



Rutland County Council

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Record of a meeting of the **PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham at 7.00 pm on **Thursday 11 October 2012**

PRESENT: Miss G Waller – Chairman (in the Chair)
Mr M E Baines
Mrs C J Cartwright
Mrs J K Figgis
Mr J M Lammie
Mr M A Oxley
Mrs L I Stephenson
Mrs C L Vernon
Mr N M Wainwright

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Mr P Goringe, Peterborough Diocese

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K A Bool, Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services
Mr D L Richardson

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr I Baugh Democratic Services Officer
Mrs S Bysouth Head of Service – Life Long Learning
Ms J Haigh Senior Manager: Health, Wellbeing and Commissioning

APOLOGIES: Mr A S Walters

410 RECORD OF LAST MEETING

The Record of the Meeting of the People (Children) Scrutiny Panel held on 16 August 2012, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

411 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Miss Waller declared a disclosable interest as she was a governor at St Mary and St John CEVA Primary School.

412 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received from members of the public.

413 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice from Members had been received.

414 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No Notices of Motion had been received from Members.

415 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE PANEL FOR A DECISION IN RELATION TO CALL IN OF A DECISION

No matter had been referred to the Panel for a decision in relation to call-in of a decision in accordance with Procedure Rule 206.

416 TOPIC FOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Report No. 205/2012 was received from the Strategic Director for People.

The Chairman introduced the report and noted that previous discussions had considered new groups which could be established. It would not be possible, due to officers' other commitments, to have more than one Task and Finish Group active at any one time. It was anticipated that the Transport Task and Finish Group would complete its work in January 2013. This work had taken longer than expected owing to the need to make contact with individual transport operators.

It was proposed that the next Task and Finish Group would commence its work in late February/early March 2013. The two possible topics were: safeguarding adolescents and active lifestyles. Following discussion on which topic would take priority it was noted that officers were currently working on understanding the particular issues relating to safeguarding of adolescents and noted that the Council had a legal duty of care to vulnerable children and young people.

In response to a question regarding deferring the choice of subject pending the appointment of new members to the panel, it was noted that it would be important to give officers as much notice as possible of the work to be done by the group.

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7.15pm - Mr M E Baines joined the meeting

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A question was raised regarding the timescale and why work could not commence sooner. In response Members were asked to consider the workloads of officers and the feasibility of commencing work sooner.

Agreed

That a Task and Finish Group to investigate and report on the subject of Safeguarding Adolescents, be established to commence in February/March 2013.

417 EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM UPDATE

The Head of Service – Lifelong Learning, Mrs Bysouth, gave her presentation. The proposals noted therein were due for implementation from 1st April 2013.

The aim was to simplify the funding formulae as a first step towards a national formula. The Dedicated School Grant (DSG) had been split into 3 blocks: a Schools Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block. There would be a minimum funding guarantee such that no school would lose more than 1.5% of its budget.

In the Schools Block all funding would go direct to the school. Rutland County Council would retain funding for admissions and aim to delegate the lump sum to each school to support small schools. Mrs Bysouth outlined the new formula factors; Rutland would be using eight of these. In the longer term small schools would be impacted the most. The Authority had decided to adopt the £100k option as this had the least impact on small schools. A full briefing had recently been provided to schools and most had supported the proposals.

In discussion the following questions and issues were raised:

- i. The lack of flexibility in the new scheme was noted; however the £100k option would enable small schools to be protected.
- ii. Funding for statemented children joining mid year would continue and the Schools Action Plus funding would offset that of the requirements of the High Needs Block.
- iii. Rutland County Council would continue to coordinate admissions and received funding for this; the Authority had produced a brochure of admissions services that would be available for schools to purchase.
- iv. Regulations relating to the Schools Forum had changed on 1st October along with the voting rights.
- v. Schools had commented that the £100k funding option would cause limited difficulties in the next two years, after which the Government would be carrying out a Comprehensive Spending Review.
- vi. The cost of providing transport was not part of the school funding reform and so not included in the £100k funding option, nor was the Pupil Premium. The chosen formula would cause the least financial difficulties for schools compared to the other options available and support the long term sustainability of education in Rutland.
- vii. The Council had supported small schools previously from Council Tax revenues; however, going forward it would be essential for small schools by building a more integrated approach with their local communities by offering and providing out of school activities and facilities, for which charges could be levied.

The Panel noted the presentation and thanked Mrs Bysouth.

418 KEY STAGE 2 NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS RUTLAND RESULTS 2012

Report No. 198/2012 was received from the Strategic Director for People.

The Senior Manager for Health, Wellbeing and Commissioning, Ms Haigh, introduced the report and highlighted the successes outlined therein but noted that although the results were very positive there was no room for complacency. Results for 2011 were above the national average and Rutland had outperformed its neighbours. The five year trend for writing was the best result for five years, with an upward trend in Special Educational Needs action

although narrowing the gender gap remains a priority. This had been the first year in which Rutland had achieved the national target for level 4 in English (60%). Schools continue to encourage boys to improve in this area.

In discussion the following questions and issues were raised:

- i. Current Government reforms would in all probability improve boys' results. Ofsted had noted four outstanding schools, eight good schools and four or five that were satisfactory; this was perhaps a warning sign. However, Ofsted inspection outcomes have changed and there were individual reasons for under performance by some schools. An intervention programme was in place to address this. Close partnership working between the Local Authority and schools continues.
- ii. The Panel was reassured by the intervention work that was taking place, which was all credit to the work of the officers.
- iii. The similarity of teacher versus test results was noted as a good sign.
- iv. The statistics presented did not show the wider picture of falling standards in relation to other countries. The use of clear benchmarks could help with this. It was noted, however, that it would be very difficult to compare results from different countries where the data were collected and collated differently.
- v. The Council was in the process of asking schools how the Pupil Premium funding was being spent.
- vi. Information was requested about the Schools Action and Schools Action Plus programmes. The former work was carried out within the schools themselves, while the latter involved the use of external help.
- vii. Paragraph 4.15 of Report No. 198/2012 noted that Whissendine Church of England Primary School was outstanding; it was pointed out that this school is now federated with St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Cottesmore, to help them improve their standards. The Council was actively encouraging such links between schools to improve standards.

Agreed:

That the information provided in Report No. 198/2012 be noted.

419 INITIAL KEY STAGE 4 ANALYSIS OF RUTLAND RESULTS 2012

Report No. 199/2012 was received from the Strategic Director for People.

The Senior Manager for Health, Wellbeing and Commissioning Ms Haigh introduced the report and noted that the three senior schools were now Academies and as such they were not obliged to share their results with the Council.

In discussion the following questions and issues were raised:

- i. The results appeared to be disappointing; on pages 20-21 of Report No. 199/2012 the difference between actual and target was significant and the issues surrounding the grading of English exams had had an adverse impact.

- ii. The effects of the potential re-grading of English exams was not known at this time. Results of exams would be complicated as many children had already left school.
- iii. Universities should recognise the issue of grading problems when taking admissions into account.
- iv. With regard to benchmarks, it was noted that only 16% of pupils achieved a C grade.

Agreed:

That the information provided in Report No. 199/2012 be noted.

420 SCHOOL EXCLUSION AND ATTENDANCE

Report No. 206/2012 was received from the Strategic Director for People.

The Senior Manager for Health, Wellbeing and Commissioning, Ms Haigh, introduced the report and noted the list of duties for which the Local Authority was responsible. There was some good news on the number of absences, but less good news regarding permanent and fixed term exclusions.

In discussion the following questions and issues were raised:

- i. It was noted that the School Improvement Development Officer job title was incorrect and should be the Social Inclusion Development Officer. This person worked closely with parents and their children and carried out home visits and does not work exclusively in schools.
- ii. The change to Academies now made the managed moves of excluded pupils between schools and across county boundaries more difficult. Officers suggested that another report should be presented on this subject after one year. Colleges in Rutland were aware of the issues and continued working with the Local Authority to address these. It was felt that this work would relate well to the proposed Task and Finish Group on Safeguarding Adolescents.
- iii. It was noted that the Isle of Wight and a local authority in the West Midlands were in a similar position to Rutland in only having Academies with no other secondary schools
- iv. There was some discussion on the validity of the data given the small numbers and the problem of being able to identify individuals due to the small numbers involved.
- v. The effect of Travellers' children moving schools and joining mid term was noted. It was acknowledged that additional help would be needed for such children.
- vi. A suggestion was made that one of the Academies could perhaps provide special provision for excluded pupils; however a school base may not be the most suitable location for such pupils and that somewhere like Jules One-stop may be better.
- vii. Rutland County Council is not required to provide education to children educated at home.
- viii. Absences during term times were discussed and it was noted that there was a national policy for dealing with and recording such absences.
- ix. Rutland County Council was working with the Melton Hub and New

College Stamford and alternative provision with regard to excluded pupils, however there was still pressure on places.

Agreed

- 1. That the increase in school exclusions during the last academic year and the steps being taken to reduce exclusions be noted.**
- 2. That the positive performance in relation to school attendance across the authority and officer activity that supported schools in this issue be noted.**

421 FORWARD PLANNING

A copy of the latest forward plan was circulated to members.

It was noted that a report on the Youth Panel was due together with an inspection of the Children's Centre.

The Chairman noted the forthcoming additional joint meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Panel and the Places Scrutiny Panel would look at the issues of transport.

A question was raised regarding the setting of Council Tax for next year and whether it would be possible to identify potential pressure points in the budget, in advance of the budget for children being set; officers were fully engaged with this issue. It was agreed that the Panel would look at the children's budget in January. The Chairman agreed to raise this at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

Agreed:

That the Chairman raise the issue of the scrutiny of the children's budget at the next Scrutiny Commission meeting.

422 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No additional items of business had been notified to the Chairman.

423 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29 November 2012 – 7.00pm

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.20pm.

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