

Item 6

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Children and Young People
Date: Wednesday 29 May 2013
Venue: Westminster Room, Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council / Representing
Chairman	David Simmonds	Hillingdon LB
Vice-Chairman	John Merry CBE	Salford City
Deputy-Chairman	Liz Green	Kingston upon Thames RB
Deputy-Chairman	Apu Bagchi	Bedford BC

Members

Paul Carter	Kent CC
Susie Charles	Lancashire CC
Patricia Bradwell	Lincolnshire CC
John Osman	Somerset CC
Anne Burns	Cumbria CC
Paul Lakin	Rotherham MBC
Rita Krishna	Hackney LB
David Bellotti	Bath & NE Somerset Council
Liz Hackett Pain	Monmouthshire CC

Substitutes

Roy Perry	Hampshire CC
Peter Evans	West Sussex CC
Peter Downes OBE	Cambridgeshire CC
Neil Burden	Cornwall County Council

Apologies

Nick Forbes	
Robert Light	Kirklees MBC
Kath Pinnock	Kirklees MBC

Officers: Sally Burlington, Ian Keating, Verity Sinclair

Guests: Sue Gregory, Steve Hart (both attended for the first agenda item)

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Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Cllr David Simmonds welcomed all those present and opened the meeting by congratulating those who had been re-elected in the May local elections. He said he had written expressing commiserations to the two board members who had lost their seats.

1. Report on recent Ofsted developments

Cllr David Simmonds introduced the report and welcomed the two guest speakers Sue Gregory and Steve Hart from Ofsted.

Sue Gregory apologised on Sir Michael Wilshaw's behalf for not attending the meeting and her and Steve outlined their individual expertise.

Sue read out the speech Sir Michael had prepared for the board. This covered a number of points including changes to the inspection framework whereby schools previously labelled satisfactory would be labelled 'requires improvement.' The speech explained Ofsted would be going further than routine inspections by working with requires improvement schools, through producing on-going reports, helping them engage with local networks and trying to act as an enabler for change. These changes had seen a variable response from local authorities around the country but it was stressed that Ofsted were very keen to engage with local councillors. There was also mention of social care inspections where there had been postponement of proposals for multi-agency inspections, in the meantime Ofsted only inspections would be being conducted.

Cllr David Simmonds started the question and answer session by asking what Ofsted meant by 'good'. Sue explained that Ofsted had no role in prescribing teaching methodology and they were looking at the overall impact of lessons and making sure progress was happening. For early years education she explained they were looking at communication and engagement with the children. When pressed she explained they would judge progress through the standardised assessments.

In discussion members made a number of points that were responded to by Sue and Steve:

- Ofsted's new role in both inspection and improvement was a concern for some members. Sue explained that the Chief Inspector of schools had a statutory responsibility to improve schools and that while Ofsted was not an improvement agency it was an agent of improvement. She assured members that their approach would be proportionate to need. Members stressed the need to involve local authorities and not duplicate their role.
- A member questioned whether Ofsted would be taking responsibility for failure by schools to improve. Sue outlined that the statutory duty for improvement was with the local authority, the head teacher and the governing body although Ofsted had a responsibility to improve schools nationally.

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- Consistency in the quality of Ofsted inspectors was questioned by members. Sue assured that Ofsted inspectors were closely monitored by regional directors who fed back any problems to the agency, but there was an issue with schools passing the blame to the inspector when they received a poor report. She however advised that if there was a genuine complaint, councils should contact Ofsted directly.
- There were a number of concerns raised about academies including their relationship with local authorities and the standard of academy chains. Sue outlined that there was guidance on how to build relationships with academies and many local authorities had a good working relationship. Members explained the poor relationship was often down to the academy. In terms of academy trusts while there was no statutory power to inspect them, if there were a number of concerns about their schools then concerns would be raised with the Secretary of State for Education.
- There was a discussion on whether expectations should vary based on the catchment area of the school. Steve and Sue both stated they believed every child should be entitled to a good education and there was no barrier other than disability and mobility that could not be overcome. Members agreed that while context needed to be taken into account all children should be receiving the best education possible.
- The success of the safeguarding inspections was questioned by members. Steve and Sue defended the inspections saying they were focusing on the perspective of the child and it was necessary to inspect safeguarding and looked after children at the same time. Members questioned how councils could provide the same service with less funding. Sue advised that this be taken up with the Secretary of State.

Decision

Members noted the report.

Action

Officers to action as directed

Ian Keating/
Cassandra
Harrison

2. Children's Improvement Board (CIB) – Legacy Programme

Cllr David Simmonds introduced the report which updated the board on the withdrawal of DfE funding for the Children's Improvement Board (CIB) and the work being done by officers on what elements of CIB to preserve. Cllr Simmonds explained officers were seeking the views of councillors on the priorities for the legacy programme and future governance arrangements.

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A number of views on priorities were mentioned including:

- The need for the peer challenge and safeguarding work to continue in light of the improvements it had contributed to within local authorities.
- The continuation of the Leadership academy, with the possibility of charging local authorities to attend.
- The priorities from the regions set out in the report were broadly agreed with. Members stressed the need for local authorities to contribute to the funding of some of these projects.

Concerns were raised over the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) recent letter to Colin Hilton. Members were worried that ADCS appeared to be aligning itself with the role that Ofsted set out for its own improvement functions rather than looking to the political and corporate leadership of children's services to deliver improvement work. It was agreed that a letter would be written to the president of ADCS and Sir Michael Wilshaw from Ofsted expressing the concerns.

Members asked for a progress report on the winding up of CIB to be a standing item on the CYP agendas from now on.

Decision

Members expressed views on the priorities for the legacy programme and future governance arrangements and agreed a letter would be sent to the president of ADCS and Sir Michael Wilshaw.

Action

Officers to feed the priorities recommendations back to CIB

Alison
Miller/Sally
Burlington

Officers to draft letters for the chairman to send to the president of ADCS and Sir Michael Wilshaw. Copies and replies to be sent to the board members.

Ian
Keating/Sally
Burlington/Verity
Sinclair

3. Other Business Report

A member commented on the child poverty report expressing the confusion over how poverty was measured. Members agreed that a discussion on child poverty should take place at a future board meeting.

Decision

Members noted the report

Action

Officers to take forward this work in light of Members' comments.

LGA Officers

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4. Notes of the last meeting and actions arising

The Board **agreed** the note of the last meeting