

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
21st January, 2011**

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Buckley, Dodson, Falvey, Fenoughty, Kaye, License, Sharp and Sims.

Also in attendance were:- Councillor Paul Lakin (Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Developing Learning Opportunities for Children) and co-opted members Mr. M. Burn and Mrs. L. Pitchley, Mrs. J. Blanch-Nicholson and Dr. S. Warren.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali and Donaldson and from co-opted member Mr. C. A. Marvin.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

87. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

88. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE YOUTH CABINET

(a) Holocaust Memorial Day – Thursday 27th January, 2011 – the Youth Cabinet was hosting an event at Rotherham Town Hall to celebrate the cultural diversity in Rotherham;

(b) Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) – the Youth Cabinet was arranging for a questionnaire to be completed (during the Rotherham Show in September 2011), enabling young people to express their views about the PSHE curriculum in schools; the results of this latest questionnaire will eventually be compared with the previous questionnaire undertaken as part of the scrutiny review.

89. COMMUNICATIONS

Two members of this Scrutiny Panel were invited to attend the performance clinic about pupil attainment at Key Stage 2, which would be held on Thursday, 17th February, 2011.

90. SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS

The Scrutiny Panel received information from Paul Carney (Principal Officer, Governor Support)) about the role of school governors, the importance which Government places upon that role and the also the support which is provided for school governors. Various salient issues were discussed:-

- the contents of the Government's Schools White Paper 2010, about the importance of teaching, detailing proposals in respect of school governing bodies;
- the White Paper's proposals to clarify the accountability and responsibilities of school governing bodies;

- the school governing body must identify the strategic direction of a school, being a critical friend to and challenging head teachers and the management of the school;
- the local authority's changing role to commission support services for school governors, rather than be a provider of services; the cost and availability of such services supplied by private sector providers (it was acknowledged that this aspect of school governing bodies is developing and changing very quickly);
- the appointment of trained clerks to school governing bodies, in order to advise and support governing bodies more effectively;
- the importance of continuing training for school governors (eg: development of on-line training materials for chairs of school governing bodies; possible use of cluster training and learning communities for the future delivery of training; opportunities to shadow and learn from existing school governors);
- the level of scrutiny of the role of school governors (nb: it is not yet compulsory for school governors to undertake training relevant to the role);
- introducing more flexible models of governing body structure; the possibility of school governing bodies being allowed to change their composition to suit their own needs (parents will continue to be represented on school governing bodies);
- encouraging people with a background in business and with professional skills to become members of school governing bodies;
- vacancy rates amongst school governing bodies and the type of vacancy (ie: whether staff, parent or local authority governor);
- removing some of the prescription currently placed upon school governing bodies and simplifying the amount of decisions which school governing bodies are required to take;
- whether there should be a salary applied to the role of school governor, reflecting their level of professionalism, or whether the current system of unpaid volunteers should remain;
- the methods used to recruit school governors and ensuring that information about the extent of the role and the training provided is readily available to people who may be interested in joining a school governing body;
- development of Academies and free schools, operating independently of the local authority; the Scrutiny Panel noted that, currently, the few Academies in the Rotherham Borough area intending to continue working in partnership with the local authority;
- the White Paper proposes no changes in respect of foundation governors of voluntary aided schools;

- the continuing review of the need for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and whether prospective school governors ought to undertake such checks (currently, school governing bodies make their own decisions as to whether their members ought to undertake CRB checks); the Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that it is good practice for school governors to undertake CRB checks.

Resolved:- (1) That the information about school governing bodies be noted.

(2) That a further report on the Schools White Paper "The Importance of Teaching", including the development of support services for school governing bodies, be submitted to a future meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

91. EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

Consideration was given to a report, submitted by the Assistant Head of School Effectiveness, providing information about the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which was introduced in 2004 to support and encourage learners from low income households to continue in post-16 learning. The EMA is a weekly allowance of up to £30, payable to young people in the 16-19 years age group who participate in a valid post-16 education or training programme based upon their weekly attendance. In 2009/10, EMA was paid to 3,930 Rotherham learners, a total cost of £108,550.

The Scrutiny Panel's discussion of this item included the following salient issues:-

- some 40% of learners in Rotherham, who are eligible for the EMA, currently receive the allowance (although this figure fluctuates throughout the academic year), the majority attending local further education colleges;
- the intention of HM Government to replace the EMA with an enhanced Learner Support Fund; (nb: young people already in receipt of the EMA, will continue to receive it until the end of the current (2010/11) academic year in July 2011; new applications for the EMA are no longer being processed, the closing date for applications being 31st December, 2010);
- the implications for young people's learning of the withdrawal of the EMA and whether learning opportunities will reduce;
- most of the EMA appears to be spent on students' transport/travelling costs in order to access education;
- the intention of the coalition Government to ensure that young people aged 16-18 years continue to engage in learning;
- collection of data, locally, sub-regionally and nationally of the progress in learning made by young people, with the help of receiving the EMA;
- any possible impact upon young people not in education, employment or

training (NEETs); it was acknowledged that it was difficult to assess any direct impact, because of the wider effects of the economy;

- the desirability of targetting support for young people from economically deprived backgrounds; whether other types of state- or local authority-funded benefits may be available for eligible young people to assist with their travelling and meal costs whilst accessing further education and learning.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That this Scrutiny Panel places on record its concern at the decision of the coalition Government to withdraw the Education Maintenance Allowance.

(3) That the issue of financial support for young people accessing learning opportunities continue to be debated at meetings of this Scrutiny Panel.

92. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES - PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2 - 2010/2011

Consideration was given to a report, submitted by the Performance Management Officer outlining the performance of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate at the end of 2010/11 quarter two against targets, with direction of travel against previous year's performance and comparisons with statistical neighbour and national data. The report and the Scrutiny Panel's subsequent debate highlighted these issues:-

- the various areas of success and under-performance;
- arrangements for performance clinics;
- educational achievements of school pupils;
- the quality of support provided by the local authority for schools, alongside the reduction in the school effectiveness service;
- federations of schools (eg: primary schools alongside secondary schools);
- schools in special measures.

It was noted that the format of performance indicator reports was currently under review.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the recommendations regarding performance clinics, as detailed in the report now submitted, be noted.

93. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES - NOTICE TO IMPROVE -

PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS

Consideration was given to a report and action plan, submitted by the Performance, Information and Quality Manager, providing an overview of the progress made since the Notice to Improve was received by Children and Young People's Services in December 2009. The report stated that the overarching action plan used to monitor improvements identifies a red-amber-green rating and a direction of travel for the areas of improvement, some areas of good performance and key risks and issues to meeting the stretching targets set for the Council and its strategic partners.

The Scrutiny Panel was also informed that the Council had very recently received a letter from Tim Loughton MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, which has lifted the Notice to Improve. The Service was now deemed to be performing satisfactorily.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the progress being made against the targets set in the Notice to Improve be noted.

(3) That the lifting of the Notice to Improve for Children and Young People's Services be welcomed.

94. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Scrutiny Adviser containing the current year's (2010/11) work programme for the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel. Members considered that the following issues should be added to the work programme:-

- support for children and young people identified as being gifted and talented (either in academic study or in activities such as music or sports);
- primary school-age childhood obesity (from school Foundation stage to school Year 6 age group);
- pupil attainment levels at Key Stage 2;
- the health of children, in the light of the White Paper "Healthy Lives, Healthy People" published in 2010 by the coalition Government.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the contents of the Scrutiny Panel's 201/11 work programme be approved with the inclusion of the various issues listed above.

95. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S

SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 10TH DECEMBER, 2010

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel held on 10th December, 2010 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

96. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST BOARD HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Trust Board held on 15th December, 2010, be noted.

97. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET MEMBER AND ADVISERS FOR SAFEGUARDING AND DEVELOPING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER 2010 AND ON 5TH JANUARY 2011

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safeguarding and Developing Learning Opportunities for Children held on 15th December, 2010 and on 5th January, 2011, be noted.

98. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH DECEMBER, 2010

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 17th December, 2010 be noted.