

AT A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at Ashburton Hall, Winchester on Thursday, 31 May 2012.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Ray Bolton

Vice Chairman:
p Councillor John West

Councillors:

a Charlotte Bailey	p Keith Evans
p Graham Burgess	p Andrew Gibson
a Rita Burgess	a Jonathan Glen
a Roz Chadd	a David Keast
p Brian Collin	p Roger Kimber
p Brian Dash	p Pam Mutton
p Sam Darragh	p Jackie Porter
a David Drew	p Jenny Radley
a Adrian Evans	p Bruce Tennent

Co-opted Members:

p Mohammed Ansar – Parent Governor (primary)
a Rosemary Olivier – RC schools representative
a Tony Blackshaw – CoE schools representative
p Phil Watson – Parent Governor (secondary)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Roy Perry, Executive Lead Member for Children's Services;
Councillor Peter Edgar, Assistant Executive Member for Education and
Councillor Marilyn Tucker, Assistant Executive Member for Safeguarding.

96. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Charlotte Bailey, Roz Chadd, David Drew, Adrian Evans, Jonathan Glen and David Keast. Co-opted member Tony Blackshaw was unable to attend and sent his apologies.

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and

having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

98. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2012 were agreed to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

99. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all Members to his first meeting as the Chairman and set out his thoughts on the nature of the Committee and his ambition that it use its collective experience to both challenge and support the Executive Member and officers in a constructive manner.

It was highlighted that all Members had been sent an update on the progress made on Children's Centres. The Chairman confirmed that although this was not an item on the agenda, he was prepared to allow a brief discussion at the end of the meeting.

Attention was drawn to the ongoing consultation on primary school places and it was noted that a decision of the Executive Lead Member was expected in July.

The Chairman confirmed that action was underway to fill the Parent Governor Representative vacancy on the Committee.

Volunteers were sought to represent the Committee on a joint project Board with the HOSC. Councillors Chadd, Porter and Kimber volunteered and were appointed.

100. ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Children's Services, item 6 in the Minute Book regarding recent changes in the accountability for schools.

The report was introduced and key elements explained, in particular the recent changes to the Ofsted framework and the context of accountability for school performance by the Local Authority and by Central Government. The role of the Local Authority in supporting good practice, difficulties associated with closing the gap between more and less successful schools and risks to the system were also highlighted.

Members welcomed the report and praised it for its thoroughness. The pressure on schools via Ofsted was discussed, as was the extent to which the Local Authority could input into the new academy schools. The difficulty of measuring the success of children from Black and Minority Ethnic

backgrounds was noted, especially given the differences between “value added” and “contextual value added” results. The best means for supporting schools was questioned and the Director of Children’s Services provided examples of the actions being taken by the department. The role of teaching schools was raised and it was acknowledged that some small schools could become financially vulnerable. The Committee agreed that it would be of benefit for the Schools Advisory Board to be retained to provide policy advice in the future.

Changes to the national curriculum were discussed and it was noted that the expected revision had been delayed further and was not now expected to be implemented until 2014.

A briefing note for school Governors regarding the changes set out in the report was proposed, however Members felt that school Governors already received a lot of information and therefore this was rejected.

It was resolved:

That the Select Committee recommend that the Schools Advisory Board be retained.

That the Select Committee support the principles of the report and the work of the department to support Hampshire schools.

101. ADOPTION ISSUES

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Children’s Services, item 7 in the Minute Book and received a presentation from the Deputy Director of Children’s Services regarding adoption.

The Deputy Director informed the Committee that adoption was a high priority both nationally and with the County Council. He explained the background to the annual adoption report and its significance. The adoption scorecard was outlined and it was confirmed that Hampshire was within the targets set by the DfE (Department for Education) and was above the national average on each of the three measures. With regards to internal analysis of the 2011/12 data, it was anticipated that the Council would continue to be within the threshold targets.

The Committee was given an overview of the national adoption picture and a number of new initiatives to improve the efficiency of the adoption process were identified. Members were reassured that a large number of checks were still in place in the case of any speeding up of the system. Further concerns regarding the length of the process were discussed and it was confirmed that efforts were being made to address this. The reasons behind lengthy court proceedings were outlined and it was noted that there was little the local authority could do to influence this. The particular difficulties of facilitating the adoption of sibling groups was raised and it was explained that careful communications with prospective adopters played an important role.

Officers were thanked for their ongoing work and the Deputy Director was thanked in particular for his presentation, which it was agreed would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

It was resolved:

That the Select Committee notes the current direction of travel in adoption and encourages the Children's Services department to continue to develop new and innovative means to support potential and existing adopters, particularly in the area of sibling adoption, to secure the best outcomes for the children of Hampshire.

102. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee received reports from the Director of Children's Services and the County Treasurer, setting out the 2012/13 to 2013/14 capital programme, item 8 in the Minute Book. It was noted that the first report, setting out the capital programme had received Executive Member approval on 23 March 2012 and that the second report, proposing amendments to the programme was due for consideration by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services following the Select Committee meeting.

The key elements of the capital programme were outlined and it was highlighted that considerable pressure on resources had arisen, in particular as a result of an increasing requirement for school places. The importance of developer contributions and subsequently the importance of maintaining good relationships with planning authorities was explained. It was noted that the position for future years was dependent on the level of Government grant available.

Members discussed aspects of the report, in particular the impact of increasing pupil numbers and the work that was underway to employ efficient building design. The ongoing review of Children's homes was raised and it was confirmed that potential sites were being assessed and that design and location were key to a successful solution.

It was resolved that an update on the progress of the Children's Homes review be considered at a future meeting.

103. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive, setting out the work programme, item 8 in the Minute Book.

It was agreed that there was insufficient time to allow a discussion on Children's Centres (Minute 99 refers) and therefore that this should be deferred to the next meeting.

Members confirmed the items they wanted to keep on the work programme and proposed additional items for future meetings:

- Troubled families
- Curriculum issues, including access to college
- Children and Young People's Plan
- Race strategy and policy
- School places plan
- Teaching schools best practice
- Youth offending team changes

It was resolved:

That the Chairman review the work programme and the potential inclusion of the items identified.

That Members submit proposed additions to the work programme to the Chairman in advance of future meetings.

Chairman, 27 July 2012