

ITEM 4

Time commenced - 18:01

Time finished - 20:00

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION TUESDAY 15 MARCH 2011

Present: Councillor F Winter (Chair), Councillors Bolton (left during Item 92/10), Davis (left during Item 93/10), Higginbottom, Radford, Tuplin and Whitby, and Kirit Mistry

85/10 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Berry and Williams and from Alison Brown, Nasreem Iqbal and David Wilkinson.

86/10 Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

87/10 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Tuplin declared an interest as he is a member of the Derby City Council Adoption Panel.

88/10 Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2011

The minutes of the meeting on 8 February 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Items for Discussion

89/10 Schools Capital Programme 2011/12

The Commission received a report on the Schools Capital Programme 2011/12.

Councillor Bolton asked how the £2M (million) allocated to Lees Brook school is to be spent given that they had anticipated £10M for a rebuilding programme. The Director of Performance and Commissioning replied that the

money would be spent on urgent work and that required to maintain health and safety at the school. She also explained that Lees Brook might be used as a case study to highlight the need for future capital funding for such schools.

Councillor Tuplin asked for more information on the apparently large fall in schools' devolved capital funding from £4.8M in 2010/11 to £0.9M in 2011/12 and whether this sum was to be allocated across all schools. The Director replied that there had been a dramatic fall in devolved funding although funding is available separately in other areas. The £0.9M funding referred to is to be distributed between all schools.

Councillor Davis asked how a backlog of £58M of work across all schools had built up. The Director of Performance and Commissioning explained that the backlog had built up over a number of years and would be tackled according to the priorities set out in section 4.8 of the report as follows:

- Fire precaution works *
- Renewing life expired boilers and heating systems
- Upgrading fire alarms and emergency lighting
- Replacement windows
- Re-roofing
- Structural repairs
- Security and safeguarding issues
- Other relevant health and safety issues such as asbestos
- Basic need – additional school places

* Highest priority work arising from fire risk assessments carried out under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order

Resolved to note the presentation.

90/10 Safe and Sound

The Commission received a verbal report on the work of Safe and Sound in the city.

Safe and Sound is the single largest organisation of its type, dealing solely with combating sexual exploitation, in the UK. In 2009/10 they directly helped 127 young people and were involved in the education of over 4000 others.

Their work with nightclubs in the city was given as an example of their assertive outreach work. They were able to highlight and address numerous examples of sexual exploitation of young people at Zanzibar under 18's nightclub in the city. This work eventually culminated in this venue being closed and club activity being introduced at a new venue where the owner showed a strong commitment to creating a safe environment for young people.

In addition to the work described above, Safe and Sound have worked with parents in the city and supported Operation Retriever. They are also active nationally, working with the government and other public bodies and delivering training to the police and health professionals.

Councillor Higginbottom began questioning from the Commission by asking whether the instances of requests from sexual favours from staff at Zanzibar had been followed up. The Director of Safe and Sound replied that unfortunately they had been unable to identify the door staff involved or retain the young people long enough to make a statement. However, prosecutions in this area across Derby were high by comparison with the rest of the UK.

Councillor Tuplin asked if all of the 74 sexually exploited currently being supported by Safe and Sound were female. The Director replied that approximately 25% were men, often heterosexual men who had been forced into sex with other men. This is an often under-represented group. The Director confirmed too, that Safe and Sound work directly with the Sexual Abuse Unit at 42 Leopold Street.

Kirit Mistry asked the Director what age group they worked with. The age range is 8-18, with peak activity typically occurring with the 12-15 age group. Safe and Sound generally sought to move 18-25 year olds on to other organisations although they do not cease working with any young people in this age group once they had begun.

It was confirmed in answer to a question from Councillor Winter that Safe and Sound work directly with Derby Rape Crisis where appropriate.

Kirit Mistry asked about work with ethnic minorities. The Director highlighted the difficulties some young people from some of these groups had in coming forward. Nonetheless figures were in line with the population as a whole.

Finally Councillor Winter asked if Safe and Sound worked to help those involved in forced marriages. She was told that they do.

Resolved to note the presentation.

91/10 Constitution of the Corporate Parenting Role

The Commission received a report which recommended that the Commission take responsibility for Corporate Parenting on behalf of the council.

Councillor Higginbottom asked why the council had not had a Corporate Parenting Board to date. The Interim Director of Specialist Services answered that there was no specific reason that could be identified.

Resolved to request a written report be submitted outlining the reasons that we have not had a Corporate Parenting Board to date.

Councillor Whitby asked if monthly meetings of any Corporate Parenting body would be sufficiently often. The Interim Director of Specialist Services answered that that was a matter for the council to decide.

Councillor Bolton observed that the Commission needed to decide how often any Corporate Parenting Board should meet. This should be discussed at the next Children and Young People Commission in June 2011. In addition all councillors should undergo training as they all act as corporate parents. Councillor Davis added that she felt the focus should be on the CYP Commission whilst acknowledging that all councillors have an obligation in this area.

Councillor Higginbottom enquired of the Chair, Councillor Winter, whether she had written to all councillors regarding their responsibilities as corporate parents. Councillor Winter had written a letter but suggested that councillors might benefit from a reminder.

At this point the Overview and Scrutiny Officer suggested that the Commission should not be too concerned as to the frequency with which any Corporate Parenting Board might meet as the Board had previously not met more than 8 times a year in the past. It was also noted that Children in Care are already the responsibility of the CYP Commission.

Resolved to note the presentation.

92/10 Annual Report from the Adoption Agency

The Commission received the annual report from the Adoption Agency.

Councillor Tuplin began questioning by asking how long the 48 children highlighted in the report as waiting for adoptive placement had been waiting. The Interim Director of Specialist Services answered that some had been waiting a long time. Time waiting for adoption is particularly dependent on age, any disability etc. Councillor Tuplin added that he felt it important to try and break any inter-generational patterns of adoption. Councillor Winter added that a number of high trauma cases had also been seen.

Councillor Whitby asked how long it took to approve an adopter. The Service Manager for Specialist and Mainstream Fostering and Adoption, replied that it takes approximately 5-6 months to approve an adopter, a similar time to that taken to approve a foster carer.

Councillor Whitby asked if potential adopters received all information available about a child awaiting adoption. Officers replied that all information was always provided. It was in nobody's interest to hide anything.

Councillor Winter enquired whether ongoing support for adopters was in place. She was told that post adoption support was well established.

Councillor Radford asked what circumstances would leave to a child being placed for adoption outside the city. Officers replied that one primary reason was the need to move a child away from their birth family. It was highlighted that the ongoing expansion of access to social media made planning for adoption more and more challenging. Photos are no longer sent to birth parents and names are also being changed. Adopters are also now receiving more training on e-safety.

Councillor Winter asked if advances in IVF treatment had had an impact on the number of people coming forward as adopters. Officers answered that they had but that there were also cases where parents had had one child by IVF and had then sought to adopt another child.

Kirit Mistry asked what the ethnic background is of the 48 children awaiting adoption. The Interim Director of Specialist Services replied that some children had been on the waiting list for some time and were at different stages in the process.

Councillor Higginbottom asked what, if any, strategy was in place to address any situation where an adopter wanted to withdraw once they had adopted a child. The Interim Director stated that as much work as possible was put in at the front end to prevent any placement failing. If any adoption failed then the likelihood was that the child concerned would be taken into care. Councillor Tuplin added that there is a 10 week trial placement before any adoption is confirmed. Councillor Higginbottom continues by asking about any issues that emerged during a child's teenage years and was told that any issues at this time would be treated the same as those for any other child.

Councillor Davis asked what view was taken of adoption / placement with a child's extended family. The Interim Director of Specialist Services replied that every case was different. It was important, if adoption took place within the extended family, that the adopters understood all the issues behind the child being placed for adoption in the first place. Officers added that the introduction of Special Guardianship Orders had helped in this area.

Councillor Tuplin concluded this item by highlighting the respect he now had for social workers following the three years he had spent on the Adoption Panel.

Resolved to note the presentation.

93/10 Children Looked After Statistics

The Commission received the latest statistics available on children looked after.

Councillor Whitby asked why Derby has so many more children in care than other neighbouring authorities. The Interim Director of Specialist Services replied that the larger number was predominantly due to Derby being an urban authority, increased numbers had been seen in other urban authorities across the country.

Referring to the current case of Mr and Mrs Johns in the local and national press Councillor Whitby asked if we were missing a number of potential foster carers due to consideration of views of faith. The Interim Director responded that she felt that the council had handled Mr and Mrs Johns' case correctly and appropriately.

Councillor Tuplin asked, in relation to performance recorded as being worse than average, whether the Interim Director had any particular concerns. She did not.

Kirit Mistry asked what evidence there was of joined up working between services. The Interim Director of Specialist Services said that such working was pursued whenever and wherever appropriate.

Finally Councillor Davis was informed, in answer to her question as to whether there are any Roma children in care, that there are currently one or two.

Resolved to note the presentation.

94/10 Topic Review – Looked After Children with Mental Health Issues

All the contributors to the topic review, which had been held earlier in the month, had been found to be very informative. The key to ongoing improvement had been highlighted as early intervention along with a better system of early assessment and improved communication. Following a meeting with the Director of Performance and Commissioning on 23 March, on the subject of CAMHS, a report would then be shared with the Commission.

At this point Kirit Mistry highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity in CAMHS.

Resolved to delegate the signing off of the final report to those members of the Commission who had actively participated in the topic review.

95/10 Retrospective Scrutiny

Councillor Davis requested the Commission scrutinise the subject of transition from primary to secondary school.

Councillor Tuplin requested the Commission scrutinise the subject of children with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and their categorisation.

96/10 Forward Plan

Due to the current pace of change within the council it was observed that the forward plan is not always produced in such a way as to allow effective scrutiny. Councillor Higginbottom stated that the Commission expected to see a report stating “no items to report” rather than simply no report.

Resolved to request that all councillors be provided with a report of items missed off the Forward Plan.

97/10 Response to any Reports and Enquiries of the Commission

Resolved to request a clearer response to their recommendation relating to the Youth Service.

Resolved to request a presentation on the Youth Service and Early Intervention Grant when a decision has been made about funding.

98/10 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items referred to the commission by Council Cabinet.

Minutes End