



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	THURSDAY, 5 MARCH 2009 AT 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Muriel Miller (Chairman), William Burt, Vanessa Churchman, Deborah Gardiner, Erica Oulton, Lady Pigot, Margaret Webster
Co-opted Members (voting)	Mrs Sue Poston, Mr Charles Rogers
Other Members Present	Cllr David Pugh, Cllr Alan Wells, Cllr Dawn Cousins
Officers Present	Mr Nicolas Crick, Mr Keith Woods, Mrs Sue Wadsworth, Mr Chris Mathews, Mr Paul Thistlewood, Miss Pakeezah Spenner
Apologies	Cllr Ivan Bulwer, Cllr Heather Humby, Cllr Gill Kennett, Cllr Colin Richards, Mrs Sara Sheath, Mr Adrian Smith, Mr Bob Blezzard

66 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [22 January 2009](#) be confirmed.

67 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Gardiner declared a personal interest in Minute number 69 and 70 as she worked for Unison.

Mr Charles Rogers declared a personal interest on Minute number 69 as he was a Non Executive Director of the IOW PCT.

68 **Public Question Time**

A number of oral questions were asked by Mr Dave Miller relating to schools. To enable the Director for Children and Young People to respond to these Mr Miller agreed to send in the questions in written form.

The Island Strategic Partnership Lead for Inspiring Island, Sue Wadsworth, outlined the delivery of the elements contained within that theme as part of Eco Island. The Children's Trust Board was responsible for managing the priorities contained within the Local Area Agreement (LAA). It was also undertaking the review of the Isle of Wight Children, Young People and their Families Plan which was a key document in service delivery. Mrs Wadsworth was also part of the Health & Wellbeing Board and this helped with co-ordinating the cross cutting priorities contained in the LAA.

The Committee queried the difference in performance information that was contained in the report before them and that which had been supplied to the recent meeting of the ISP Board. This was due to the different timescales involved. It was noted that the Committee had received Quarter 3 figures while the ISP Board received a wider perspective. Reporting mechanisms were spread over the year and sometimes the full picture would only emerge during the course of the year. The Board was also trying to re-arrange the national performance indicators to match the working groups driving the work forward. Certain themes were cross cutting and did not 'sit comfortably' in certain areas making the process complicated and challenging.

Discussion took place on whether some of the targets were realistic, particularly in relation to school achievement. Targets needed to be ambitious and aspirational but if set too high could be demoralising if they were beyond reach.

Specific performance indicators were raised and discussed and seen as issues of concerns/areas to watch:

- NEET figures considered good on the IOW and the downturn was most likely connected to the economic climate. Jobs that were previously available were no longer available due to the economic climate and people were seeking further qualifications. Some in the NEET figures already had difficulties in the school system.
- NI050 & NI069 –possible error in figures noted.
- NI069 – Children who had experienced bullying. Concerns raised regarding questions posed and statistical basis. Response by Director and Cabinet members that the questions were posed in the right context and were statistically correct. The issue of bullying was taken very seriously. There was an 'Anti-Bullying Strategy Policy' that had been recently approved by the Council and this would be sent out to all the school governing bodies.
- NI032 - Repeat incidents of domestic violence (cross cutting issue). No figures were available in the Q3 report since the target was not part of the Inspiring Island Theme (did not go under Children's Trust Board).
- NI060 – Core assessment for the children's social care. GOSE Audit would come out as an appendix to the next report. Core assessment inputting into the system was seen as a National concern since it was complicated and time consuming and on top, courts did not accept core assessments using the ICS format which meant duplication of work already done.

- School re-organisation: impact on raising standards. The DCSF would give direction on what the IOW should be achieving. The responsibility of targets would not shift between the boards. The Chairs of the boards would meet more often which would contribute to achieve seamlessness across the process.

Mention was made of the recent pledges to young people made at the recent full Council meeting. This had been written by young people themselves. Robust initiatives were in place to monitor deliver relevant services. The Corporate Parenting Group and the Children Care Council had regular meetings and sent feedback straight to the Children's Trust.. It was reported that 20 new foster carers had just been assessed and recruited on the IOW.

With regard to the funding implications if certain targets were not met. The Director of Children and Young People indicated that financial reward money was only attached to some of the targets.

The Leader of the Council, who was also Chair of the ISP, gave a clarification on the whole LAA process. It was emphasized that targets were devised in agreement with the Government Office in the South East (GOSE) and it was an evolving process for all partners. This was the first year since the LAA had been implemented and the ISP was still trying to find their 'feet'. Implementing the LAA was a very complex process and some other authorities had even more complex arrangements but the Island was deemed as being much further ahead than others.

The progress of the ISP board was improving in a positive direction. A data sharing protocol was now in place showing effective work across the organisations. Agendas across the partnership were very ambitious which could be challenging at times but as a whole the partnership was getting stronger and becoming more cohesive in set-up and some key deliveries.

RESOLVED

THAT the progress being made with the delivery of the Inspiring Island theme be noted.

70. **Child Protection**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the report with reference to the Lord Laming report due to be published which would impact upon this area. The report before the Committee outlined the Council's responsibilities and the background to how this had evolved and the frameworks in place with partners. The restructuring of the Children and Young People's Directorate was nearly completed and this would give a greater focus on the way child protection was approached.

Key issues and challenges being faced by the Directorate were mostly in areas such as :-

- Recruitment and retention of qualified social workers.
- Implementation of the Integrated Children's System (ICS) which was identified as a national problem.
- Family Proceeding Courts not accepting the core assessment format with ICS.

The Committee also received details from the Local Safeguarding Children Board on the number of children with a child protection plan, number of children in care by placement type and the tasks contained in the Safeguarding Action Plan.

Members raised issues regarding the role of qualified social workers and family support workers as well as recruitment of the posts. It was reported that there was a national shortage regarding recruitment of the latter and more people would need to be trained. The Head of Intervention reported that the Council was looking at ways to make recruitment cost effective such as advertising for free on the internet and at Universities. Current staff needed to be valued more and pay scales needed to be improved to compete with the mainland. Another option was to concentrate on internal development and promotions and focus more on secondments and placements so that people got the opportunity as well as possibly introducing 'graduate' appointments. All these measures would ease pressure around staff.

Greater emphasis was being placed on prevention work rather than intervention. The costs of placements, especially off Island, had budgetary implications. There would still be the need for such placements but it was anticipated that through more effective prevention at an early stage better outcomes could be achieved. This also involved partner organisations and good communications and co-ordination of activities. The Committee was made aware of an annual report issued by the IW NHS Primary Care Trust on Child Protection in Health. A copy of this would be circulated for members information.

The Committee, whilst appreciating the report that had been submitted, were concerned that this had not fulfilled its original request in receiving the detailed response provided by the Council to details requested by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) It was also under the impression that 'peer reviews' would be undertaken in conjunction with Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council. The Committee had not proceeded with its own enquiry due to these matters and not wishing to duplicate work.

Members were advised that the response to the DCFS had been précised in paragraph 41 of the report. The Committee however indicated that it would wish to receive a full copy of the information requested bt the DCFS and the full response provided.

No review would be undertaken with Southampton and Portsmouth Councils as the Council would now be one out of three authorities in the country taking part in an Ofsted pilot project dealing with new safeguarding inspection arrangements. This would enable the Council to have further external independent scrutiny of safeguarding services and also contribute to the development of Ofsted's new inspection process.

RESOLVED:

- (i) THAT the Chairman discuss with the Chief Executive issues surrounding the background to the Child Protection report and how this matter can be progressed to the Committee's satisfaction.
- (ii) THAT a full copy of the information requested by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, together with the Council's response be circulated to the Committee together with a copy of the Annual Report by the Isle of Wight NHS Primary Care Trust on Child Protection.

71. Forward Plan

The published Forward Plan for the period March 2009 – June 2009 was circulated at the meeting. It was noted that it was a busy period with ten items to be presented at Cabinet on the 31 March 2009 and eight items on the 4 April 2009.

CHAIRMAN.