

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

MINUTES

8 January 2007

The meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. in the Owton Manor Community Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jane Shaw (In the Chair)

Councillors: Shaun Cook, Mary Fleet, Pauline Laffey, Francis London, Arthur Preece and Maureen Waller

Co-opted Member:
David Relton.

Resident Representatives:
John Cambridge, Evelyn Leck and Michael Ward.

Also Present: Councillor Pamela Hargreaves, Children's Services Portfolio Holder.

Young People's Representatives:
Leigh Bradley, Kelly Goulding, Cassie Jeffries, Hannah Shaw, Jonathan Simpson and Leon Smith.

Officers:
Adrienne Simcock, Director of Children's Services
Sandra Saint, Healthy Schools Co-ordinator
Deborah Gibbin, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator
John Robinson, Children's Fund Manager
Paul Wilkinson, Senior Advisor
Steve Haley, Finance Officer
Joan Wilkins, Scrutiny Support Officer
David Cosgrove, Principal Democratic Services Officer

49. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Jonathon Brash and Sheila Griffin.

50. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

**51. (i) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2006
(ii) Minutes of the informal meeting held on 27
November 2006**

(i) Confirmed.

(ii) Received.

**52. Responses from the Council, the Executive or
Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this
Forum**

No items.

**53. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred
via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee**

No items.

**54. Budget and Policy Framework – Consultation
Proposals 2007/08** *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 27 October 2006, consideration was given to the Executive's Initial Budget and Policy Framework Consultation Proposals for 2007/08. The meeting agreed that the initial consultation proposals would be considered on a departmental basis by the appropriate Scrutiny Forum. This occurred during November 2006.

The comments/observations of each Forum were fed back to an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee held on 17 November 2006 and were used to formulate the formal Scrutiny response to Cabinet on 4 December 2006. Details of the comments/observations made by the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum were set out in Appendix A to the report.

The comments/observations made by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee were taken into consideration by Cabinet during the finalisation of its Budget and Policy Framework Proposals for 2007/08 on 18 December 2006. The Executive's finalised proposals were considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee on the 19 December 2006 and repeating the process previously implemented, have again been referred to the appropriate scrutiny Forum for consideration on a departmental basis.

The Director of Children's Services, Adrienne Simcock, outlined the budget pressures set out in Appendix B to the report and the top-level priorities in Appendix C. The Director highlighted that there were no grant regimes terminating during 2007/08 that would affect her department's budget.

Appendix D to the report set out the proposed savings that would be made in

the Children's Services Department during the next financial year. The Director stated that Cabinet had agreed that the savings required would be at the three percent level for 2007/08.

The Director commented that while not seriously detrimental, the savings proposed did have an element of risk. In response to questions, the Director stated that the savings would not have a serious affect on services, while accepting there was no effective choice in the savings put forward at three percent level. The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Pamela Hargreaves indicated that one of the difficulties in making the decisions on the savings proposed was the potential affects on service provision.

Members expressed concern that the PCT continuing healthcare eligibility criteria was still being awaited in relation to the Children and Disabilities SEN. The Director assured Members that interim arrangements were currently being considered, though this was an issue across the country not just in Hartlepool. Once the eligibility criteria were available it would be easier to discuss funding with the PCT.

Members also sought confirmation that the authority was seeking contributions/funding, wherever possible, from partner organisations. This was highlighted particularly in relation to the operation of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The Director commented that partner organisations had an obligation to collaborate on the Board but not to contribute funding. Discussions were on-going and contributions were expected in 2007/08 though it was highlighted that the national position was changing with a move towards local safeguarding boards.

Decision

1. That the Cabinet's decision to restrict the proposed savings as part of the Budget and Policy Framework for 2007/08 to 3% be welcomed.
2. That the Forum's comments and observations be presented by the Chair to the meeting of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee on 19 January to enable a formal response to be made to Cabinet on 5 February 2007.

55. Provision of Sex and Health Education in Hartlepool – Scoping Report *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer outlined to the Forum the proposals for the undertaking of their forthcoming investigation into the provision of sexual health education for young people in Hartlepool.

The overall aim of the scrutiny investigation was to "review current practice in the provision of sexual health education to young people in Hartlepool and suggest possible improvements". To fulfil this aim, the following Terms of Reference for the review were proposed:-

- (a) To gain an understanding of the sexual health issues affecting young people nationally and regionally;

- (b) To gain an understanding of the national and regional position relating to the provision of sexual health education for young people, with particular reference to:-
 - (i) National policy relating to the provision of sexual health education for young people; and
 - (ii) The work being undertaken nationally and regionally to provide sexual health education for young people and determine its effectiveness.

- (c) To gain an understanding of, and examine, the local position relating to the provision of sexual health education for young people, with particular reference to:-
 - (i) The sexual health issues effecting young people in Hartlepool;
 - (ii) The history of sexual health education in Hartlepool;
 - (iii) The strategies/practices being implemented in Hartlepool schools for the provision of sexual health education; and
 - (iv) Effectiveness of strategies/policies being implemented in Hartlepool; and
 - (v) Sources of advice outside schools and how outside bodies/agencies assist in the provision of sexual health education in Hartlepool.

- (d) To consider examples of best practice in other Local Authorities;

- (e) To compare strategies/practices implements in other Local Authorities, and strategies/models identified nationally, with those being implemented in Hartlepool with a view to identifying possible areas of improvement; and

- (f) To seek the views of local residents, parents, children/young people and those working in schools on this issue.

It was highlighted that the nationally used name for this area of education was 'Sex and Relationship Education' and this should be the phrase used during the investigation. As such the aim of the was amended as follows:-

"To review current practice in the provision of sex and relationship education to young people in Hartlepool and suggest possible improvements"

Members of the Forum could request a range of evidential and comparative information throughout the Scrutiny referral and could invite a variety of people to attend to assist in the forming of a balanced and focused range of recommendations as follows:-

- (a) Portfolio Holder for Children's Services;
- (b) Officers from the Children's Services Department;
- (c) Representatives from United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP);
- (d) Representatives from national and regional bodies. (Possibly the regional Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, Regional Healthy Schools

- Co-ordinator, National Children's Bureau and/or the Sex Education Forum);
- (e) A small Working Group of the Children's Services Scrutiny Forum to visit a Hartlepool school to discuss and possibly observe sex and relationship education first hand with teachers and pupils;
 - (f) Representatives from other Local Authorities with examples of good practice. (Possibly Sunderland – similar practices to those in Hartlepool, South Tyneside – A different secondary model to that in Hartlepool, Gateshead – Different practices to those in Hartlepool);
 - (g) Representatives from outside groups/bodies. (Possibly B76, Sure Start, Youth Service, Barnardos, the School Nursing Service and/or Teesside Positive Action (TPA));
 - (h) Local residents and Resident Representatives; and
 - (i) Ward Councillors.

Members approved the list of individuals and bodies recommended for involvement in the investigation, as outlined above, with the addition of input from Relate.

Members questioned when comparing how this section of education was provided in Hartlepool with other areas, how would that be assessment be undertaken; would there be a simple comparison of the 'negative' statistics such as teenage pregnancy rates and rates of STD's in young people? The Chair commented that Members of the Forum would be involved in visiting other authorities to assess for themselves if this subject was being taught in a better way than in Hartlepool. The Children's Services Portfolio Holder commented that statistics did allow comparison but that subjective/qualitative assessment by the Forum would be significantly more useful.

The investigation in this area was welcomed by the officers working in this area as it was quite some time since an assessment had been undertaken. The current focus was to encourage earlier education in this area and children in Year 9 (Primary School) were now receiving classes in this subject. There was some concern expressed by Members at this policy and particular concern was expressed by some of the young people's representatives present who considered that Year 9 may be too early for many children. One past practice that they considered very successful was the involvement of young people of college age, like themselves, visiting secondary schools to lead some of the classes.

Some Members suggested that it might be very useful to the investigation if a survey of young people who had received Sex and Relationship classes during their time at secondary school could be organised by the young people's representatives. Members considered that with appropriate support, such an informal survey could feed some very useful information into the investigation.

The Scrutiny Support Officer outlined the proposed timetable for the investigation. Members suggested that the visit to another authority should be to an area not previously visited by the Forum during an investigation. The

Chair commented that the date and time of the next meeting also may have to amended. The Chair indicated that she was conscious that the involvement of the young people's representatives was essential to this investigation and therefore re-arranging some meeting times to facilitate their attendance may be necessary. The Scrutiny Support Officer indicated that she would discuss the matter further with the Chair and the young people's representatives.

Through the discussion, it was also agreed that rather than visit a school, a Sex and Relationships class would be delivered to the Forum so Members could see first hand the type of issues raised with children and young people within Hartlepool's schools.

Taking into consideration the suggestions made the proposed timetable for the investigation was amended as follows:-

8 January 2007 – 'Scoping' - To formalise the process for the Forum's investigation and receive evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

22 January 2007 – Formal meeting of the Forum to receive:-

- (i) A 'Setting the Scene' report from the Scrutiny Support Officer;
- (ii) Evidence from the Children's Services Department's Healthy Schools Co-ordinator on the issues detailed in term of reference (c);
- (iii) Evidence from a national or regional body on the issues detailed in terms of reference (a) and (b); and
- (iv) Evidence from the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) on the work it is undertaking regarding sex education.

w/c 5 February 2007 – Possible additional meeting – Should it be required.

w/c 12 February 2007 – Additional meeting at which the Forum will take part in a sex and relationship class.

w/c 19 February 2007 – Site Visit - To another Local Authority's to observe best practice.

26 February 2007 – Fomal meeting to consider:-

- (i) Feedback from the site visit to another Local Authority and Working Group visit;
- (ii) Evidence from outside agencies/bodies;
- (iii) Evidence from local residents, parents, children/young people and those working in schools on this issue; and
- (iv) On the evidence provided, if/how the sex and relationship education offered in Hartlepool could be improved.

w/c 19 March 2007 – Informal meeting to consider the content of the Draft Final Report.

2 April 2007 – Consideration of Draft Final Report.

20 April 2007 – Consideration of Final Report by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee.

30 April 2007 – Consideration of Final Report by the Cabinet.

11 June 2007 – 'Closing the Loop' report back from Cabinet to the Forum.

Decision

That the Aim, Terms of Reference and Timetable, for the undertaking of the investigation, as outlined above be agreed.

JANE SHAW

CHAIRMAN