

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 12 SEPTEMBER 2011

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Shanks (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Wealls (Opposition Spokesperson) and Marsh (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillors

PART ONE

1. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1(a) Declarations of Interests

1.1 There were none.

1(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

1.2 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Children & Young People Cabinet Member Meeting held on 28 March 2011 be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

3. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 3.1 The Cabinet Member passed her thanks and regards to both the Head of School Admissions & Transport and the Head of Fostering & Adoption who, after lengthy and dedicated service, would sadly be leaving employment at the Council.

4. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 4.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

5. PETITIONS

5. (i) Petition – Prevent the demolition of Whitehawk Youth and Community Centre

The Cabinet Member received an e-petition signed by 10 people concerning the future of Whitehawk Youth and Community Centre.

The Cabinet Member noted the response would be sent to the petitioner as he was not present at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the petition be noted.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- 6.1 The Cabinet Member reported that one public question had been received.
- 6.2 Laura James and David Higgins asked the following question:

“In 2001, it was estimated that there were around 500 carers aged 8-17 years old in Brighton & Hove and 800 young adult carers. This is an old estimate, and it is believed numbers have increased significantly over the last decade, particularly in supporting those with mental health and substance misuse issues. Currently there are 130 Young Carers supported by the Brighton and Hove Young Carers Project which obviously falls short of the numbers of potential Young Carers in need of support in our city.

Research has shown that a significant proportion of young carers suffer significant educational disadvantage. They are more likely to be bullied and find it more difficult to attend school and complete their homework because of their caring responsibilities. They often, therefore, underachieve in exams and struggle in the labour market. Research commissioned by Manchester Metropolitan University has highlighted the significant benefits to society, the individual and to the economy, from investment in services for young carers.

Please will you give priority to work to more accurately understand the number of and location of young carers in Brighton & Hove, to ensure Council and voluntary sector services are able to reach out to all or as many young carers as possible, and that appropriate resources are forthcoming to support young carers in their lives in general and in the often challenging roles they undertake, which is of enormous benefit to their families and to our society”

6.3 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

“The needs of young carers are met in a range of ways by a range of services and professionals including the support provided by the Young Carers Project.

The Carers Strategy is about to be refreshed and we will be consulting on this in the autumn and reporting to the Joint Commissioning Board in November. The Partnership Group undertaking the review is a multi-agency group that includes Community and Voluntary Sector organisations and advocacy groups such as Amaze.

One of the targets in the current strategy is: *“Identification and recognition of young carers at point of assessment/service provision of cared for person including health services.”*

We expect this target will remain as a priority in the refreshed strategy.

It is also important that young carers can access the opportunities available to all young people in Brighton and Hove and we will give this particular attention when we publish our strategy for Youth Services which is currently out for consultation”.

6.4 David Higgins asked the following supplementary question:

“In the likelihood that more Young Carers are identified, how would the additional resource demand be addressed?”

6.5 The Cabinet Member gave the following response:

“A review of the Carers Strategy was currently underway and would be presented to the Joint Commissioning Board in November. The effective targeting of resources and funding would be incorporated into this”.

7. DEPUTATIONS

7.1 There were none.

8. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

8.1 There were none.

9. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

9.1 There were none.

10. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

10.1 There were none.

11. ANNUAL FOSTERING SERVICE REPORT

- 11.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People. The report met the regulation that required an annual fostering report to be received by the Council Executive. The report focused on fostering activity and a profile of the work of fostering teams with the Fostering and Adoption Service.
- 11.2 Councillor Wealls noted that the report highlighted recruiting additional staff. He asked how many positions would be created.
- 11.3 The Head of Fostering & Adoption replied that an additional part-time Practice Manager and an additional three social workers would be appointed. They would form a dedicated recruitment team. The Head of Children & Families added that the Cabinet Member had requested a structure chart for the Fostering team which would be presented at the next Child Review Board.
- 11.4 Councillor Marsh enquired as to the factors involved in choosing between private agency and the council operated Fostering Service.
- 11.5 The Fostering & Adoption Service Manager answered that the Council had a high reputation for the levels of service, assurance and support it provided. Whilst she could not comment on the service private agencies offered she was aware that they could offer high payments in comparison to the Local Authority. The Strategic Director, People added one of the first things he discovered upon his appointment in 2010 was that the Fostering Service provided support to the highest standard.
- 11.6 **RESOLVED-** That the Annual Fostering Service Report and the progress of the Fostering & Adoption Service in relation to fostering activity is noted.

12. ANNUAL ADOPTION SERVICE REPORT

- 12.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People. The report met Standard 25.6 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services that requires the Adoption Agency to produce a 6 monthly report to the Council Executive. The report gave full information about adoption activity and compliance with the national adoption standards and a profile of the work of the Adoption and Permanence teams.
- 12.2 Councillor Marsh enquired about the composition of the Adoption and Permanence Panel.
- 12.3 The Head of Fostering & Adoption replied that Adoption regulations specified the composition of the Panel that included, amongst others, an independent foster carer, adoptive parent and an adopted person.
- 12.4 Councillor Wealls asked if adopters were surveyed about the service provided.
- 12.5 The Head of Fostering & Adoption answered that surveys were carried out throughout the various stages of the adoption process as well as for specific services. In addition, questionnaires were regularly sent out with responses sent to the Chair of the Adoption & Permanence Panel with the results discussed with the Lead Commissioner- Children, Youth & Families in their quarterly meeting.

- 12.6 Councillor Wealls requested further information on the approach taken by Adoption Services in black, minority and ethnic (BME) adoption cases.
- 12.7 The Head of Fostering & Adoption clarified that the adoption agency had an explicit inclusive recruitment strategy and employed a recruitment officer for BME carers and adopters. Careful assessment was undertaken to ascertain the needs of adoptive children in relation to identity and this determined the type of placement. The Head of Children and Families added that every case of adoption was reviewed annually by the Child Review Board. A part of this review was to confirm that timescales were implemented properly.
- 12.8 **RESOLVED-** That the Annual Adoption Agency Report and the progress of the Agency in relation to adoption and permanence activity is noted.
- 13. COMMISSIONING STRATEGY FOR SERVICES, ASSESSMENTS AND PLACEMENTS FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CHILDREN IN NEED WHO ARE AT RISK OF CARE OR CUSTODY**
- 13.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People that provided information on the Local Authority's Commissioning Strategy for services, assessment and placements for looked after children and children in need.
- 13.2 Councillor Wealls enquired about the implications of the G v London Borough of Southwark judgement on the Commissioning Strategy.
- 13.3 The Managing Principal Lawyer clarified that where the Authority provided interim accommodation to under 18's, it was likely that they were a looked after child. Children's Services will in most cases be obliged to provide section 20 duties.
- 13.4 **RESOLVED-**
- 1) That the Commissioning Strategy for services, assessments and placements for looked after children and children in need is agreed.
 - 2) That the arrangements for monitoring the development plan through the Children's Services Value for Money Project are noted.
- 14. YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN**
- 14.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People that provided a Youth Offending Service (YOP) Improvement Action Plan as a result of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection.
- 14.2 Councillor Marsh conveyed her disappointment at the inspection results noting that many areas of the service performed below the national average.

- 14.3 The Strategic Director, People identified that whilst there was room for improvement, there were contributory factors to the result. In particular, he felt the inspectorate's criteria could not be adequately applied to young offenders in the context of Brighton & Hove.
- 14.4 The Head of Children & Families added that the Child Review Board would be discussing the matter further.
- 14.5 **RESOLVED-** That the Cabinet Member approve the YOS Improvement Action Plan
- 15. TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS TO VOLUNTARY AIDED CHURCH SCHOOLS IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE**
- 15.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director, People requesting permission to consult with schools, parents, carers and Diocesan authorities on the possible withdrawal of denominational transport.
- 15.2 Councillor Wealls noted his concern that the proposals would mean low-income families, who did not qualify for transport support, would now have to buy a yearly bus ticket at a cost of £250 each. He asked if the proposals would also apply to academy and/or free schools.
- 15.3 The Head of Admissions & Transport answered that the proposals only applied to those schools of religious character. There were currently no academies or free schools of this type in Brighton and Hove.
- 15.4 Councillor Marsh felt the proposals could be interpreted as discriminatory.
- 15.5 The Managing Principal Lawyer emphasised that consulting on an issue was not discriminatory. She added that there would be a need for an Equalities Impact Assessment would be required as part of the consultation process.
- 15.6 The Cabinet Member enquired as to the timescales of consultation and, if agreed, implementation as parents would begin applying for school places toward the end of the year.
- 15.7 The Head of Admissions & Transport replied that the consultation process would be approximately three months and, if agreed, implementation would begin from the 2013/14 academic year.
- 15.8 **RESOLVED-** That the Cabinet Member agrees:
- 1) That the Council should take forward a consultation with schools, parents and carers and the Diocesan authorities on the possible withdrawal of denominational transport.
 - 2) That following that consultation a further report should be made to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young people setting out the results and recommendations arising from the consultation.

The meeting concluded at 5.22pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of