

SCRUTINY COMMISSION 1
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Minutes of a meeting of Scrutiny Commission 1 held on Monday 14th July 2008
at 6.00 pm in the Reception Suite, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT – Councillors J.A.Francis (Chairman), G.M.Green (Vice-Chairman), E.J.Greenaway, G.P.Hossell, M.J.Smith, E.M.Swift and K.L.Tomlinson and Mr.A.Atkinson (RC Diocese Representative), Mrs.M.Ward (Primary Parent Governor Representative), Mrs.M.Sedgebeer (Primary Teacher Representative), Mrs Annette Cox (Co-opted Member), Mr.D.Greenwood (Young People Forum Representative) and Miss.P.Lill (Young People Forum Representative).

OTHER MEMBER PRESENT – Councillor S.P.Burrell – Cabinet Member: Children & Young People.

OFFICERS PRESENT – Julia Almond – Corporate Director: Children & Young People, Sara Tough – Interim Head of School & Community, Chris Minton – Senior School Improvement Manager – Primary, Fiona Hensley – Senior School Improvement Manager – Inclusion, Alastair James – Principal Strategy & Development Manager – Connexions for Youth, Sarah Morris – Scrutiny Officer and Andrew Roberts – Democratic Services Officer.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Daniel Greenwood and Miss Phoebe Lill from the Young People Forum and Mrs Annette Cox to their first meetings of the Commission.

SC1-1 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 14th April 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SC1-2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor R.M.Tyler, Revd I.Terry (CE Hereford Diocesan Representative), Mr.S.Whitehouse (Secondary Parent Governor Representative), Mr.G.Raxster (CE Lichfield Diocesan Representative). Mrs.S.Harris (Primary Headteacher Representative) and Dr S.Ali (Co-opted Member).

SC1-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Councillor J.A.Francis – Chairman Group 1 and 2 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and Member Shropshire Private Nurseries Association.

Councillor G.M.Green – Governor – Abraham Darby Specialist School for the Performing Arts.

Councillor E.J.Greenaway – Member – Sure Start Plus Project Board and Member – Sure Start Jubilee Board.

Councillor M.J.Smith – Trustee Hadley Under Fives and Governor – Hadley Learning Community.

Councillor E.M.Swift – Governor – William Reynolds Infant School and Haughton School.

Councillor K.L.Tomlinson – Governor – Charlton School.

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SC1-4 SCHOOL OFSTED INSPECTIONS UPDATE REPORT

Members received the report of the Corporate Director: Children & Young People seeking to inform the Commission of the results of recent School Inspections that had been undertaken by OfSTED since the previous Commission meeting. Overall it was reported that 13 local schools inspections had been published which included 10 infant, junior and primary schools, 1 secondary school, 1 special school and 1 cross phase school.

The Commission were referred to a number of key successes as outlined within the report the main one of which was that one school St Matthew's Primary School had achieved outstanding in all 5 of the inspection categories, which was extremely hard to achieve and upon which the school was congratulated. Other key highlights included that 9 of the 13 schools were judged as being good or outstanding in terms of overall effectiveness and also in achievement and standards. In 10 of the schools leadership and management was also judged as good or outstanding. Finally it was reported that 12 out of the 13 schools had demonstrated the capacity to continue to improve even further in the future.

Members were extremely pleased with the results as indicated within the report and in particular the St Matthew's Primary School inspection.

RESOLVED – that the Chairman would write a letter of congratulations to St Matthew's Primary School on behalf of the Commission.

SC1-5 SOUTHALL SCHOOL – OFSTED ACTION PLAN

The Commission was referred to the briefing note from the Senior School Improvement Manager – Inclusion in connection with the action plan that had been prepared following the recent OfSTED Inspection Plan which had adjudged that Southall School should be placed in Special Measures.

By way of background Members were informed that Southall School was a special school for pupils aged eleven to sixteen with complex and moderate learning difficulties and also that their attainment on school entry was below or well below that expected for their age. In September 2006 the school had been re-designated from an all-age school to its existing designation. There were currently 147 pupils on roll, numbers from BME communities was low but a high number of pupils (45%) were entitled to free school meals and six pupils were in public care.

Members were referred to the five key issues that had arisen from the inspection and it was further noted that the LA and the school had produced robust action plans in order to address the key issues which were currently being implemented. The aim of which was to ensure the removal of the school from special measures as quickly as possible and it was hoped that this could be achieved within 12 months.

Details of the steps taken to support the school were outlined to Members as detailed on the briefing note. The Senior School Improvement Manager – Inclusion had taken a strong lead in ensuring that the support of consultants and other professionals was accessed as appropriate for both staff and curriculum development purposes and for evaluating progress towards the action plan. It was

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also reported that strong working relationships with senior staff and governors had been developed and that also the school received regular meetings to provide support and monitor progress. Members were further informed that the school would be revisited by HMI in September to assess on progress against the action plan that had been achieved – further inspections would be undertaken at later dates. The Commission requested further update reports whilst the school remained in special measures.

Councillor S.P.Burrell – Cabinet Member: Children & Young People reported that he had visited the school twice the latter visit being after the OfSTED Inspection and he advised the meeting that the sense of ownership within the school was very strong. He stated that everybody should concentrate on looking forward to the future.

SC1-6 UPDATE REPORT ON R:EVOLUTION

The Interim Head of School and Community provided to the Commission an update report on R:Evolution and to summarise project progress to date. Members were reminded that the project was based on Stafford Park. Members were referred to the briefing paper which provided details of the initial development of the Young People's Centre. The vision behind the centre was the creation of a multi agency venue with a strong young person centred ethos.

The Commission were also informed that at the same time as the establishment of the centre – the Council were experiencing accommodation problems for the Key Stage 3 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which needed a permanent base. Following discussions between the Council's Children Services and the PCT the concept of the young person facility was developed. The two statutory partners were then joined by a third partner – "nacro Shropshire", with other support being received from other children's agencies which included Connexions, Youth Development Service, Youth Offending Service, Schools, Police etc.

Members were reminded that in July 2005 Cabinet had approved a report which set out how the development of the project would operate over a three phase process. Phase 1 had been successfully completed with Phases 2 and 3 to follow in due course. The PRU had recently appointed an excellent Head of PRU who had also successfully ensured a successful OfSTED Inspection. It was further reported that some twilight and evening use was now being developed with drug and substance misuse teenagers as well as some targeted support for LAC children.

The Commission were advised of the current challenges facing the centre, the main issue being the withdrawal of Nacro from the direct management of the building to allow for the appointment of a Centre Manager. At present a twelve month seconded post was currently being advertised and it was hoped that an appointment would be made in time for the commencement of the new term in September 2008. It was also acknowledged that the centre was well placed now to commence towards the implementation of Phases 2 and 3 however this had been delayed due to the nature of how the centre was funded. The management board now felt that in order to complete the remaining phases it was important that the profile of the centre should be raised. It was also acknowledged that the drop in sessions required more support at this time. One of the issues was the gap of associated agencies being willing to use the centre and to utilise the facility as a means of supporting delivery of services

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to vulnerable teenagers. Whilst it was acknowledged that schools had been very supportive it was noted that support from other agencies could be generated by means of a more corporate drive.

Another significant challenge was transport provision and it was acknowledged that the location of the centre provided a block to access especially in the evenings.

The Management Board were now actively establishing a potential operational model that would best support the implementation of Phase 2 and eventually Phase 3. This would be centred around a core team to support the general operation of the building as well as finalising the timetable for the targeted drop in times in the evenings.

After the presentation a number of members raised questions in relation to the Centre (responses are indicated within the response appearing within the following brackets). These included:

Councillor Tomlinson – raised a question in relation to the development of the centre and she stated that she had not recalled that the planned development would be over three distinct phases. She also raised an enquiry in connection with her concerns in relation to the overall management and that the Centre had not delivered on every aspect. (By way of response it was confirmed that the development of the Centre had always been planned to be introduced within three distinct phases. In connection with behaviour management it was acknowledged that there had been some issues in the early stages – however these had now been addressed and it was also confirmed that the present Head of the Centre was very experienced particularly when dealing with behaviour issues).

Mr Atkinson – whilst expressing the view that the underlying principles behind the centre were excellent he did query the location of the facility particularly citing the transport issues. (In response whilst it was stated that in some respects the location of the centre was absolutely ideal to avoid it being “linked” to a particular area, although it was acknowledged that transport in the evening was an ongoing issue).

Councillor Greenaway – enquired as to what the maximum capacity of the PRU was. (It was confirmed that the maximum capacity of the PRU was 36 although due to the Joint Use nature of the Centre it was only possible to have a maximum of 18 pupils at any one time as regard had to be given to the other users at the Centre. It was further stated that the Joint Use operation allowed some very good opportunities to extend curriculum provision. It was also suggested as to whether the Commission would wish to re-visit the Centre).

Mrs Sedgebeer – raised a question in connection with future funding provision – she also queried that the proposed appointment although only a secondment seemed to indicate that there was no long term vision for the Centre. (By way of response it was confirmed that there was a long term vision and that once the further developments were in place this would in turn further assist in securing the long term provision at the Centre. It was further suggested that there should be a further report on development of the Centre to a future Commission meeting).

RESOLVED –

- (a) that a visit to R:Evolution for Scrutiny Members would be arranged, and;
- (b) that a further update on the development of the Centre would be presented to the Commission at an appropriate future date.

SC1-7 INITIAL FEEDBACK – JOINT AREA REVIEW

The Commission received a verbal report in connection with the recently completed JAR Inspection from the Corporate Director: Children & Young People. She reported that at present only the draft feedback had been received on which the Council had formally responded – a further draft would be made available in August upon which the Council would be invited to respond with the full final report being published in September 2008.

Accordingly the Commission was informed that she was unable to share the full details of the Inspection findings at this particular time.

However it was reported that all staff had worked very hard and had pulled together during the Inspection, which had resulted in over 70 interviews being conducted during the Inspection. The JAR had in particular focussed on the following individual areas – Safeguarding of children; Disabilities; Young People in Care; Teenage Pregnancy and Youth Provision.

Whilst the Commission were unable to receive the full details the work associated with Youth Provision and the work of the Clusters and the Active Involvement work was also recognised. Although the initial response was very positive it was also acknowledged that some areas would need to progress their published plans further in order to continue the acknowledged excellent work of the Council.

SC1-8 FORWARD PLAN

Members were informed of the forthcoming Cabinet decisions contained within the Forward Plan which covered the period July 2008 – October 2008 for the Children & Young People portfolio.

There was a general discussion in connection with the overall effectiveness of this particular item as to whether the information provided within the Forward Plan was sufficient and relevant. It was also stated that some items contained within the overall Forward Plan would cut across or affect more than one specific Portfolio. It was enquired as to whether more information could be provided in the form of a brief report being submitted.

Members were reminded that they did receive on a monthly basis a link that enabled them to view the complete Forward Plan and further that if they wished to raise particular items they could do so.

RESOLVED – that this item would be submitted and considered at a future Scrutiny Management Board meeting or workshop.

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SC1-9 CORPORATE PARENTING MONITORING GROUP – ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

Members received the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Monitoring Group (CPSMG) for the 2007/08 Council Year, which provided a summary of the work that had been undertaken by the Group, the key issues that had been identified during the year and the issues that the group members would pursue at future meetings.

The Commission was reminded that the CPSMG was the main mechanism by which scrutiny members could monitor the performance of services to children and young people in the care of the Council. The Chairman of the Monitoring Group, Councillor G.M.Green referred the Commission to the contents of her report and also to the newsletter that had been produced that was also attached to the report. She also emphasised that although the CPSMG had a key role in monitoring performance and services, all elected members had a role as corporate parents.

The Chairman of the Group wished to record thanks to all the Members and Officers who had been involved with the work of the Monitoring Group during the year. She also wished to thank those Members who had given their time in order to undertake the Regulation 33 visits to Council-run residential children's homes. She requested other members of the Commission not on the sub-group to consider taking part in Regulation 33 visits (for which full training was provided)..

Members of the Commission wished to acknowledge the work of the Monitoring Group and the input that was received from the various children and young people who were directly involved with the Group. The Commission also praised the quality and production of the newsletter that was attached to the report.

SC1-10 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTees

The Commission noted the formal appointments of new co-optees to the Commission namely Mr.D.Greenwood and Miss.P.Lill (Representatives from the Young People Forum), and Mrs.A.Cox and Dr.S.Ali.

SC1-11 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE/REVIEW OF MEETING

The in-depth review of School Travel was due to be completed by the end of August. The Commission had one outstanding review – Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, focussing on the transition into Adult Services for children with learning disabilities. This was to be a joint review with the Scrutiny Commission for Health & Care, but that Commission was currently involved with other reviews and would not be able to start a new review for a number of months.

RESOLVED – that the Scrutiny Commission 1 – Children & Young People would defer their involvement with the review of Adults with Learning Disabilities until the Scrutiny Commission 3 – Health & Care was in a position to proceed with this review.

Members were requested for issues that could be considered either at a future Commission meeting or as a short in-depth review, to commence in September. The

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following items were suggested:- Youth Services, Provision and Effectiveness of PPA time within Schools and the Profile of Young People within the Press. In connection with the profile of young people within the press it was suggested as to whether Charlotte Baker could be invited to the next meeting at which this issue could be discussed further.

RESOLVED – that the September Commission meeting would have a single agenda item of Raising the Positive Profile of Young People, and that the November meeting would consider Youth Services and the Provision and Effectiveness of PPA time within Schools.

SC1-12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission noted that the meeting dates for the remainder of the 2008/09 Civic Year were noted as Monday 8th September 2008, Monday 3rd November 2008, Monday 19th January 2009 and Monday 30th March 2009.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman.....

Date.....