

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 17th March, 2008.

Present:- Councillors Maclsaac (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Dhillon, Mann, O'Connor and Pabbi.

Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Sandy Hopkinson, Primary School Representative
Margaret Lenton, Head Teacher Representative

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors P Choudhry, Finn and Jenkins.

PART I

45. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

46. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28th January, 2008 were agreed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Jenkins in the list of attendees.

47. Schools' OfSTED Inspections

An update on the outcome of schools' OfSTED inspections from between October, 2007 and February, was provided for Members' information. The report primarily contained good news concerning the schools that had received OfSTED inspections. The summary of results showed that all grades were 'good' or 'outstanding'. Officers informed the panel that the inspections that had taken place in the previous few weeks had also shown good results. The Director of Education and Children's Services noted that parents were beginning to recognise the success of Slough schools and the applications to Slough secondary schools had increased significantly this year.

Members placed on record that their congratulations be conveyed to the schools concerned and that Officers be commended for producing a clear and concise report.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

48. Slough 2007 Key Stages Summary Results

This report contained good news and showed that the majority of students in schools were achieving very well. The foundation results were good considering the base that children started school with. Key Stage 1 results further improved on the foundation results. Although Slough's Key Stage 2

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 17.03.08

results were often seen as a weakness they had improved from previous years. The reason for the dip in results at this stage was due to the high level of mobility in Slough schools. Those pupils beginning and ending the stage in Slough schools achieved very well. New measures of progress were to be introduced and Officers felt that these would improve the results further. Results from Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were also exceptionally good.

A Member thanked the Officer for the explanation for the slight anomaly in the results at Key Stage 2 and suggested that it would be useful in future to receive a breakdown of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 results between selective and non-selective schools. It was noted in the past two or three years comprehensives have improved massively and the grammar schools have retained their excellent standards. A co-opted Member noted that at Slough grammar schools the results were taken for Key Stage 3 at the end of Year 8, a year early, as they were taking part in a national pilot programme. The Scrutiny Panel passed on their commendations to the schools.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

49. Slough's Disabled Children's Residential Respite Unit Breakaway - Statement of Purpose

Robin Crofts outlined this report and introduced Jackie Wright and Sue Betts who worked more closely with the Breakaway children's home and would provide further information to the Members. Sue Betts, the Manager of the children's home, gave a detailed explanation to Members of some of the information included in the report. Thirty children had access to respite care at the unit; some of these just for teatime visits, some had one or two overnight stays a month and some were on a part care programme in order to prevent family breakdown or out of area care. A recent OfSTED report received by the unit ranked the provision overall as good with no recommendations for improvement.

The Chair noted that many of the children attending the unit had a number of difficulties and the competency of the staff managed this well. It was good that there was a unit such as this within the Borough. It was agreed that a visit for a Councillor would be arranged. The Director of Education and Children's Services informed the panel that Breakaway offered continuity of care for children as well as continuity for their education and health care needs as many attended the paediatric unit at Wexham Park Hospital. Mr Crofts confirmed that after Easter Arbour Vale residential unit would be opening which would provide 12 beds. Arbour Vale would cater for children on the autistic spectrum and would be able to support a large number in due course. Although with a slightly different remit it would work together with the Breakaway unit and therefore an amended statement of purpose may need to be reviewed for next year and brought back to the Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved - That the contents of the report be noted and that the Statement of Purpose be approved.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 17.03.08

50. Youth Offending Team Progress Report

Shelly LaRose, Youth Offending Team (YOT) Manager, presented the report to the Panel. Members were reminded that the Slough YOT was a partnership arrangement funded by Slough's Education and Children's Services, Thames Valley Probation Service, Health Service – Berkshire East Primary Care Trust and Thames Valley Police. The plan was produced yearly and the work of the YOT was divided into statutory provision and preventive work. It was noted that much more preventative work was being done at present, in line with the direction received from Central Government. Much of the work aimed to achieve a balance when dealing with addressing offending behaviour in order to make Slough safer.

It was noted that motoring and violence against the person offences had gone down which reflected the excellent work of the YOT. However, there was a small cohort committing theft offences which had gone up over the past year along with drug related offences. However this group is now believed to have moved on from Slough although others may already be taking their place. One of the key objectives of the YOT was to communicate with young people to bring down offending. To this purpose a youth café had been set up in Cippenham in order to engage with young people. It was noted that one of the big challenges for the YOT was to get young people into education training or employment. Cumulatively Slough had achieved 71% of young people in education, training or employment. Although this was short of the 90% target set by the Government, it had increased dramatically from 40%. There was a 6% target of young people to be on remand. Slough was currently at 9%, this was due to just one or two people in a small cohort. It was noted that small changes could dramatically affect percentages. The YOT was meeting offending behaviour reduction targets and working with MALTS. It was reported that this would be an important function in the future.

Reoffending was due to be looked into over the 2008/09 year as the criteria for this had changed. At previous meeting of the Panel Members requested a breakdown by types of offence. More females than males were offending at present; this may be due to a link with drugs. It was mainly 16 and 17 year olds who were the most prolific offenders. The ethnic breakdown of young offenders broadly matched the ethnicity of the population as a whole.

The YOT were in the process recruiting more appropriate adults and Members of the Management Board. It was noted that a capacity and capability assessment would be carried out in line with the Local Area Agreement and priorities would be agreed between the YOT and the Youth Justice Board. The current aim for the Slough YOT was to maintain the existing Level 4 and to consolidate this position. Slough was in the top ten of its selected statistical neighbours and the manager of the YOT gave her thanks to the Management Board for their hard work.

Members questioned whether a significant proportion of theft offences were related to drugs misuse and questioned what had been undertaken in Slough to intervene in this. It was brought to Members attention that the Police

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 17.03.08

statistics showed that offending rates had decreased. However some young people needed rehabilitation treatment rather than just community care that was currently available. The YOT's aim was to engage more staff at a lower level in order to tackle this from the beginning. 49 drug offences were recorded during 2007/08, although the number was probably far higher as drug offences were not always recorded. Officers estimated that this could be as high as double the recorded amount and within this there could be as many as 15 to 20 who were heavy users.

Members questioned how many in the YOT had struggled academically at school or suffered from learning disabilities. It was explained that problems at school could be a factor for many of the young people which was why the YOT was focusing heavily on achieving the target for people in education employment and training. Inadequate parenting was a contributor to some of the offenders but some came from very supportive families who often tried to help and intervene. Dyslexia screening was regularly carried out but due to resources this was no longer the case. However if a problem was revealed with a young person they would be screened.

The Director of Education and Children's Services informed Members that the YOT's hours were not 9 to 5 but spread across days, evenings and weekends to ensure that central services were in place for young people. The Chair suggested that the YOT, if possible, work with other support services in providing information with particular reference to identifying those with dyslexia.

Resolved: That the report be noted

51. Information On Youth Services In the East of Slough

The Scrutiny Panel received information regarding youth service provision in the east of Slough. A map that showed the locations of youth service provision was tabled. Horsemoor Green in Langley was the only main centre in the east of Slough. There were two centres to the central east of Slough one of which, the main Slough youth centre, was a specialist art and creative industry unit. This was popular with residents throughout Slough and was open to 10.00 p.m. on a drop-in basis to provide excellent provision for young people. The Upton Lea centre was a general use community centre and at present held a youth club one night a week. This centre was heavily used and there were plans to increase the provision to two nights.

It was noted that the Youth Service was collecting information on activities that were available in order to set up a comprehensive website for young people to access the services available to them. Horsemoor Green would be open for further hours but Officers were also looking for alternative provision in the east of the Borough particularly in the Colnbrook and Poyle area. Street work was carried out with young people on the streets of Slough by a dedicated street work team. This was obviously more accessible in the summer than in the winter and it was felt that further provision was needed. Significant funding had been secured for a mobile unit and hopefully further

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 17.03.08

funding would be available. Officers were looking to bring this on line over the next year.

A Member noted that their Ward on the western side of Slough also had poor provision for youth services and it was felt that the service needed to be better spread geographically overall. Officers noted that a wider mapping exercise was carried out in order to compile the report and the provision was mainly located in the north-west and central-west of Slough. The Director of Education and Children's Services noted that Officers had met with young people through the Young People's Cabinet and it was noted that they often did not have information to access youth services which was why the website was being set up. The Chair noted that there were clearly large gaps in provision and that people were very territorial. It would therefore be difficult to try to engage people to attend youth clubs in other areas. It was suggested that the Youth Service Team could work with local parishes in order to locate venues for youth service provision.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

52. Minutes of the Admissions forum held on 17th January 2008

Members discussed a number of issues surrounding the recent news regarding school admissions and suggested that a report on this should be brought to the next meeting.

Resolved -

- a) That the minutes be noted.
- b) That a report be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel detailing the numbers of first choice places offered in Slough at primary and secondary schools and School places planning.

53. Minutes of the Slough Schools Forum held on 23rd January 2008

Resolved - That the minutes be noted.

54. Forward Work Programme

A Co-opted Member informed the panel that it would be useful if the panel could look into the skills training provided at the skills centre set up by Windsor Boys Schools. The centre was also used by Slough Schools and it was felt by member of the education business partnership that some of the training, such as hairdressing, was inappropriate.

Resolved:

- a) That a report on provision at the Skills Centre be provided at the next meeting to address the appropriateness of training.
- b) Agenda plan to be amended as agreed in the appropriate items.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - 17.03.08

55. Any Other Business

Forced Marriages - A number of Members were concerned about the recent reports on forced marriages and wanted to know the extent of the problem in the Slough area. Officers noted that it was very difficult to get accurate quantitative information but agreed that it was a serious issue and that further action should take place to address the problem.

Resolved:

- a) That the Luton report be distributed to E&CS scrutiny members.
- b) That Officers decide on appropriate action concerning further steps in addressing the problem of forced marriages, including reporting to Members.

Music Provision for Mallards - A Member raised concerns about the lack of access for children to learn a musical instrument and suggested that provision to learn a musical instrument is found for children at Mallards.

Resolved: That officers would investigate whether provision could be found in the current budget or whether a bid could be made for the youth opportunity fund.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 8.20 p.m.)