

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING
INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL
ON
24 JANUARY 2011**

Present: Councillors P Thacker, J Wilkinson (Vice-Chairman), S Day, B Saltmarsh and M Jamil

Also present Alastair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative
Councillor S Scott Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Kane, Tasha, Scott, Young People
James

Officers in Attendance: John Richards Executive Director - Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis Assistant Director Resources , Commissioning & Performance
Melanie Collins Assistant Director, Learning and Skills
Javed Ahmed Youth Access Point Manager
Jason Horne Youth Worker, Unity Project
Steven Milford Curriculum Specialist Youth Worker - Princes Trust
Paulina Ford Performance Scrutiny and Research Officer
Ruth Griffiths Lawyer

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Lowndes.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting Held on 15 November 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2010 were approved as a correct record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

5. Making a Positive Contribution - Reducing NEETS

The Assistant Director for Learning and Skills introduced the report and the young people who were in attendance with the Youth Access Point Manager and Youth Worker from the Unity Project. The Youth Access Point Manager informed Members of two examples of projects designed to reduce the numbers of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) namely, The Princes Trust Team Project and Kick Start. A short film was then shown about the Princes Trust Programme. Kick Start was a partnership programme with Peterborough United which was based at Peterborough United. It was run over a period of 4 weeks on 2 days per week. The young people left the project with some practical skills such as Level 1 Health and Safety and a first aid at work certificate. The project provided a

confidence boost for young people who had been long term NEET. 80% of the young people left the project with positive outcomes.

The Youth Access Point Manager gave a presentation showing the latest data on NEET's which highlighted the following information:

- 8.1% 16-18 year olds were currently NEET in Peterborough = 506 young people
- Levels were gradually reducing but it was a tough economic climate within which to reduce NEET
- Wider policy may impact on NEET – e.g. Education Maintenance Allowance being cut and university tuition costs rising
- Comparatively high NEET, but only 99 young people 'not known' to the services and compared to other authorities this was a relatively small figure and one of the best locally.

The Committee were advised that the support given to young people to try and prevent them from becoming NEET was offered within the 8 – 19 Service through Connexions. This included:

- Preventative work in schools
 - Careers guidance and transition planning
 - Projects that work directly with year 11 students for those at risk of becoming NEET
- Transition support and tracking
 - Outreach, support and follow up
 - Connexions Youth Access Point and a new vacancy service
- Engaging and re-engaging
 - Engagement activities/courses in the community. There was a network of youth projects across the city that worked with the harder to reach young people.

The young people attending were asked some questions about what had led them to becoming NEET and what had helped them to get into education, training or employment. They were also asked if they had any ideas as to what would help young people get into education, employment or training. The young people informed the Committee of their own experiences. The young people suggested that other young people should go to Connexions as they had all found this service very helpful in signposting them on to the right sort of courses and advice.

Members felt that the young people were taking positive actions to help themselves in the future. The Chair thanked the young people for attending and sharing their experiences with the Members.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members wanted to know if the young people were confident that other young people in the same situation would know where to go to access the services to help them. *The young people felt that other young people would be able to find the help easily as it was widely advertised.*
- Members asked officers if a young people's employment adviser had been appointed. *Members were advised that a young people's employment adviser had been appointed and that the appointment was making a big difference.*
- Members had noted in the report that there was a list of future actions and wanted to know which ones were in progress and which were not. *Members were advised of the ones that had been started and that some would be started later. The Enjoy and Achieve Partnership considered the issues around NEET and there were four pieces of work*

happening at the moment. These were to develop a city wide sports strategy engaging vulnerable young people more effectively, involve more young people in cultural and heritage matters, get young people involved in voluntary activities and finally develop young leaders at the Primary Schools so they would become more confident adults.

- *Are the young people with English as an Additional Language being missed? Members were advised that part of the youth workers week was spent out in the communities and they also worked specifically with people from new communities. This helped to identify those young people with English as an additional language.*
- *Where does Peterborough stand nationally with regard to NEET's? Members were advised that Peterborough was 8.2% above the national average of 6.1% but the percentage of not known young people in education, training or employment in Peterborough was 1.7% which was much lower than the national average of 5.0%. This was a great achievement.*
- *At a meeting of this Committee in July 2009 it was agreed that the City Council should strive to be recognised as leading the way to other employers and helping in the employment of NEET's. Has this been successful? Members were informed that there had been a lot of work done with Perkins. They had led the way in giving opportunities to young people. The LEAP programme which was around education and achievement was based at Perkins and forty young people were offered an accredited course in a vocational qualification linked to Perkins. Peterborough United Football Club was also another example of a local business supporting NEET's. The recession had affected the involvement of local businesses and further work needed to be done.*
- *Councillor Scott informed Members that Corporate Parenting were supporting work that was being done with Children in Care in trying to find them opportunities within Peterborough City Council. There had also been success with getting young offenders into employment within the City.*
- *The Assistant Director, Learning and Skills informed Members that the Future Jobs Fund had six young people working with learning and skills and 50% of those had already got jobs. The Future Jobs Fund had been very successful but the funding for this project had now ceased under the new Coalition Government.*
- *Where are the figures coming from for our 'not known' young people? Members were advised that there were several methods that the information came from which included a network of youth workers, Connexions staff, data from schools and colleges, door knocking and speaking to young people. The base line figure came from young people in year 11.*

ACTION AGREED

1. To note the work being undertaken and the progress made with regard to NEET's and that a further update and progress report be brought back to the Committee in a year.
2. That the Assistant Director for Learning and Skills:
 - I. Provide the Committee with regular updates provided by the Enjoy and Achieve Partnership on current projects and the latest initiatives for NEET's.
 - II. Provide the Committee with the list of different ways that young people are tracked to identify whether they are in education, employment or training.

6. Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children's Services

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report. The Ofsted Annual Assessment was published on 9 December 2010 and had been reported widely. The Director of Children's Services confirmed to the Members that he had challenged the judgement of Ofsted twice but was unable to change their view. There was much to celebrate in the letter from Ofsted but the safeguarding judgement was limiting. Members wished it noted that through tracking the performance of the actions being taken over the last

nine months by this Committee they had noted a marked improvement in addressing the issues highlighted by Ofsted and were confident with the level of improvement. Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Councillor Wilkinson noted that the Ofsted letter stated that improvements to services designed to promote sexual health were having a positive impact but numbers of teenage mothers were not reducing. This appeared to be a mixed message. Councillor Wilkinson advised that she worked for the Terrance Higgins Trust which was one of the organisations that gave sexual health training but it seemed that the message was not getting across. What else could organisations like Terrance Higgins do to change this? *Members were informed that incidents of teenage pregnancy had reduced but not as fast as the original LAA targets had suggested. There had been a number of solution centers where everyone who had any influence on teenage pregnancy met and talked about what could be done to change the trend. It was a difficult area to make a difference and everything possible was being done to change this. John Richards invited Councillor Wilkinson to contact him with regard to getting in touch with the Terrance Higgins Trust to see if they could offer any further help.*
- The Ofsted letter stated that permanent exclusions were increasing, why? *Members were informed that Primary school exclusions had remained low. Secondary school exclusions had risen in some areas partly due to the fact that some new pupils in schools were not accepting the code of behaviour, also some schools used this as a very firm sanction to set down a code of behavior. Peterborough City Council have a good partnership within secondary schools and brokered managed moves of more difficult young people from one school to another before a permanent exclusion happened. There was a very effective pupil At Risk Panel that checked to see if the school had done everything possible to prevent exclusion and to see whether strategies used at other schools to prevent exclusion could be shared. There was a drive across the City to improve behaviour. Exclusion figures were monitored closely and exclusion was used only as a last resort.*
- What do you do with the year 10's and 11's that are excluded? *We look at the child's individual needs. There was a Pupil's Referral Unit who worked with the various secondary schools, the regional college and other organisations to provide the appropriate courses and specialist provision for that individual child.*
- As more schools take control of what they do are we going to end up with the situation where a school could refuse to take a child? *There was a Fair Access Protocol which every school in the City was signed up to. This was driven by the Government and was regarded as best practice. When a school gets to the top of the list they will take that child regardless of whether they were an academy or not.*

ACTION AGREED

To note the contents of the Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children's Services published on 9 December 2010.

7. Safeguarding and Children in Care - Progress Report on the Children's Service Development Plan

The Executive Director of Children's Services presented the report and informed members that as requested by the Committee at a previous meeting he had provided the full action plan which had also been provided at the milestone meeting with the Department of Education in December. Section one of the action plan contained information on the key targets which had to be met for the Minister and section two provided updates for the rest of the plan which were already in place. The milestone meeting held on 13 December 2010 had a good outcome. The Department for Education were pleased with the commitment to the change process. They noted the improvement of the key performance indicators, that there were more manageable case loads and that a revised audit process was in place. They were also pleased with the clear commitment of officers and members to ensuring continued

improvement in Peterborough. This had been confirmed in a letter from Ofsted dated 29 December 2010 to John Richards which was tabled at the meeting.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members noted that core assessments and timescale were tracking well ahead of the target of 80% but that the last three or four months had dipped but was still ahead of target. Were there any actions being taken to address this. *Members were informed that this had also been raised at the meeting with the Department of Education. In terms of the November figure of 65.6% there was a number of core assessments which had come through from the period when there were difficulties and those were being signed off in that month therefore that was historical to that period of time. There had been a blip throughout October and November. The good news was that in December they were back up to 84% for the month and cumulative were similar to 85% for the period.*
- Can you explain the data around the social care vacancy rate? *We checked with the Department for Education whether or not the 8% maximum target was only for permanent staff or agency staff as well. The advice was that agency staff could be included. The reason agency staff could be included was because of the information provided on how long the agency staff had been in place. Most of them had been in place for longer than six months and therefore provided a stable work force. The Department was satisfied that the plans in place to recruit permanent staff would bring the figure nearer to the 8% target.*
- Has the life story work been brought up to date. *Members were informed that the Life story work was not completely up to date but Faith in Families and St Francis had been commissioned to undertake this work. John Richards advised that he would find out how many were still to be completed and let the committee know.*

ACTION AGREED

- (i) To note the progress made in addressing the recommendations made by Ofsted following their inspection of Safeguarding and Children in Care services; and
- (ii) That the Committee receive a further progress report in June 2011.
- (iii) That the Executive Director of Children's service provides the Committee with the number of life story's still to be completed.

8. Portfolio Progress report from Cabinet Member relevant to the Committee

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services introduced the report. 2010 had been a significant year and in March there had been an Ofsted Inspection which provided several challenges. The department had responded extremely well to the issues raised and there had been significant improvements. There had been a large amount of success in recruiting social workers both experienced and new to the role which had been one of the issues raised in the Ofsted report. The adoption service and fostering service had seen new foster carer numbers improve. The Corporate parenting panel was now playing an important role and was significant in the preparation and adoption of the Pledge to children in care.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Where is the Pledge? *The Pledge had been approved by Council and it was with the Children in Care Council.*
- Is the Pledge physically on show anywhere? *There was a large glossy Pledge and it was the intention to place it in the Town Hall Chamber for everyone to see. It had also been suggested that there would be an easy read version published for the younger children as the Pledge covered young people of a wide age range. Members were advised that the Pledge was being taken seriously and that there should be a report back to the Committee annually to track the progress of the pledge.*

- Can you confirm that all children with disabilities aged 14 or over have a transition plan in place. *Yes every child had a transition plan in place.*
- The report stated that children in care allocated to a qualified social worker were 92%. What actions are being taken to address this? *Members were advised that 70% of children in need were also allocated to a qualified social worker but this was not a legislative requirement also 92.7% of children with a disability were allocated a worker but this was also not a legislative requirement. The target for children in care to have a qualified social worker was expected to be 100% and was being addressed. However if they did not have a qualified social worker allocated to them they would be allocated a team support worker who was supervised by a qualified social worker. Therefore in all cases all children were under the supervision of a qualified social worker.*

ACTION AGREED

1. To note the progress made on the portfolio for the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
2. That the Executive Director for Children's Services brings to the Committee a progress report on the Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care in twelve months time.

9. Opening of a New Secondary School - Reeves Way, PE1 5LQ

The Executive Director of Children's Services introduced the report. He advised that it was a good news story. There was immense pressure for more secondary school places in Peterborough. The Hereward School had closed but had been kept in a reasonable condition. Agreement was obtained by Cabinet to make a capital investment in the Hereward School. Under the coalition government there was an opportunity to open a Free School. There would be a number of people who were preferred bidders to run the school and when one was chosen it would become an Academy. The report outlined the school, how it would be developed and the process on choosing a sponsor-partner to run the school. There were currently five main bidders one of which would be chosen in the next few months.

- Is the plan for the secondary school to in take a full cohort immediately or on a phased basis? *A new school has to be grown and developed so initially there would be a year 7 and a year 9.*
- There are five short-listed bidders already which seem to be a bit early as we are only just hearing about this now. Will there be another consultation period to allow others to put their bids in. *Under the free school proposals consultation with potential providers did not have to take place. It would be up to us to go out and find out who was in the market. The providers we had been given were all recommended by the DFE there were about 20 Academy providers across the country and we had picked the best of those. The ones that had been picked had a good understanding of the Peterborough demographics.*
- The panel making the decision did not seem to have a governor representative or anyone who had gone through the process of opening a new school. *There were people on the panel who had gone through the opening of a new school and Councillor Holdich was a governor at some schools. However we would welcome a governor representative joining the panel.* The Chair put forward Alastair Kingsley as a Governor representative to join the panel. Jonathan Lewis welcomed this suggestion.
- Why has the opening of the new school been delayed until 2013? *Extra places had been created at various schools across the city which provided more time to look at the process to ensure the new school had the best possible start and time to plan and prepare the school.*
- You have used words like community cohesion and strong community focus. What does this mean with regard to the new secondary school? *The previous schools that were in there had failed to engage with the local community that the school served. They had not taken into account what the people wanted and what the children's needs were. The site had not been used for community facilities and this was now being done it needed to be*

the hub of the community. Community from a school perspective meant that the curriculum needed to be appropriate for all young people in the school and varied with strong pastoral support. There also needed to be opportunities for parents, community leaders and local business to be part of the school.

- This school had in the past suffered from an image problem. The catchment around the school needed to be treated carefully and a different approach needed to be taken. The free school route meant that this would happen and would attract the highest calibre education providers to the City. It would have unique selling points and the provider would work with the community to make it work. The 6th Form offer would be specialist with the right mix of vocational, apprenticeship and traditional academic courses.
- Will the school work closely with the Primary Schools. *Yes it would only succeed on the strength of links with Primary Schools and this would be one of the tests when choosing a provider. The location of the school is very good for links with City College Peterborough, Peterborough Regional College and the University Peterborough.*
- A member of the audience asked how much the cost of the redevelopment of the site would be. *He was advised that surveyors were currently assessing work that needed to be completed and when the provider was chosen they would say how they would like the school to look and this would be then be costed. Some funding would be coming from Peterborough City Council and some from the Department for Education. There was enough money in the capital programme to accommodate the refurbishment. The free school route meant that the school would open as an Academy.*
- When will the names of the bidders be known? *The bidders had not confirmed that they wished to take part in the bidding process so names could not be disclosed at this point.*
- Are placements in the school going to be maintained from the local community and will Peterborough City Council lose control if it is an Academy? *There had to be a community focus as part of the criteria for choosing a provider and the Local Authority would remain in control of the overall admissions arrangements.*

ACTION AGREED

That the Executive Director for Children's Services brings to the Committee a progress Report on the opening of the new secondary school at Reeves Way as part of the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University portfolio progress report at the meeting on 21 March 2011.

10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items for further consideration.

11. Work Programme

The Work Programme was considered for 2010/11.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm the work programme for 2010/11 and the Scrutiny Officer to make any amendments as discussed during the meeting.

- It was agreed that the Complaints Report due to be presented to the Committee in March 2011 would be rescheduled to June 2011.

12. Date of Next Meeting

21 March 2011

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 8.55 pm