

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at 6.00 pm in the Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

**PRESENT:** Councillors G Green (Chair), S Burrell, J Greenaway, M. Ion, C Turley

**Co-optees:** Mr A Atkinson

**Officers:** Jim Collins (Assistant Director: Education, Culture & Skills); Clive Jones (Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services); Guy Kershaw (Project Director for BSF); Christine Marsh (Service Delivery Manager- Early Intervention); T Clarke (Scrutiny Officer).

#### **CYPSC-45 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 26th March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **CYPSC-46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor A Mackenzie, J Loveridge  
Co-optee: Dr S Ali, Ms M Ward and Ms E Ofori

#### **CYPSC-47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

#### **CYPSC-48 BSF UPDATE**

The Project Director explained that the Building Schools for Future (BSF) update would be delivered in two parts, firstly by himself Guy Kershaw Project Director and secondly by Jim Collins Assistant Director of Education, Culture & Skills who would update Members on the consultation of the Secondary School provision under the BSF programme.

The Project Director for Building Schools for Future (BSF) gave a verbal update to the Committee Members on the progress of the BSF project.

- The new canopy had been put in place at the Abraham Darby School and the internal work for the school has started.
- The Primary school and Leisure centre had successfully been completed and all minor problems had been resolved.
- Traffic and parking issues had caused annoyance with the local neighbourhood and yellow lines had been put in to resolve this. The Head had been acting as a traffic warden to ensure the safety of the children and a pedestrian crossing has been added to the project.
- The School handover date was 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and the official opening would be 7<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The project was due for completion in December 2012.

- Residents of Canonbie Lea had experienced flooding before Christmas and a request had been received to check the level of the playing fields. An independent surveyor had been appointed to complete this work and the drainage engineer will speak to the residents and the landscape architect to ascertain what can be done to resolve the issue of flooding.
- At the Phoenix School, Kier Moss had erected the site cabins and the piling was due to start on 30<sup>th</sup> April. The proposed completion date had been set as September 2014.
- At the Newport Girls' High School the demountable structures are due to be replaced during the Summer holidays.
- Work commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> April to build the skills centre at the back of the Mount Gilbert school.
- The procurement process for Ercall Wood had nine bidders apply and of these two have been shortlisted. These preferred bidders will be informed next week and will compete on the design of the Ercall Wood School over the next eight to nine weeks. The aim will be for the project to build the new school to be started in November.
- Following the appointment of the preferred Ercall Wood bidder in early July, the remainder of the programme would be taken forward. If necessary, the remainder of the programme could be accelerated to ensure that completion takes place as early as possible.

Members asked the Project Director of the BSF a number of questions.

**When will the HSE report be available?**

The Project Director explained that in the interim it was unlikely that the Council would have access to the report to ensure that there would be no prejudice in the event of a future prosecution taking place.

**How are we going to reassure the parents that there is no danger of injury from the new canopy?**

Safety checks have been carried out on the Primary School and the Leisure centre and everything has passed the required standards. The new canopy design is supported by 7 columns rather than the previous design of 1 column. There are ongoing safety checks which will continue to take place until the school is handed over in June.

**Was the flood identified as a risk at the start of the development?**

Following a heavy downpour in October/ November 2010 residents of Canonbie Lea experienced flooding. At the time, this was attributed to the fact that the site drainage had not been completed and the water off the fields and the temporary car park ran into the residents gardens. Following this incident full drainage and additional drainage to the standard of a 100 year event and an additional 30% volume has been constructed and approved by the Telford & Wrekin Council engineers. A CCTV report had been commissioned as part of this work to ensure that there were no blockages in the drains.

**Members suggested that residents on the periphery of new developments would benefit from having a separate meeting with Council Officers prior to the residents meeting to raise their individual issues with the project.**

The Project Director explained that the Council would be working with residents to resolve local issues as each project commenced, for example working with the residents of Golf Links Lane on the existing parking issue around the Ercall Wood School.

**Is it possible to confirm the number of secondary school places in the Borough?**

There would be 12,500 school places across the Borough, which has been calculated to take into account the proposed new developments plus 3.5%.

The Assistant Director for Education, Culture & Skills gave a verbal report to Members.

The results of the consultation were:

- The Faith School received 6 positive responses, 9 negative responses and 37 general concerns
- The move from the current Charlton site to the site of the BRJ received 16 positive responses and no negative responses
- The merger of the Sutherland and the Wrockwardine Wood School 2 negative responses, 7 general concerns and 1621 negative photocopied letters which were from either teachers, children or parents.
- Lord Silken School 9 positive responses, no negative responses.

A number of key concerns had been raised during the consultation and the Assistant Director for Education explained to Members what had been done to address these concerns.

- The consultation was extended to accommodate the diocesan engagement with the parishioners regarding the Faith School in Priorslee and to clarify the transport arrangements for the children already attending the Blessed Robert Johnson (BRJ) school and their siblings.
- An analysis of projected pupil numbers was provided to the Diocesan partners which demonstrated that the reduction in the size of the Faith school from 1050 to 900 would still provide ample places for those seeking a place on the grounds of faith.
- The dioceses were also informed that the contract for each project included the option to add extra classrooms onto the schools accommodating 150 pupils should the number of pupils rise in the future.
- Following the consultation, the original provision for places, had been increased at the new Oakengates Leisure Centre site school from 1050 to 1200 to accommodate the current projected numbers for pupils attending the school. The parents and staff from the Wrockwardine Wood and Sutherland Schools acknowledged that they wanted the lessons from a previous merger to be taken into consideration in this merger.
- The third concern raised by the residents of Salisbury Avenue was the site of the new Faith school. The proposed sites were initially the site owned by Ricoh, the site on Salisbury Avenue and the old Celestica site by the lake. To assist in the decision making, representatives of the Priorslee Action Group had been invited to meet officers to discuss their concerns. Since the start of the consultation the Ricoh site was no longer available and the preferred site is the site to the right of

the Garden Centre on Salisbury Avenue. As part of this proposal a traffic survey would be completed.

- Engineers had been asked about the potential to put the Southall School onto the site of the Lord Silkin, but the site analysis highlighted that it would not be large enough to fit all the schools and the skills centre together.
- The 16+ Centre based at the Lord Silkin School was considered a necessary part of the regeneration assisting in tackling unemployment in Brookside and Stirchley.
- The Head of Southall School had been assured that Southall School would continue to be developed as an important part of the programme, although it could not be amalgamated onto the same site as a mainstream school.

Following the report, a number of issues were raised by Members:

**Sue Harris the Headteacher at the Shortwood Primary School had raised the issue of ensuring that the consultation takes place with the primary schools that feed into the proposed new secondary schools.**

All feeder schools had been invited to take part in the consultation and 11,000 invitations were sent to parents.

**The Committee had previously recommended that the Headteacher's and staff did not lead the consultation meetings. Has this been taken into consideration for the next phase of the consultation?**

This has been taken into consideration and all meetings had since been led by Council Officers.

**There have been concerns raised that the people who have taken part in the consultation have not received feedback.**

The staff at both the Wrockwardine Wood and the Sutherland Schools are both onboard with the merger and the school now needs to market its vision for the future.

**As areas are developed and pupil numbers increase, at what point does the project receive more money from the government to support the rising pupil numbers?**

The current projections allow for the housing developments up until 2018 plus an additional 3.5% of children. Also there is already a reduction in revenue for primary aged children so there would not be an increase in the money available to the Council.

**Can academies dictate the numbers of pupils they enrol?**

The academies are able to dictate the number of pupils they accept which could be a problem if school places have been projected. However, we have maintained good relationships with the academies and will continue to work to do so.

**What is the split between the age ranges for the Faith school?**

There will be places for 750 pupils aged 11-16 years and 150 sixth form places.

**How many year 6 pupils are eligible to go to the Faith School and will there be enough places if all the pupils from Priorslee Primary and Redhill Primary want to attend?**

Having assessed previous trends only about 50% of the pupils from the Priorslee would be applying to attend the Faith School. However, as with all BSF schools should the pupil numbers increase in the future then the school could be extended as part of the brief that the developers have received to design buildings with the potential to expand.

**While it is superb that the Faith school will have post 16 provision and it is understood why there is no post 16 provision on the Oakengates Leisure Centre site, it is still a concern that there is no post 16 provision at Oakengates.**

The reason that there is no post 16 provision at Oakengates is that the site could not accommodate 16 + provision.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Assistant Director for Education, Culture & Skills provides an update to the Committee in 6 months time.**

## **CYPSC-49 CHILD POVERTY**

The Service Delivery Manager for Early Intervention updated Members on progress made following the workshop in October and highlighted that child poverty is the symptom of something else that is happening to the child or the family which could be one or a number of factors such as low aspirations, the community that they live in, failing to engage in school or financial difficulties.

- The Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services said that the Council would be using the principles of the Government's Social Justice Strategy to tackle worklessness, family poverty, education issues, drug or alcohol dependency and debt.
- A Strengthening Families Task Force had been set up to oversee early intervention projects aimed at improving life chances by supporting families to reduce their need to access more costly personalised intervention, such as child protection.
- The Service Delivery Manager for Early Intervention reiterated that part of the early intervention is to strengthen existing projects supporting families by engaging with communities and exploring ways of creating community ambassadors.
- The Woodside & Sutton Hill Family Groups had existed for over 20 years and had continued to flourish. Telford & Wrekin Council had continued to support the Family Groups in partnership with the Children's Centre for the last 8 years. The Family Groups had provided a necessary contact into the community which had led to families who needed support then going on to trust the Council and be able to gain access to more services. The difficulty in the current climate for small groups was to identify funding opportunities as lottery funding is normally accessed by larger groups..
- A need had been identified to strengthen the bid writing capacity of small groups involved in early intervention. A brief had been put together to help enable groups to bid for funding as not-for-profit organisations.

- In the recent allocation of early intervention funding several bids were received and a combined bid from the Woodside/ Sutton Hill groups and Home Start allowed them to meet the funding criteria.  
The funding amount received by the Sutton Hill group will be lower than previously but they will continue to engage with the hard to reach communities but with a narrower range of services.

The Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services gave the Members an update on what has happened since December's meeting.

- The service restructure had been completed and a new approach was being undertaken to tackle the issues..
- The Government is making £380,000 of funding available for the Council to tackle troubled families. These are families who may be involved in crime, anti social behaviour, truanting from school, or be out of work. These families can be a high cost to the public purse.
- The Government has also set aside £500,000 as part of the European Social Fund to tackle worklessness.
- The Council would be required to identify families that need intervention. The finances available will mean there are gaps in provision which would mean that the Council would be working in partnership with other organisations.
- Once the Council had identified the families most in need of support, they would be checked against the list held by Job Centre Plus.
- The strengthening Families Task Force would work with the Community Engagement Team to engage with communities
- Family Connect the first point of contact for Children's Services would aim to ensure that the public have enough confidence in the service to contact the Council.
- The findings from the Poverty workshops would be fed into the work of the Strengthening Families Task Force

Following the report, officers responded to a number of questions and comments made by Members:

**Young people living in poverty outside one of the areas named as being an area of social deprivation may not get access to the resources of other young people in an area of social deprivation.**

The Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services said that this would be tackled using the new approach to considering poverty.

**Members recommended that the Telford Council of Churches is contacted regarding the fact that there is no diocese representation in the Strengthening Families Task Force,**

This information will be forwarded to the Director of Children Services.

**Members know the issues in their wards and it would seem sensible to work with them. Often residents will call the Member so that they remain anonymous rather than calling the Police.**

The Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services said that the Members and the Police would be engaged.

**Members remarked that Home Start had been successful in securing funding and had assisted the community with parenting skills and developing volunteering skills.**

The acceptance by the community is something that is essential which is why local volunteers and Ambassadors are crucial.

**How will we know that the Project had made any impact?**

**What indicators have been written into the project?**

Each of the five areas will have to identify approaches and indicators to ensure that the project is a success. The Family Intervention Project measures the level that the family starts on and continues to monitor success throughout the project. This or a similar model may be used.

**Families have multiple factors that affect the reason why they are in poverty, how would these be addressed?**

An holistic approach will be taken to tackle multiple problems such as attendance at school, long term unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour. The cost effectiveness of the approach would be measured.

In the past troubled families had cost the government around £9bn a year, £8bn of which was spent on the effects or impact that the families had caused in the community and £1bn was spent on supporting the families. The aim was to re address the balance of this by increasing expenditure on supporting young people. For each of the troubled families identified by the Council a total of £4,000 would be paid, of which £3,200 would be the attachment fee and £800 would be awarded if the intervention was successful which would be measured by each child achieving 60% attendance at school and not been involved in any anti social behaviour for the last 6 months.

**Would it be possible for Scrutiny to receive this data quarterly as long as it is anonymous?**

It is possible for Scrutiny to have this information but the benefits are not expected to be seen until the 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

**Is there a Member of staff in school who will be working with the Council to tackle issues of low attendance?**

Family Connect has been launched as a single point of contact for children's and family services. Schools have been encouraged to contact Family Connect to report truancy issues which would feed into the overall picture about problem families. The single point of contact which has been launched and encourages schools to contact them, to ensure that the whole picture is captured for problem families. It is thought that either the Headteacher or the Learning Mentor would contact Family Connect.

**A member commented that it is important is to set realistic targets and there needs to be a realisation that the Council would not be successful with every family.**

**Members commented that an opportunity has been raised that Magistrates may be available to work with excluded young people to stop them getting in to further trouble.**

**Have you thought about the people who have been involved in anti social behaviour but have then become model citizens?**

This is what the Strengthening Families Task Force will be aiming to achieve working alongside professionals such as the Adult Social Workers who for example will support those involved in drug abuse.

**A sub group of Members from the Committee made a site visit to the Sutton Hill Family Group which seemed to be the kind of model that the Council were looking to support. However, a few weeks later in the local press it said that the group had run out of funding and was closing. How can this have happened?**

Unfortunately for the group it had not been successful in securing funding. It then turned to the Council who were not able to offer assistance without contravening the procurement processes that are in place. The group were invited to bid for early intervention funding and merged with Home Start and the Woodside Family group in a bid, which was successful.

**There are groups with great volunteers that lack the management or financial skills to put together funding bids. How can the Council support volunteers to acquire these skills?**

The Council is considering how to support voluntary groups to develop their capacity to secure funding, possibly through CVS.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Assistant Director for Family & Cohesion Services reports back to Scrutiny quarterly.**

## **CYPSC-50 FORWARD PLAN**

Cllr Mike Ion requested that the Children in Care performance monitoring information should be included on the agenda for future meetings. The Chair agreed that this would be included on the agenda for the next meeting. .

The next meeting was scheduled for 22nd May 2012 for Members to receive a report on the Children's Autism Strategy.

The meeting ended at 7.50pm

**Chairman:**

**Date:**