

AT A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ADVISORY PANEL of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on 8 FEBRUARY 2011.

**Chairman:**  
**p Councillor M.J. Tucker**

Councillors:

p A. Evans

p Mrs Charlotte Bailey

p R. Bolton

a B.D. Dash

p D. Keast

p Roz Muschamp

p Mrs Pamela Mutton

p Mrs Jackie Porter

**32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from councillor B.D. Dash.

**33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a personal or prejudicial interest in any matter considered at the meeting declared that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, considered 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.

Councillor Jackie Porter declared a personal interest as the Chair of Trustees of an organisation that receives funding from Hampshire County Council.

**34. MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting of 7 October 2010 were considered by the Panel and it was noted that Children's Centres should be corrected to Children's Homes for the purposes of accuracy. Subject to these amendments being made, the Minutes were agreed to be a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**35. MEMBERS FEEDBACK ON VISITS TO CHILDREN'S HOMES**

Individual Members of the Panel reported on visits they had made to Children's Homes since the last meeting. In particular, reference was made to Swanwick Lodge. The Members who had visited the Home had found youngsters to be motivated and stimulated. The fact that all of the children living in Swanwick Lodge at that point were from outside Hampshire was raised and the Deputy Director for Children and

Families confirmed that facilities such as those available were rare throughout the country and therefore places were available to other authorities to help meet national demand. A charging policy was in place and the income from the Youth Justice Board and other authorities funded the unit.

The Chairman thanked Members for their input and encouraged those who had not yet done so to visit a Children's Home.

**36. FEEDBACK FROM SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

Members who had attended safeguarding training in October 2010 reported to the Panel that it had been a positive experience.

**37. HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICES**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services (Item 7 in the Minute Book) on adoption services in Hampshire County Council.

The report to bring the Panel up to date with developments in adoption was outlined and Members' attention was particularly drawn to concerns addressed by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, such as issues around delays in the Court process. It was confirmed that the adoption service is inspected by Ofsted and the next inspection was expected to be in approximately 18 months.

Members discussed in detail various aspects of the adoption process, including: the significance of the birth parents' religious views, opportunities to speed up Court processes, the speed of placement once a decision was reached, the merits of Special Guardianship, the difficulties in recruiting adoptive parents and the extent to which the County Council had sought to influence the Under Secretary of State.

The Committee thanked Officers for their hard work in Hampshire County Council's adoption service and it was resolved that the report be noted.

**38. UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE WESSEX YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM AND THE RESPONSE TO THE JUSTICE GREEN PAPER**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services (Item 8 in the Minute Book) regarding youth justice.

The background and purpose of the Wessex Youth Offending Team (YOT) was explained to the Panel and it was highlighted that a new Justice Green Paper containing information on youth offending had recently been published. The Panel received a verbal presentation

giving details about the governance, finance and performance of the YOT.

The link between poor educational achievement and youth offending was raised and the Deputy Director for Children and Families agreed to discuss joint approaches with education officers.

The Justice Green Paper was outlined to the Panel and the consultation questions and proposed Hampshire County Council responses were discussed. Members expressed disquiet at the expression “out of court disposal” and it was confirmed that this was from legal terminology and examples of what it meant in practice were given. Concerns were raised regarding the potential costs of remand for young people that were to become the responsibility of the County Council. The future of the ASBO system was also discussed and it was noted that there appeared to be a move towards a more flexible and incremental system.

The Panel thanked officers for their presentation and it was resolved to note the report.

### 39. **PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children’s Services (Item 9 in the Minute Book) regarding safeguarding performance.

The performance figures in the report were explained to the Panel and comparisons made with other similar local authorities and with the national averages for England. Concern was expressed that performance may fall in light of the departmental reorganisation and it was acknowledged that this was a risk but that measures were in place to avoid impacting service delivery. In light of the changing performance criteria, the Panel discussed the significance of specific National Indicators. It was noted that an emphasis on quality rather than timescale was important in most situations. It was agreed that a discussion about care leavers should be added to the agenda of a future meeting.

The recent Ofsted inspection of the department was discussed and the positive feedback on actions that had been taken since the previous inspection were noted. The four areas that Ofsted had identified for development were highlighted to Members. The Deputy Director explained the background to these issues and measures that were being taken to tackle them.

The Deputy Director outlined some of the key features of the recently published second part of the Munro Review. He highlighted in particular questions raised about serious case reviews and Ofsted evaluations as well as positive messages about the role of Directors of Children’s Services and potential changes to the ICT packages. It was

felt that the report was a positive step towards significant changes in social care.

It was resolved to note the report and to distribute a copy of the Munro Report Part II to Members of the Panel.

40. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE**

The Panel received a verbal update from the Deputy Director Children and Families regarding recent changes to the departmental structure. He explained the necessity to make in-year budget savings and that the changes had provided a stable structure for the future with clear service priorities. He confirmed that the majority of officers leaving the department were doing so voluntarily.

The consultation regarding the future of Children's Centres was questioned by Members and it was agreed that a discussion regarding Children's Centres should be added to the agenda of a future meeting of the Panel.

It was resolved that the update be noted and that a copy of the new departmental structure be distributed to Members of the Panel.