

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2007 at 6.00pm  
in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley

### **PRESENT:-**

Councillor Nottingham (Chairman)  
Councillor Ms Boleyn (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors D Blood, Mrs Coulter, Mrs Dunn, Hanif, Ms Partridge, Ms Roberts, Simms, and Wright; Mr Hatton and Reverend Wickens; Mr Jones and Mr Smith; Mrs Roe and Mrs Verdegem; Mr Taylor.

### **OFFICERS**

The Director of Finance (as Lead Officer to the Committee), the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Directors of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services), (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) and (Resources) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

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12                    **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Hill and Mrs Rogers.

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13                    **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following in relation to Agenda Item number 6 (Transforming Secondary Education) in view of the matters relating to them indicated below:

Councillor Mrs Coulter – Chairman of the Pupil Referral Unit.

Councillor Nottingham – Governor of the Crestwood School.

Mrs Roe – Teacher and Teacher Governor of Redhill School.

Mr Smith – Governor of Oldswinford Hospital.

Councillor Wright – Governor of Ellowes Hall School.

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14                    **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed, subject to the substitution of the words “the Council” for the words “each School” in the second line of the third paragraph of the preamble to minute 11 (Quarterly Performance Management Report).

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15                    SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor Simms was serving in place of Councillor Hill for this meeting of the Committee only.

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16                    CHILDREN'S TRUST AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted advising the Committee of the background, governance arrangements and processes involved regarding the proposed Children and Young People's Plan for 2008-11. In discussing the arrangements, the Director made particular reference to the future provision of services currently contracted to National Children's Homes, in the light of the expiry of their contract in 2008.

In the discussion that followed, the Director confirmed that the draft Plan would be submitted to the Select Committee at its next meeting. In response to a question, he then described briefly the arrangements for contingency planning on services being decommissioned. The importance of members being kept abreast of developments in relation to the services involved was emphasised.

In response to a question on the role Schools would play under the Plan the Director indicated that they were being included in the consultation process taking place currently on the formulation of the Plan. Additionally, membership of the Children's Trust Executive included Head Teachers.

The Director clarified the machinery for the approval of the Plan, authority for which vested in the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chairman of the Primary Care Trust.

RESOLVED

(1)            That the Committee endorse the decisions of the Children's Trust to:

- Develop the new Plan for January, 2008;
- Task the Partnership and Children's Trust Division to undertake a joint Needs Analysis with Health and other partners as appropriate.

- Develop the new Plan with the process being clearly positioned with the Partnership and Children's Trust Division, supported by the Joint Planning and Commissioning Group;
  - Endorse the section on the Children's Trust developments in the review of Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09 as detailed in the report submitted;
  - Report back to the Select Committee with a draft Plan at its meeting to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2007.
- (2) That the Director of Children's Services circulate details of how the kite mark referred to in paragraph 7 of the report will be developed and operate.

## TRANSFORMING SECONDARY EDUCATION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted indicating Dudley's revised strategy to secure major capital investment in secondary education through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

In presenting the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Resources) summarised the background to the programme and indicated the next steps that would be involved, which would include consultation with schools, colleges, the Learning and Skills Council, dioceses and health and other agencies as well as Area Committees. The provisional timetable had been confirmed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and correspondence from the Department confirming that Dudley was taking the right steps in preparing for the programme was quoted in the report. The financial arrangements envisaged were reported by the Assistant Director.

A question and answer session followed in which some concern was expressed by certain members on the insistence of Government that monies allocated would depend to an extent on the establishment of academies. The reasons for the Government's introduction of academies were indicated by the Assistant Director. He also reported that, while previous bids for BSF funding had been unsuccessful because academies had not been included, the most recent indications were that the Government was taking a more flexible approach.

In response to a question regarding the security of children, if General Practitioners' Surgeries were to be included on school premises, the Assistant Director confirmed that, although firm proposals were not yet in place, security issues would be addressed. In response to a question on whether or not Pupil Referral Units were to be included in the building programme, the Director of Children's Services indicated that BSF was intended to provide for all children of secondary age whether they were in schools or other educational establishments.

In response to a further question, regarding the machinery for dealing with school organisation proposals, following the discontinuation of the School Organisation Committee, the current arrangements were explained by the Assistant Director. In relation to this issue, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the revised consultation arrangements recommended by the Working Group of the Select Committee had been approved by the Cabinet Member and that the directorate policy on consultation had been amended accordingly.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) The emerging strategy for Transforming Secondary Education, as set out in paragraph 12 and Appendix 2 to the report now submitted, be endorsed.
- (2) That members of the Select Committee be invited to submit any comments or views regarding the Transforming Secondary Education programme to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services or the Director for submission to the DCSF.
- (3) That further reports be submitted to the Select Committee as the programme progresses.
- (4) That it be noted that the Transforming Secondary Education proposals will be submitted to the Cabinet in December, rather than October and that the Forward Plan will be amended accordingly.

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the inspection findings of OFSTED on the Dudley Local Authority Adoption Service.

The inspection had found that all of the standards assessed had been met in full and in two instances the standard had been exceeded. The judgements of the inspectors against outcomes in relation to the service were set out in paragraph 11 of the report. It was noted that the three statutory requirements against which the Council was obliged to act in order to meet the legislative requirements of the Care Standards Act, 2000, the Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and National Minimum Standards had been addressed.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services) referred to the growing involvement of the Independent and private sector in fostering for under 19 year olds, as the market had developed, and acknowledged that it would be necessary for the Council to consider service investment issues in the future. A discussion on the matter ensued in which reference was made to unit costs. Arising from this, in response to a question, the Assistant Director clarified the monitoring arrangements that pertained in relation to value for money when the Council engaged the private sector, in which she also confirmed that private agencies were inspected against certain prescribed standards and that the Council had the ability to comment in this regard.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and noted.

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INSPECTION FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE  
INSPECTION IN RESPECT OF DUDLEY'S FOSTERING SERVICE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the inspection findings of the Commission for Social Care Inspection in respect of the Dudley Local Authority Adoption Service.

The report indicated that there were 28 standards which were required to be met and the inspection judgement categories were indicated in paragraph 6 of the report submitted. The service had received an overall quality rating of good. The report submitted also indicated the format and structure of the Adoption team in the Directorate of Children's Services and summarised its main work areas.

The report indicated that the inspectors had made a number of practice recommendations to improve quality and standards further and that an action plan was being drawn up to address those particular recommendations. In relation to paragraph 17 of the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services) indicated that, owing to a senior member of staff leaving the Authority for another post, consideration was being given to a restructuring of the service.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and noted.

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## SCHOOL INSPECTION, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENDED SCHOOLS

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Early Years, Youth and Education Services) reported orally on the OFSTED inspection of the schools carried out since the previous meeting of the Committee.

Seven schools had been inspected and all had received reports of satisfactory or better, one being judged as outstanding and two as good. All had met OFSTED standards.

In relation to extended schools and workforce developments, the Assistant Director reported that those schools with extended facilities had been judged as good. A programme was being developed for 52 schools to provide extended services by September, 2008 but, currently, extended services had not yet started at some 30 schools.

The other area reviewed had been teachers' workforce development, which had been judged by the Inspectorate as good.

Reference was made in the discussion to the Annual Performance Assessment meeting with OFSTED and the Director of Children's Services confirmed that a report on the meeting would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

### RESOLVED

- (1) That the oral report be received and noted.
- (2) That the intention of the Director of Children's Services to submit reports on the extended schools programme and the Annual Performance Assessment meeting with OFSTED to future meetings of the Committee, be noted.

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## QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Quarterly Corporate Performance Management report in respect of the activities relating to the terms of reference of the Committee for the first quarter of 2007/08 was submitted.

In relation to the number of looked after children adopted during the year as a percentage of looked after children, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Children's Specialist Services) indicated that the position was improving and that the target figure of 24 should be met or exceeded. She made the point, however, that the percentage figure in the report gave something of a false impression as the number of looked after children in Local Authority care had increased since the previous year.

In relation to a question on the impact the Working Group might have on Personal Education Plans (PEPs), which were still below target, the Assistant Director explained the machinery in which the Social Worker with responsibility for the preparation of the Plan would operate in conjunction with the Working Group, which was designed to be of multi-agency membership. She expressed the expectation that this action, together with the deployment of the virtual Head Teacher assigned to the Authority, would enable improvement to be achieved. The point was made by the Director of Children's Services that, because a PEP issued to a child had not been updated, this did not mean that a PEP for the child did not exist.

In response to a further question, the Assistant Director reported on the initiatives being undertaken in order to improve non-school attendance.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and noted.

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The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN