

Time commenced - 6.00pm
Time finished - 7.29pm

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION
3 NOVEMBER 2009

Present: Councillor Bolton (Chair)
Councillors Ginns, F Khan, R Khan, Latham and Williams
John Honey and Nasreen Iqbal

In attendance: Councillors Jones and Allen for minute 33/09
Young people's representatives

25/09 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Higginbottom, Kirit Mistry and David Wilkinson.

26/09 Late Items

The Chair informed the meeting that Sky, one of the young people's representatives and Adele Styles, Young People's Senior Consultation Officer, had that day visited the House of Commons where Sky was shadowing Dawn Primarolo the Minister of State for the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

One of the young people's representatives informed the Commission that on 30 October 2009 she had visited the House of Commons with the Youth Parliament.

27/09 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28/09 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to an amendment to Minute 18/09 replacing 'Fielding' with 'Feldman.'

29/09 Call-in

There were no items.

Items for Discussion

30/09 Response of the Director for Children and Young
People on the issues raised by young people's
representatives at the last CYP Commission meeting

The Assistant Director of Specialist Services, Keith Woodthorpe responded to the queries from the young people's representatives that had been raised at the last meeting.

Keith stated that a request had been made to provide support and a central point of contact for young people who have left the care system. He said that this mainly applied to younger children who are looked after for a shorter period of time. He stated that the query had identified a gap in the current service provision. This was being addressed and in future officers would ensure that a contact point is available.

Another request related to support after an adoption had occurred. Keith informed the Commission that there is currently a scheme in existence, however, because the new parents have legal responsibility for the child any support would have to be provided with their consent.

The young people representatives also asked for an out of hours care line service to be made available. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services explained that there is an out of hours service available but currently it is limited to emergency calls. He informed members that officers would look into the possibility of expanding the service.

The young people representatives had expressed concern about the letter box contact service. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services informed the Commission that this applied more to young people who have been adopted. He said that failure of this system was often down to the birth parents. If they decide not to fulfil their agreement with the Council then the authority could not take any enforcement action. However if the fault was with the adoptive parents then the authority could intervene. He stated that because each case has its own unique circumstances it was not possible to provide a general response.

Life story work had also been raised by young people representatives. Keith said that this was an area of work that needed to be developed. Some progress has been made in developing the service but it was dependent on staff skills and the time they had available.

Resolved to note the responses.

31/09 Budget Scrutiny

The Commission received a presentation by the Corporate Director of Resources outlining the budget strategy for 2010/11 to 2012/13. He stated that this year the Council would be approaching the budget differently and the budget would be constructed by adopting a strategic approach. Previously

departments have been allocated cash limits and have had to operate within those parameters. This time all budgets are being considered within the Council as a whole.

The Corporate Director of Resources outlined the pressures on the Council. These included £1.5m from 2011/12 because of a revaluation of the Derbyshire Pension Scheme and £600k from 2012/13 for the Building Schools for the Future project.

The Director also highlighted possible savings such as those resulting from the DECATS scheme and by dividing the pressures through the whole Council.

The Director informed the Commission that 16 to 17 year olds can now ask to be supported by the Council as 'looked after children' He said that this could potentially amount to a budget pressure of roughly £300,000. The Director said that there might need to be more rigorous management of this pressure.

Councillor Williams asked when the Youth Service became a statutory function. Officers stated that they would respond to that question after the meeting.

Resolved to note the presentation and use the supporting document as a basis for comparative purposes later in the budget process.

32/09 Annual Safeguarding Plan

The Commission considered a report of the Corporate Director for Children and Young People which detailed the annual review of the Derby Safeguarding Children Board for 2008/09.

The Assistant Director for Specialist Services told members that Derby continued to perform well. The service had not achieved excellence but neither had any other local authority in the country. Derby continued to have excellent working arrangements with the police and the health services.

There are significant pressures on the Council's social workers because of staff vacancies. This means the current staff members have high case loads and no new funding has been announced by the Government.

The service has been subject to a serious case review. The feedback from the review is pending but some of the recommendations from the review have already been implemented.

The Chair asked for an update on the proposed solutions to the current vacancy situation. The Assistant Director stated that officers had compared the pay scales of neighbouring authorities for social workers and had found they were being recruited on higher scales. If the Council were to raise the starting pay grade then this would mean that the salary of existing staff would need to be adjusted as well and this would have a significant financial impact.

The Director said that this would need to be balanced against the prospect of getting into a vacancy spiral where the existing workers leave, meaning that the remaining staff have more work and might also leave.

One of the young people's representatives expressed concern about the possible impact the shortage of staff could have on service delivery. The Assistant Director of Specialist Services explained that the shortage of social workers is nationwide but said there was a strategy in place to counteract further losses of experienced staff.

Councillor Williams stated that more needed to be done to celebrate the successes of the department.

Resolved to note the work and performance of the local safeguarding children arrangements for 2008/09 and the key priorities for the Derby Safeguarding Children Board for the coming year 2009/10.

33/09 Work Plan – Gangs Review

Members considered a report detailing the draft conclusions and recommendations of the Commission's 'Gangs Review.'

Councillor Latham suggested that the report should also include a recommendation that included the need for intervention and parenting support. She suggested that some young parents might need advice and support to build their parenting skills and confidence. She said that this was an opportunity for children workers to tackle this problem at primary and nursery level. The Chair echoed Councillor Latham's comments and added that parenting skills could be added into the PSHE – in full teaching programme. Neighbourhood Boards should also be encouraged to create youth panels.

Councillor Williams stated that the Council needed to recognise community safety as a priority. Neighbourhood forums can then spread that message across the city. The issue of gangs may be localised at the moment but it could spread citywide. Councillor Williams expressed concern about the future capacity of the Gangs Team and the funding pressures it currently experiences.

Nareen Iqbal stated that section 25/9-06 of the report should also include the Police and the Derby Community Safety Partnership (DCSP).

Councillor Williams stated that more needs to be done to involve the young people of Derby in the democratic process. During the course of the review many young people had expressed an interest and wanted to get more involved but did not know what to do. She said that the Council need to empower these individuals.

The Corporate Director of Resources informed the Commission that in terms of funding the DCSP received £155,000 in 09/10 and £210,000 in 2010/11.

He stated that the Multi Agency Gangs Team (MAGT) had only been established in May and he was not aware of any budget pressure. The Chair stated the officers at MAGT were concerned that funding would be removed so that amounted to pressure.

Resolved that the Commission endorse the report subject to final electronic consultation with members.

34/09 Draft Performance Review Programme

Members considered a report of the Corporate Director of Corporate Services that was referred to the Commission by the Scrutiny Management Commission. The report requested that the Commission consider and confirm the performance review programme topics for the coming year.

Resolved to confirm the suggested review topics as contained in Appendix 2 of the report.

35/09 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items.

36/09 Forward Plan

Resolved to identify items in the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for consideration at future meetings of the Commission.

37/09 Responses to any reports and enquiries of the Commission

The Chair informed the Commission that there had been no reply from Ed Ball to the letter she had sent to him about passports for looked after children.

38/09 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet.

MINUTES END