

Ambitious Plymouth

Monday 12 August 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Bowie, in the Chair.

Councillor Sam Leaves, Vice Chair.

Councillors Casey (substituting for Councillor Parker), Sam Davey, Gordon, Jarvis, Jordan, Michael Leaves (substituting for Councillor Martin Leaves), Mrs Nicholson, John Smith (substituting for Councillor Stevens) Stark and Wright.

Co-opted Representatives: Matt Currie and Harry Samuels – Young Person Representatives.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Martin Leaves, Parker and Stevens.

Also in attendance: Maggie Carter – Head of Education, Learning and Family Support, John Miller – Head of Youth Services, Elaine Shotton – Service Manager (Targeted Youth Services), Alison Botham – Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, Carol Henwood – Principal Adviser, Brad Pearce – Education Catering Manager, Jayne Gorton – Scrutiny Lead Officer and Ross Johnston – Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 10 am and finished at 12.05 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

10. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made in accordance with the code of conduct –

Name	Minute No. and Subject	Reason	Interest
Councillor Glenn Jordan	6. Local Authority Approach to Dyslexia: Assessment, Training, Opportunities and Typical Provision Available in Schools	Has dyslexia	Private
Councillor Alison Casey	6. Local Authority Approach to Dyslexia: Assessment, Training, Opportunities and	Has dyslexia	Private

	Typical Provision Available in Schools		
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11. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2013 are confirmed as a correct record.

12. **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES**

The Chair welcomed Matt Currie and Harry Samuels, Members of Youth Parliament to their first meeting of the Ambitious Plymouth scrutiny panel.

Agreed that –

- (1) Mrs Edith Bayley, Parent Governor, is appointed as a co-opted representative for a period of four years, subject to an annual review;
- (2) two members of Youth Parliament, are appointed as co-opted representatives for a period of four years, subject to an annual review.

13. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

14. **LOCAL AUTHORITY APPROACH TO DYSLEXIA: ASSESSMENT, TRAINING, OPPORTUNITIES AND TYPICAL PROVISION AVAILABLE IN SCHOOLS**

Maggie Carter, Head of Education, Learning and Family Support presented the panel with a report on the local authority's approach to Dyslexia.

Following members' questions it was reported that –

- (a) Plymouth City Council would continue to promote the need for schools, and the professionals working within schools, to be aware of children's learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and continue to closely monitor data provided by schools on the learning progress of children and young people;
- (b) as the champion of vulnerable children Plymouth City Council would continue to provide advice to schools about how to support children's Special Educational Needs (SEN). Plymouth City Council would expect schools to use the delegated funding for SEN to support and offer alternative educational approaches such as ICT to assist pupils with learning difficulties.
- (c) if a school identified a child with a learning difficulty i.e. dyslexia or dyscalculia (difficulty with numbers) then it was expected that the school would investigate the issue further, probably through the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and put in place a specific programme that

would assist the child with learning;

- (d) parents who had concerns about their child's learning should raise these concerns with the school, if however the parents were not satisfied with the school's response then they could seek help and support from the Parent Partnership service;
- (e) dyslexia did not have any medical solutions, and it was classed as a difficulty with learning; however, there was much debate internationally on whether there were any neurological factors that influenced the causes of dyslexia.

Members further commented that –

- (f) the screening process for dyslexia was too vague and letting children down; the vagueness of the screening process was a contributing factor for the stigma that was attached to dyslexia;
- (g) it would be helpful to dyslexics if the results of their diagnosis in school followed the individual through further education, such as University and Colleges, and into employment settings, such as apprenticeships.

Maggie Carter was thanked for her attendance.

It was agreed that –

- (1) Glenn Jordan would champion the panel's work on dyslexia and meet separately with officers from the Education, Learning and Family Support Department and report back his progress to a future panel meeting;
- (2) Maggie Carter would provide an update to all panel members on whether the results of dyslexia diagnosed in schools follow the individual diagnosed through further education, such as University and Colleges, and apprenticeships.

15. **MISSING YOUNG PEOPLE'S TEAM REVIEW**

John Miller, Head of Youth Services, and Elaine Shotton, Service Manager (Targeted Youth Services), provided the panel with an update on Missing Young People's Team.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the Missing Young People's Team, renamed as MIST (Missing, Intervention and Support Team) had been set up to provide an improved service to missing young people and protect them from harm or exploitation;
- (b) following the return of a missing child the service undertakes a return interview with that child within 48 hours (but preferably within 24 hours);
- (c) the MIST team was committed to improving the safety of young people within the city and ensuring young people were made more aware of risks

and vulnerabilities through an education programme called 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation'.

Following members' questions it was reported that –

- (d) one of the key risks and vulnerabilities that threatened the safety of young people was the internet; educating young people about online safety was a vital message to be delivered through the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme;
- (e) the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme was due to be piloted in two Plymouth schools from September 2013, with the ambition of delivering the programme more widely from early 2014;
- (f) all missing young people received a return interview, with under 13s receiving the service's priority; the return interviews were conducted following the initial police interview and assessment, if the police had any concerns at this stage then they contacted the social care department.
- (g) the service was working towards developing a 24 hour advice and support telephone service as well as a missing young people's advice and support website, to inform and educate parents about how to report and deal with concerns about missing young people;
- (h) the service had been working towards building relationships and partnerships with organisations from the voluntary sector including Barnardo's and soon the NSPCC.

It was commented by members that –

- (i) the service should explore working with other voluntary organisations including the Salvation Army;
- (j) social networking should form a significant part of the 'Be-Wise to Child Sexual Exploitation' programme to ensure that all young people were aware of the risks and vulnerabilities associated with this type of communication tool.

John Miller and Elaine Shotton were thanked for their attendance.

It is recommended that the MIST team present the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme to the Youth Cabinet to receive feedback on the programme's content from young people prior to delivering any sessions in schools.

Agreed an update on the work of the MIST team and the delivery of the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme is provided to the panel in February 2014.

16. **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE REVIEW**

Alison Botham, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care provided the panel with an update on Children's Social Care. The panel was informed that –

- (a) there had been a number of national developments in Children's Social Care which had brought about a number of key changes within the service, some of these included –
 - the new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, which had led to changes in relation to multi-agency, safeguarding practices and a new single assessment replacing the current initial and core assessments;
 - a move to embracing a national approach to adoption, meaning that local authorities move towards working together on finding adoptive parents rather than the current local authority based local approach;
 - changes to the OFTSED inspection arrangements for safeguarding and looked after children;
 - new arrangements for dealing with missing young people and child sexual exploitation;
- (b) Plymouth had been awarded one of 20 pioneering places for its work on early intervention and prevention, following the establishment of the Early Intervention Foundation;
- (c) Plymouth had successfully reduced its timescales for care proceedings to 26 weeks from 56 weeks in a comparable period from last year, and as a result of this success, new arrangements for child care proceedings were being piloted in Plymouth;
- (d) the service faced a number of key issues and challenges, which included –
 - an increase in referrals over the past year by 10 per cent;
 - an increase in children subject to Child Protection Plans from 312 at the end of 2012 to 345 in mid-June;
 - a small increase in the numbers of children in care;
 - the ability to recruit permanent social work staff, although Plymouth had a successful recruitment process compared with national data.

Following members' questions it was reported that –

- (e) the service had recently implemented a flexible hours system which had enabled a higher ratio of part-time staff within the service, this had benefited the service as staff with the relevant qualifications and experience who could no longer be employed on a full-time basis, due to changes in personal circumstances, were able to continue to work on a part-time basis;
- (f) the Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provide a service to children in care, and the children's service was working with colleagues to

ensure that improvements were sustained;

- (g) the service had 21 children in residential care of which only four were located in Plymouth;
- (h) the Advice and Assessment Team had four uncovered vacancies; however, it was hoped that six new permanent appointments would be made in September leading to all posts being covered;
- (i) the service had been reviewing its provision of ICT resources, although the equipment and software was fit for purpose there was a requirement to increase the quantity of laptops available to enable the service to have a more flexible approach to working.

Alison Botham was thanked for her attendance.

17. **NARROWING THE GAP: FREE SCHOOL MEALS VERSUS NON-FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

Carol Henwood, Principal Adviser and Brad Pearce, Education Catering Manager, provided the panel with an update on Narrowing the Gap: Free School Meals versus Non-Free School Meals. The panel was informed that –

- (a) the data presented in the report was from 2012, this was because the 2013 data had yet to be analysed or validated;
- (b) the uptake of Free School Meals (FSM) in Plymouth was 80 per cent, which was around the national average for England;
- (c) attainment results for pupils with FSM across Key Stage 1 – 4 was promising, all at levels similar to the national average, however, Key Stage 5 attainment results were concerning.

Following members' questions it was reported that –

- (d) applications for FSM were becoming more discreet and simpler to understand with online facilities now available for parents to establish eligibility and apply for FSM and wording being simplified to enable all parents to understand the eligibility criteria;
- (e) where eligible FSM were available for full-time pupils at school, this included nursery children who attend full days and also sixth form pupils. Meals were not available for children at further education collgese;
- (f) all school meals were produced without any traces of nuts, however, other less common allergies could be catered for on a school-by-school basis and parents were encouraged to inform the school of any particular need and speak directly with the kitchen manager on site;
- (g) at present FSM were only available during term-time, but it was hoped that

schools could look to offer food services throughout the year and make use of school kitchens, this would though need to be carefully considered in terms of cost and staff employment. FSM were funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and current budgets would not support the cost of the all-year round provision.

Carol Henwood and Brad Pearce were thanked for their attendance.

The Chair informed the panel that the Cooperative Scrutiny Board on 7 August 2013 approved a Cooperative Review Request to review the topic of 'Narrowing the Gap in Schools' and requested that four members, in addition to Councillor Sam Leaves and herself, commit to sitting as members on the review panel.

The membership for the Cooperative Review on Narrowing the Gap in Schools is agreed as follows:

- Councillor Bowie (Chair)
- Councillor Sam Leaves
- Councillor Alison Casey
- Councillor Paul Jarvis
- Councillor Glenn Jordan
- Councillor David Stark

18. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS**

The panel noted its tracking resolutions.

19. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted its work programme and agreed that –

- (1) an update on the MIST team and the delivery of the 'Be-Wise to Sexual Exploitation' programme is provided to the panel in February 2014;
- (2) due to a clash with the Labour Party Annual Conference the Democratic Support Officer will email all Ambitious Plymouth members to establish which members will be in attendance at the meeting on 23 September 2013, subject to the response an alternative date might be sought.

20. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.