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YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2015

10.00 - 11.35 am in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)

Councillors Peggy Mullock (Vice Chairman), Andy Boddington, Hannah Fraser, Vince Hunt, Kevin Pardy, John Price, Kevin Turley and David Turner

Co-Opted Members (Voting)

Austin Atkinson

17 Apologies and Substitutions

17.1 Apologies were received from Mark Hignett and Robert Tindall.

18 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

18.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

19 Minutes

19.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 14 May 2015 and 24 June 2015 had been circulated.

19.2 Resolved: -

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 May 2015 be approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

19.3 A Member made reference to paragraph 12.12 of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2015, and commented that it was their understanding that the budget for infrastructure support was set by the Council rather than through the tendering process. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that this was the case.

19.4 Resolved: -

That subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting held on the 24 June 2015 be approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

20 Public Question Time

20.1 There were no questions from members of the public

21 Members' Question Time

21.1 There were no questions from Members

22 Provision of Childcare and Early Years Education

22.1 A report providing information on the provision of childcare and early year's education in Shropshire had been circulated.

22.2 The Early Years Education & Childcare Manager outlined the statutory requirements for the provision of childcare and early year's education. He reminded Members that currently there was an entitlement for all children to receive 570 hours of free childcare each academic year from the term after their third birthday until the point that they start school. The same entitlement is also available for two year olds whose families meet the free school meals eligibility criteria, for children with disabilities and for looked after children. He advised that currently around 95% of three and four year olds accessed all or some part of their free entitlement, with around 80% of eligible two year olds taking up their entitlement. He added that work was ongoing to identify eligible two year olds and to encourage their parents to use their entitlement.

22.3 Linda McMurray, the proprietor of Frankwell Tots to 12s Nursery advised that the shortfall between what the council paid and the true rate was subsidised by what other parents paid. She commented that there were concerns regarding the extra financial pressures caused by the proposed increase in the number of free hours and also the proposed increase in the "living wage" which had been announced in the budget. She invited members of the Scrutiny Committee to visit her nursery. The Chair thanked her for this offer and asked Members to let the Committee Officer know if they were interested in a visit.

22.4 A Member queried the difference in payments to school nurseries and private nurseries. The Early Years Education & Childcare Manager advised that the higher rate paid to schools settings reflected the fact that they were required to have a qualified teacher leading the provision whereas private nurseries only needed someone qualified to NVQ Level 3.

22.5 The Chair thanked Ms. McMurray for attending the meeting and explaining the situation from a provider's point of view.

23 Schools Sustainability

23.1 A report providing an overview of the issues affecting the sustainability of schools in Shropshire had been circulated.

23.2 The Deputy Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advised that the number of children on the school roll had fallen by 10% over recent years and was set to fall a further 4% by 2019 – 20; this would result in a significant fall in the dedicated schools grant (DSG) as the amount of grant received was linked to pupil numbers.

He reminded Members that the Schools Forum had set up a group to look at School Sustainability and that this had worked alongside an Administration group looking at the subject. Both groups had advised Governing Bodies to look very carefully at the projected pupil numbers for their school and the impact that was likely to result on funding for the school and to look closely at the different options for ensuring the future of their schools.

23.3 A Member commented that the situation differed over the County as there were some areas where the school roll was set to rise. The Business Manager advised that the figure of 4% was an aggregated figure for the whole of the county. He added that there were a number of areas where the school population was forecast to rise and also there were areas of the county where the projected fall in the school roll was significantly more than 4%.

23.4 A Member commented that it was important that schools had sufficient information to enable them to plan ahead. The Director of Children's Services advised that schools had been provided with an interactive mapping tool and that Officers were working with schools to be "part of the solution". She added that the role of Governors was key to the process and that there was an expectation that schools would work in a more collaborative way.

23.5 In response to a query regarding actions taken to update Governing Bodies the Business Manager advised that the annual meeting with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies would consider this topic and that workshops would be held to look at sharing best practise.

23.6 Resolved: -

That the Committee accept the position as set out in the report.

24 Compliments and Complaints

24.1 A report summarising the complaints data in relation to the service areas covering, Children's Social Care, Education and Skills for the year 2014 – 15 had been circulated.

24.2 The Director of Children's Services informed Members that during the year 2014 – 15 there had been 109 formal complaints, the majority of which were in relation to Children's Social Care and Safeguarding.

24.3 A Member welcomed the report the information contained in it and commented that as the majority of complaints centred on communication which should be easily addressed.

24.4 In response to a query the Director of Children's Services advised that a lot internal queries that were not dealt with as formal complaints were also dealt with by Officers.

24.5 The Chair thanked Officers for a very informative report.

25 Peer Review

- 25.1 The Director of Children's Services updated Members on the recent LGA peer review. She advised Members that the Peer Review had taken part in 55 meetings and had reviewed 60 cases. She then drew some highlights out of the initial report -
- 25.2 The Director of Children's Services advised Members that following receipt of the formal findings of the Review a small group would be set up to oversee an Action Plan based on the findings of the Review. Regular updates would be brought to future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 25.3 The Chair thanked the Director of Children's Services for her update

26 Work Programme

- 26.1 Members received copies of the Committees work programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.
- 26.2 The Chairman asked Members to let her know of any other topics they would like added to the Committee's Work Programme.

27 Date of Next Meeting

- 27.1 Members were reminded that the next scheduled meeting would take place on Wednesday 16 September 2015 at 10.00am at the Shirehall.

The Chair advised Members that this was the Head of Education Improvement & Efficiency's last meeting as she was retiring from the Council. She thanked her for all the work she had done and wished her all the best in her retirement.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: