted to the Executive Member later in the year to reflect the implications of the grant cessation, following the budget announcement in October 2010.

The report detailed proposals to create £150,000 savings and efficiencies in line with the strategic aims of Children's Services and the wider strategic objectives of the Council.

The proposals would have no impact on the level of service provision being offered. However, it was likely that there would be less flexibility for staff rotas.

The report recommended that the proposals be subject to consultation with staff and trade unions.

The PDG noted the report for submission to the Executive Member.

## **20. ENRICHMENT FOR LEARNING (FIND YOUR TALENT, STUDY SUPPORT AND INSPIRING COMMUNITIES)**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report that set out the findings of a review of the Enrichment for Learning Service to take into account the early closure of the Find Your Talent and Inspiring Communities programmes and the cessation of Area Based Grant to the Study Support Programme and consequently proposals for consultation.

The Enrichment for Learning Team within Children's Services was responsible for the delivery of three grant funded areas of work, the Find Your Talent and Inspiring Communities Pilot projects and the Study Support programme which was funded through Area Based Grant. The Government had announced the in year cessation of the Find Your Talent and Inspiring Communities projects and funding for Study Support would stop in April 2011 following reductions in Area Based Grant.

The Council had been allowed to retain £91,744 of unspent Find Your Talent Grant from 2009/10. This funding would be used to manage the closure of the project and the associated support functions provided by the Enrichment for Learning Team and to support the exploration of opportunities to enable the continuation of a cultural offer for children and young people in the town.

The Council had been informed that the Inspiring Communities Pilot project was being cancelled in year during 2010/11.

The proposals would require a number of staff redundancies and, without any voluntary early retirement or voluntary severance requests, this would mean a net reduction of 1.34 FTE permanent posts and 2.94 temporary posts; all temporary posts would end on 31st March, 2011,

The Executive Member would be requested to approve the proposed restructuring of the Enrichment for Learning Team for consultation purposes with staff and trade unions.

The PDG noted the report for submission to the Executive Members.

## **21. INTEGRATION OF HEALTH SPORT AND INCLUSION, PLAY AND YOUTH**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report that set out the proposed efficiencies and savings as a result of the integration of services, a reduction in core provision and to take into account a reduction in funding from 2011/12 onwards, and consequently proposals for consultation.

As part of the overall Council/Children's Services departmental budget reductions the Positive Contribution Division had been set a target to find budgets saving and efficiencies of £405,500 for 2011/12 and the report explained how £355,500 savings could be achieved.

Staffing costs formed the majority of the Division's controllable revenue operating costs and, as such, no significant savings could be made without reviewing and reducing the Division's staffing establishment.

In the previous review of the Play and Youth Service (December 2009) it was identified that integration of management arrangements would provide economies of scale and so the proposal now detailed brought together the management functions of the Council's 5 – 19 and Sport, Health & Inclusion Services into one single management structure.

Additionally some aspects of the Youth/Connexions Service would be reviewed to help meet the 2011/12 savings and efficiencies target.

The report recommended that the proposals be subject to consultation with staff and trade unions.

The PDG noted the report for submission to the Executive Member.

(The meeting started at 3.00pm and finished at 4.00 pm)