

**Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 5th September, 2011.**

**Present:-** Councillors Dar, Davis, P K Mann, Minhas, Sharif and Smith

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors M S Mann, Plimmer, Stokes and Strutton

**Non Voting Co-opted Members:-** Sandra Malik

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor O'Connor and Abe and Charlie McGeachie

**PART 1**

**13. Declaration of Interest**

None.

**14. Election of Chair**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, nominations were sought for the election of a chair. Nominations were received and seconded for Councillor P K Mann who was duly appointed.

**Resolved –** That Councillor P K Mann be appointed Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel for the 6<sup>th</sup> September meeting.

(Councillor P K Mann in the Chair)

**15. Minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel held on 9th June 2011**

The minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel on 9<sup>th</sup> June were approved as a correct record.

**16. Minutes of the last meeting held on 9th June 2011**

The minutes of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> June were approved as a correct record.

**17. Member Questions**

One written question was submitted regarding the improvement plans in place by Slough primary schools that had received non-satisfactory Ofsted notices.

Robin Crofts, Assistant Director confirmed that amongst the range contributory factors identified, of particular concern were issues around leadership and management. The LEA was working closely with schools to address these

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challenges through the provision of early support. However as per the change of focus precipitated by The Importance of Teaching White Paper the emphasis now lay with schools in terms of responsibility for self improvement. The changing role of the School Improvement Team meant that previous support provided was no longer feasible. With the work of the LEA, the six original schools that had received improvement notices, only four now remained. The LEA continues to work on strengthening inter-school partnerships and ensuring that schools are working well together in clusters. Further, whilst resources are limited, there is a strong focus in ensuring that spending decisions made meet the agendas as above.

### **18. Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and LAC**

Clair Pyper, Director for Education and Children's Services provided an update paper on the recent Ofsted inspection and the work the council was doing to address the issues raised. It was confirmed that whilst the council was informed that an improvement notice would be issued, the final signed version had not yet been received. The Improvement Plan would incorporate any recommendations made by Ofsted.

A number of detailed questions were raised including ones eliciting further details on case audits, the delivery of reviews and the composition of the Improvement Panel. Clarity was also sought regarding the recent removal of the Independent Chair of the LSCB. The Director confirmed that whilst operationally independent, contractually the Chair was still accountable to Slough Borough Council (as the employer) and as such as the direct line manager, the Director for education retained the right to determine future employment. It was confirmed that whilst the decision had been made by Slough Borough Council, it had been made following consultation with partners in the LSCB. A question was asked on the training regime in place for officers. Margaret Dennison, Assistant Director Children and Families confirmed that in addition to the standard training programme, additional external training had been arranged and this would be available to staff on an ongoing basis.

Questions were sought from members in attendance. The Chair confirmed that given time constraints, questions from members in attendance would be limited to two.

The meeting was adjourned so that copies of a letter received could be distributed to members in attendance.

A question was received on the commitment of the commissioner to ensure that issues raised through the recent Ofsted inspection would be dealt with in an inclusive and participatory way. A further question on child trafficking was overruled on the basis that it was not relevant to the agenda item being discussed. A third question was then received on the processes the council employs to identify and deal with children that were outside the system.

The Commissioner confirmed that there had been an explicit commitment made to ensure that the issues identified would be addressed in an inclusive and participatory way. The Director of Education and Children's Services elaborated on the processes employed by the council, alone and working in collaboration with partners to try and identify children that were outside the system. However due to the very nature of such children this was not easy or straightforward.

A question was received about the policies and procedures employed by the council to deal with children at risk. It was confirmed that a copy of the policy would be sent

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to the Member. The Director also confirmed that a meeting request had been received and that her office would respond to this and a meeting arranged in due course.

The Chair asked that an update paper be brought to the next panel meeting in October.

### **19. Slough Youth Offending Team Progress Report**

Shelley La Rose, Youth Offending Team Head of Service presented the paper on the inspection of youth offending services, the recommendations and progress against the Inspection Improvement Plan and how progress would be reported to the YOT Management Board. The service manager confirmed that whilst the Slough YOT continues to perform strongly, the inspection report did highlight areas where practice would need to be improved. This included moderate improvement in areas such as safeguarding and public protection and substantial improvement in public protection. Responding to the findings, Slough YOT had begun working to the Improvement Action Plan which has been signed off by the inspectors and YOT management Board

A number of questions were received from Members in particular there was an interest in why performance in particular areas such as timeliness and quality of assessments had been poor. A question was asked on why, given the demographics of Slough performance on diversity wasn't better? Members also asked a question on the period the service was working to, to make improvements and address the recommendations made.

The Head of Service confirmed that the YOT had 12 months from the receipt of the acceptance of the Inspection Action Plan, by the inspectors to institute the changes needed. The Head of Service also confirmed that whilst some of the judgements had been disappointing, it was important to note that in a number of areas the work had been undertaken but not documented. Given the inspection sought explicit documentation of actions, the absence of these meant that the service was marked down. In terms of diversity, the service had been penalised for adopting the standard definition of diversity with its focus on race, gender and disability. The inspection adopted a much broader definition. The service was putting more emphasis on following procedures, guidelines would be re-visited and training provided to staff that needed it.

The Chair asked that given the early stages in implementing the improvement plan, a further update in six months would be welcomed.

### **20. Academies Report for Scrutiny**

Robin Crofts, Assistant Director for Inclusion introduced the paper detailing the current position on Academies in Slough and possible future developments. The Assistant Director confirmed that following Slough's first Academy (Langleywood) in 2008, the borough currently had six academies as of August 2011. Beechwood school was in the process of consulting about its future status with a view of transferring to Academy status by January 2012. It was very likely that given this trend, a majority of secondary schools would have transferred to Academy status within the next (approx) eighteen months. It was important to note that whilst transferring to Academy status meant that the school would no longer fall within the immediate influence of the Local Education Authority (LEA), the close relationship

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enjoyed by schools, both amongst each other, and with the LEA meant that there would still be a close working relationship.

Members raised a number of questions including the admissions policies in Academy schools, the monitoring schools, the responsibility for managing school places and whether Academy schools enjoyed charitable status.

The Assistant Director confirmed that that admissions policies would be the preserve of Academies and the LEA would not be able to influence. The planning for school places however would still fall under the remit of the LEA and thus an ongoing relationship would need to be maintained. Monitoring of schools would be carried out by central government who would adopt many of the responsibilities previously held by the LEA. The officers were not able to answer the query on the possible charitable status of Academies although an answer and it was confirmed that an answer would be provided outside of the meeting.

### **21. Integrated Youth Support Services**

Ellen O'Farrell, Youth Service and Participation Manager introduced the paper setting out the progress that had been made in delivering the new Integrated Youth Support Service since the proposal was agreed at Cabinet in March 2011. Notable developments included the full integration of Connexions to the IYSS. The latter had now full responsibility for the NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment). There was also now a single point of access to all targeted services previously provided by the Youth Service, Connexions and the Health Improvement Team. From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 the IYSS gradually phased out all universal youth clubs previously delivered by the Youth Service. From the approximately 1,019 services that had been available (as of February 2010 – approximately 50 activities per week that had been open have now come to an end. A number of young people have compiled petitions on the back of this requesting that their youth club remains open.

A number of questions were raised by Members on a broad range of issues including the impact of the transfer of the connexions service and further details on the nature of the petitions and the number of signatories. The Officer confirmed that the exact impact of the transfer of Connexions on the management of NEET figures was hard to determine. This would be more clearer as the year progresses. Also important to note that September is a difficult period as there is usually a spike in the number of young people certifying as NEET. The Youth Service and Participation Manager confirmed that exact details on the number of signatories to the petitions was known and that an answer will be provided outside the meeting.

### **22. Consideration of reports marked to be noted/for information**

No reports were received.

#### **22.1 Condition of School Estate**

The Project Officer for Asset Management presented a paper on the conditions of school premises. Members noted the contents of the report and thanked the officer for the presentation.

### **23. Forward Work Programme**

Members asked for additional papers to be brought to forthcoming panels including

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- A follow up paper on Academies (March 2012)
- An update on the YOT report for March 2012

### **24. Attendance Record**

**Resolved-** That the attendance record be noted.

### **25. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.35 pm and closed at 10.00 pm)