



# Notes of evidence

Name of meeting	<b>POLICY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND SCHOOL RESULTS</b>
Date and time	<b>THURSDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2008 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM</b>
Venue	<b>COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Commission	Cllrs George Cameron (Commissioner), John Effemey, Roger Mazillius
Cabinet	Cllr Alan Wells
Other Councillors	Cllr David Pugh
Officers Present	Nicolas Crick, Alison Dempsey, David Hands, Clare Messenger, Rachel Reeds, Keith Simmonds, Paul Thistlewood
Stakeholders	Elaine Garrett, Rachel Hayes
Apologies	David Whittaker, Muriel Miller, Gill Kennett

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**7. Minutes**

The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Mr Thistlewood, advised that as the meeting was not quorate it could only proceed on an informal basis and the minutes of the meeting held on [25 June 2008](#) would have to be confirmed at the next meeting.

**8. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**9. Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

**10. Childhood Obesity Project**

The Policy Commission received a presentation from the Childhood Obesity Project Officer, Elaine Garrett, on the Childhood Obesity Project. It was anticipated that the project would run from June 2008 to April 2009 and

would result in a report including recommendations for how to address the problem.

The 2007 foresight report had identified the drivers of childhood obesity and indicated that action was need on three fronts:

- Lifestyle, including healthy eating and physical activity
- A health promoting environment
- Access to treatment and support for weight loss.

The research was to be gathered through semi-structured scoping interviews with about 70 different stakeholders considering issues such as funding needs, data, training needs, relationships with other agencies, ideas for development and so on.

The project would develop a long term approach and produce recommendations for the Policy Commission that could be built into existing policy.

Members were concerned about the sustainability of resources to fund the project. The Childhood Obesity Project Officer assured the Commission that funding was in place until April and that work was currently progressing to schedule.

The problem of fast food operators in close proximity to schools was discussed. It was suggested that the Commission consider using its influence to press for changes to the licensing protocol.

#### 11. **Special Educational Needs - Learners with Difficulties and Disabilities Strategy 2008 – 2012**

The Policy Commission considered Special Educational Needs - Learners with Difficulties and Disabilities Strategy which the Commission had considered in May and had recommended be subjected to further consultation. It would be presented to Cabinet in October.

Consultation had taken place over a 6 week period and 25 responses had been received. Some revisions had been made as a result of the consultation and if a suggestion had not led to a revision, justification for this was set out in the report.

Members were advised that the revised strategy had been received well at the Headteachers and Early Years conferences.

Members were advised that the Special Educational Needs – Learners with Difficulties and Disabilities Strategy and Reference Group would meet quarterly to review the implementation of the strategy.

It was also requested that those who had offered suggestions as part of the consultation be issued with written feedback explaining the reasons their suggestions had or had not been taken on board. The Commission would be informed of the result of this exercise.

Members asked that the Commission be presented with an annual report of the progress of the Strategy.

Members were assured that, if all the initiatives were implemented, provision for children with special education needs would be vastly improved and those supporting such children would feel much more confident.

## 12. **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

The Policy Commission was presented with the Implementation Plan for the Corporate Parenting Strategy which had been adopted by Cabinet in September. The strategy would be launch later in the year.

The Head of Targeted Intervention, Nicolas Crick, explained that the focus of the Implementation Plan would be on ensuring a partnership between Members and professionals. The Corporate Parenting Group would consider the delivery and performance of the Strategy, the Children in Care Council would set aims for improvement and allow children in care to present their views, and there would be an annual conference to raise the profile of the Strategy.

Members were advised that the number of children in care on the island had been reduced in the past few months but the figure was still higher than the national average. Members were assured that the Corporate Parenting Strategy had robust provision for the development of preventative strategies such as new policies and the education and supporting of parents.

Members were concerned about provisions in the Strategy to prevent children being moved frequently to different foster homes and schools. Mr Crick explained that more foster carers were being recruited so the Council would be better able to match children to placements which should mean children are more likely to stay in that placement long term. Keith Woods, Director for Children and Young People, added that this work would compliment the powers gained by the local authority in the 2006 Admissions Code to create continuity in school placements by the provision of transport.

Members were also advised that the restructuring of Children's Services would have a further positive effect on the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Members asked what direct role they could play in helping to improve the lives of children in care. Mr Crick suggested that Members would have opportunities to engage with children in care at the annual Corporate Parenting event, at the Children in Care Council and at 'Have Your Say' Days.

Members suggested that children could be told who their local Councillor was and how to contact him or her.

Mr Crick advised members that the plan to professionalise the Foster Care Scheme, particularly in relation to the care of older children, would reduce

the likelihood of children being moved between placements and equip foster carers with better skills.

Members were also advised that the local authority was currently recruiting social workers but that there was a national shortage of trained professionals. The Isle of Wight Council has been successful in attracting social workers from the mainland.

Members were told that there is a social worker emergency duty service for outside office hours. Mr Crick advised that professionalising the Foster Care Scheme would mean children in care would be better supported in the evening and at night. Children's Services were considering more open-ended contracts for social workers to provide a better service outside office hours.

CHAIRMAN