

# ITEM 4

Time commenced - 6.00pm  
Time finished - 8.30pm

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 22 JANUARY 2008

Present: Councillor Poulter (In the Chair)  
Councillors Allen, Bayliss, Dhamrait, Ginns, Higginbottom  
and Rawson.

Co-opted Members: John Honey - Roman Catholic Diocese Representative  
Kirit Mistry – Derby Racial Equality Council

In Attendance: Councillor Bolton – Council Cabinet Member for Children  
and Young People  
Ian Jennison – NUT  
Edward Hayes – Director of Education – Roman Catholic  
Diocese

### 51/07 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Willoughby, Alison  
Brown, Nasreen Iqbal and Dave Wilkinson.

### 52/07 Late Items

There were no late items.

### 53/07 Declarations of Interest

Name	Type of interest	Reason
Councillor Dhamrait	Personal	Governor – Dale Primary School
Councillor Higginbottom	Personal	Chair of Governors – Ashgate Primary School and a governor at Brackensdale Junior School
Councillor Rawson	Personal	Governor – da Vinci Community College  Trustee / Management Board Member – Umbrella  Trustee / Management Board Member – Derwent Stepping Stones

## 54/07 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 11 September and 24 October 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### Items for Discussion

## 55/07 Home to School Transport - Update

The Commission received a statement from John Honey – Roman Catholic Diocese representative regarding the introduction of charges for pupil transport to faith schools.

John Honey advised the Commission that the latest proposals had damaged the relationship between the Council and the diocese. There were six catholic schools in the city, educating 10% of the city's pupils. Catholic people provided £110,000 of the funding for catholic schools. Over the years a close working partnership had developed between the Council and the diocese. Children of other faiths represented 20% of all children in catholic schools in the city. It was clear around the country that other authorities were going down the same route as Derby so the diocese is willing to concede that some charging is needed.

The diocese was deeply saddened by the levels of charges. The Council needed to review the impact of charges over the next few years. There will be an increase in cars on the roads and there may be an effect on schools run by the Council. The diocese would continue to work closely with officers at the Council.

Edward Hayes – Director of Education – Roman Catholic Diocese added that it would be interesting to see the effect on Local Authority community schools.

Councillor Poulter responded that it had not been the intention of this Commission or the Council to damage any relationship with the diocese. The applications to St Benedict's had increased this year in spite of these proposals, though this might not continue and would need to be monitored. The Commission would also ask to be kept informed of any environmental impact.

Councillor Bolton – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People added that the report approved by Cabinet was a joint report with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation. It was a great shame if this had damaged the partnership with the diocese. Applications to St Benedict's were up by 7% this year. Parents had been made fully aware of the proposals. The Council had tried to deal with this issue in the open and in a fair way. She was sorry the diocese was not happy with the results.

**Resolved to note the statement.**

The Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director for Corporate and Adult Services providing comments and questions to assist in the scrutiny of the Revenue and Capital Budgets. Members also considered reports from the Corporate Director – Resources detailing the proposed Revenue and Capital budgets for 2008/8 – 2010/11. Members interviewed the Council Cabinet Member and Corporate Director for Children and Young People, later reflected on the information provided and agreed the following recommendations.

**Resolved to recommend:**

**1. That Council Cabinet note that the Commission:**

- a) would not wish to see the implementation of the 2010/11 proposals to reduce spending on: Family Support (£134k), Reception and Hospital Service (£108k), Aspire Leaving Care (£60k), Reduction of post 16 residential beds (£296k), Assessment and Care Planning (£248k), Independent Reviewing Officer function (£72k),**
- b) were informed by the Council Cabinet Member and Corporate Director that every effort would be made to find ways to avoid the implementation of the proposals and**
- c) have resolved to receive a regular progress report from the Cabinet Member and Director on the steps taken to avoid implementation in 2010/11, the first of which should be no later than December 2008.**

**Reasons for recommendation**

**These services are central to the Council's statutory obligations in respect of child protection and looked after children; from a risk management approach meeting our responsibilities is highly sensitive both intrinsically and because of the level of external inspection and ramifications should anything go wrong.**

**2. That Council Cabinet:**

- a) note that the Commission welcomes the work to reduce the unit costs of independent fostering agency, IFA, placements, either through contracting arrangements and/or collaboration with other local authorities and**
- b) needs to recognise that the overall number of in-house foster carers are affected by the rate of allowances they receive and that this has an inter-relationship with the need to make placements with IFAs.**

## **Reasons for recommendation**

a) The appointment of an officer to secure unit cost improvements through a commissioning and contracting process is a welcome example of invest-to-save. It may be that, subject to any rules on competition, a sub-regional consortium of unitary/councils may be able to secure even more favourable unit costs.

b) The Commission decided not to make a specific recommendation regarding the rate of fostering allowances for 2008/9; however, experience has shown that the number of in-house foster carers is not growing fast enough to enable the rising number of looked after children to be accommodated. As a consequence greater and greater use of made of the much more expensive IFAs. Good child care practice means that once placed there, the child is likely to remain and thus create a long term financial commitment. Making increased budget provision in response (£547k extra from April 2008) in tight financial circumstances squeezes out the scope to increase the allowances to our own foster carers, which would serve as an aid to recruitment and retention and reduce the need for IFA placements. In July 2006 the Commission's own review heard – and agreed - that 'the issue of allowances couldn't be ignored – it's a competitive market' and that 'we need to strive to reach' the Fostering Network's recommended rates.

3. That Council Cabinet note that the Commission is concerned that the re-categorisation of the costs of the Education Psychology, so as to fall within the schools budget with consequent charging to individual schools, may have an adverse impact on individual pupils accessing the service, as the 'affordability' will depend on i) the level of charges, ii) the number needing referral and iii) the state of the school's budget.

## **Reasons for recommendation**

At its meeting the Commission was not sure about the 'mechanics' of putting this important service into the schools budget. If the change does not produce any adverse impact on pupils needing referral then the proposal can be welcomed as creative accountancy. The concern is that a school with budgetary difficulties or which by chance has an unusually high number of children needing referral in a year, does not refer all those who would be referred under the present system. Early, appropriate intervention can avoid much costlier responses later, for example, successfully dealing with behavioural issues can avoid permanent exclusion, family breakdown and the need for the child to become looked after by the Council.

4. That Council Cabinet should consider the feasibility of building a larger residential home for autistic children, perhaps comprising

two five beds wings, with the additional places to help adjacent authorities to meet the needs of similar children.

#### **Reasons for recommendation**

There could be a win/win result of income generation for Derby City Council and reduced costs, compared to expensive out-of area placements for neighbouring councils. Accepting the logic that the nature of the children means that specialist units have to be small to manage well and deliver care, two wings could keep the operational scale but also provide significant management economies when compared to two entirely separate homes. Even with a catchment area based on the BVPI indicator of placing a child not more than 20 miles from the parental home, that would include Nottingham City, the Erewash/Amber 'border' towns plus Burton-on-Trent.

5. That Cabinet note that as regards the new capital programme 'Primary Strategy for Change' the Commission a) wish to be involved in a timely way so as to have the opportunity to potentially influence the proposals and b) will take a specific interest in the methodology to be used to determine the order that primary schools appear in the programme.

#### **Reasons for recommendation**

The Primary Strategy for Change was described as BSF's 'little brother' because the scale of funding is much smaller. However, the submission to central government has to make projections about primary provision for the following 14 years – making the 15–20 page document much more strategic than most local authority service planning. Working back from the final submission date of 16 June 2008, the timetable needs to factor in engagement with the Commission whilst the proposals are still capable of being shaped and revised. Regarding b) with such limited funds covering such a long period achieving a fair methodology is essential to justify each school's place in the ranking order.

### **Performance Management**

- 57/07      a) Performance Eye Quarter 3 Data for 2007/8  
              b) Interview of Officers About Particular Areas of Performance  
              c) Update on Performance Surgeries held on 18 September and 20 November 2007

The Commission was advised that the Performance Eye cycle did not align with the timing of this meeting. If members agreed to the motion on the agenda then a meeting would take place at 5.30pm on 31 January 2008.

**Resolved that a) to discharge proper scrutiny of the issues, the Chair, Vice Chair and a Liberal Democrat member be delegated to consider i) the Performance Eye 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter data and ii) the progress made regarding the indicators considered at Performance Surgeries, b) other members be invited to attend the meeting and c) any outcomes be reported back to the Commission.**

**58/07          Annual Children and Young People's Social Care Services Complaints**

The Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director for Children and Young People on the Annual Children and Young People's Social Care Services complaints during 2006/07.

Councillor Higginbottom asked if all the 'lessons learned' had been implemented in relation to p14-12 of the report. Andrew Flack advised that he would email a response to this question.

**Resolved to note the Annual Children and Young People's Social Care Services complaints during 2006/7.**

**59/07          Annual Performance Assessment of Children and Young People's Services**

The Commission considered a report from the Corporate Director for Children and Young People detailing the outcome of the 2007 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People.

The Commission commented that this was a very positive report, and in particular the 'outstanding' grade for the 'Making a Positive Contribution' outcome.

Andrew Flack, Corporate Director for Children and Young People advised that the Joint Area Review report would be published in February 2008.

**Resolved**

- 1. To note the 2007 Annual Performance Assessment of Services for Children and Young People and congratulate the staff for this very positive report.**
- 2. To note the improved performance from 2005-2006 and issues highlighted for improvement in 2007-2008.**

## Items for Discussion

### 60/07 The Development of Children's Centres in Derby

The Commission considered the draft report arising from the focussed scrutiny review.

**Resolved to approve the report and refer to Council Cabinet for its consideration.**

### 61/07 Focussed Scrutiny

The sub-group of the Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr Allen had agreed on 4 January to look at progress made in reducing teenage pregnancies. The evidence gathering sessions would take place on 5 February 2008.

**Resolved to note the report**

### 62/07 Retrospective Scrutiny

Councillor Bayliss suggested having another look at Children Looked After. Councillor Rawson advised that this had been done recently at the Corporate Parenting Sub-Commission. An update report had been received by the full Commission in November 2007 and a second will be presented in November 2008.

### 63/07 Call-In

There were no items.

### 64/07 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

There were no items.

### 65/07 Forward Plan Tracking and Reporting System

The Commission considered a report from the Chair on whether to adopt a Forward Plan tracking and reporting system as agreed by the Scrutiny Management Commission.

**Resolved to adopt a Forward Plan tracking and reporting system as agreed by the Scrutiny Management Commission.**

### 66/07 Matters Referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

67/07        Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the  
Commission

There were no items.

MINUTES END