



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PERSONAL HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2003 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Gill - Chair
Councillor Mrs Chambers - Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Getliffe -Labour Spokesperson

Councillor Green (for Councillor Beck)
Councillor J. Blackmore

Councillor Fitch (for Councillor James)
Councillor Nurse

CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Ms S. Bray – Voluntary Sector

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ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Coles – Cabinet Link Member for Social Services and Personal Health

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41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Act applied to them.

Councillor Mrs Chambers declared a non-prejudicial interest in Appendix E, 'Adoption Team Annual Report' as she was a member of the Adoption Panel. The Town Clerk advised that she could speak and vote on the item.

47. PRESENTATION ON THE 'EVERY CHILD MATTERS' - GREEN PAPER

The Corporate Director of Social Care and Health gave a detailed presentation on the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper. The Green Paper set out the Government proposals for reforming the delivery of Social Services and had major implications for the organisation and delivery of children's services.

Members were informed that the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, Social Services Inspections and the Government Strategy for Children had formed the background to the green paper. A number of key concerns had been identified

as a result of these. In particular it had been felt that there was a fragmentation of services for children, an imbalance between prevention and crisis intervention and an overall lack of a unified vision for children and young people. In addition it was felt that there were problems implementing the current legislative framework, that ACPC's were not always effective and that there were problems with the sharing of information between agencies.

The key overall objectives of the Green Paper were to ensure that children were healthy, safe, enjoying and achieving, having social engagement and economic well-being. The five main areas of the proposals attempted to improve prevention, early intervention and protection, support parents and carers, improve accountability and undertake workforce reform. The proposals were explained to Members in some detail. They included methods to improve information sharing, the development of a new post of Children's Director to replace the current Director of Education and the Director of Social Services, and the integrating of services into Children's Trusts. The creation of the new post of Children's Director was to be compulsory, although the exact form this would take was yet to be clarified. In addition it was reported that a Parenting Fund of £25 million was to be established, however it was stressed that this funding was to be split nationally, and would largely be destined for the voluntary sector.

Members of the Committee thanked the Corporate Director of Social Care and Health for his presentation. They gave their support to the ethos and general principles of the Government's green paper, approving of the idea of creating a 'level playing field' and also the workforce reforms. Concerns were raised about the detail of some of the proposals. It was felt that clearer information was needed on the model for the proposed Children's Trust, and that the trusts should have a focus and emphasis on children at risk. Members expressed their hope that the local pilot of a Children's Trust in Leicester, which they considered to have a wider scope than the Government proposals, would influence the final outcomes.

Members also raised concerns about the proposals for a Director of Children's Services and expressed the opinion that whoever be appointed to this position should have a Social Services background. They felt it important that this did not become a 'take over' of Social Services by the Education Department as it was felt that the immediate priorities of the two departments were different to one another.

Further concerns were raised about funding of the proposals. Members believed it to be unrealistic for the changes and transitional costs to be contained within existing funding, as was proposed. In addition concerns were raised at the speed at which the consultation was taking place and the legislation that was planned as a result.

The Corporate Director of Social Care and Health explained that the consultation period ended on the 1 December 2003. The paper was due to go straight to legislation. Discussions had already taken place with Government Ministers on the green paper and comments from members would be used to

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form further feedback from the authority. CLASP were also encouraged to make a contribution to the consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Director of Social Care and Health incorporate comments from the committee when feeding back into the Governments consultation process on the 'Every Child Matters' green paper.