

# Children's Services Overview Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall,  
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 18 March 2014.

Present:

Michael Bevan (Chairman)

Pauline Batstone (Vice-Chairman)

Dan Brember, Mike Byatt, Barrie Cooper, Stephen Hill, Colin Jamieson, Michael Turnbull and Daryl Turner.

Rebecca Knox, Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families, Toni Coombs, Cabinet Member for Education and Communications, and John Wilson, Chairman of the Council, attended under Standing Order 54(1).

## Officers attending:

Sara Tough (Director for Children's Services), Vanessa Glenn (Head of Family Support), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance), Helen Squibb (Head of Learning and Inclusion), Siân Dobson (Children's Services Group Finance Manager) and Rebecca Guest (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

## The Following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

Sam Fox-Adams (Senior Policy and Performance Manager), Mike Felstead (Policy Manager, Children in Care), Lyn Frith (Joint Interim SEN Strategic Lead), Margaret Judd (Group Manager, Funding and Efficiency Team) and Linda Wyatt (Senior Advisor, Learning and Inclusion).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview Committee to be held on **1 July 2014**.)

## **Apologies for Absence**

32. Apologies for absence were received from Steve Butler, Beryl Ezzard, Susan Jefferies, Mary Kahn, Mike Lovell and Margaret Phipps.

## **Code of Conduct**

33. There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

## **Minutes**

34. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2014 were confirmed and signed.

## **Matters Arising**

### Minute 5 New Framework for the Inspection of Local Authorities Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers

35.1 In response to a member's request for an update on the development of hyper links to the members' webpage, the Director for Children's Services advised that she would confirm the progress made and report back to the member concerned.

### Minute 9 The Dorset Learning Partnership: A new relationship between the Dorset County Council and Schools – progress update

35.2 Members noted that from 21 March 2014, the Dorset Learning Partnership Strategy document would be available on-line. A link would also be placed on the members'

gateway page. Members asked that officers ensured that all members be made aware of the link.

#### Minute 10 Draft Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2014-2016

35.3 A member highlighted the need for the Overview Committee to be kept informed on all children matters, and the concern was raised that sometimes relevant information went to other committees/groups such as the Children's Trust Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

35.4 Members were informed that additional information would be given during agenda item 9, Corporate Performance Monitoring Report Third Quarter 2013-14 (1 September – 31 December 2013).

#### **Corporate Parenting Panel**

36.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 21 January and 20 February 2014 were received.

36.2 In response to a member's statement, the Director for Children's services confirmed that work had commenced to produce data on a locality basis.

36.3 The Chairman of the County Council commented that he believed the Proposed Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board (to be discussed later in the meeting), did not adequately reflect the discussion or recorded minutes from 20 February 2014.

36.4 The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families, informed the Committee that the Panel had vacancies for two reserve members from the Liberal Democrat Party and one from the Conservative Party. In addition she advised members that young people were meeting in May when they would hold members to account.

36.5 The Cabinet Member also informed the Overview Committee that the Children's Services Directorate were in the finals of a national award regarding the commissioning of young people and their inclusion in the decision making process.

#### **Public Participation**

##### Public Speaking

37.1 There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

37.2 There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

##### Petitions

37.3 There were no petitions received in accordance with the County Council's petition scheme at this meeting.

#### **Proposed Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Board**

38.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that suggested terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Board, following the Cabinet decision on 4 December 2013 to amalgamate The Corporate Parenting Panel and The Children in Care / Care Leavers Board.

38.2 Members noted that it was vital that the new Corporate Parenting Board preserve the positive work undertaken by both former bodies and enhance the work undertaken by corporate parents in Dorset.

38.3 The Chairman of the County Council referred to the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 20 February 2014 in which members of the Panel agreed that the Terms of Reference should include more on educational attainment. In particular members of the Panel felt that the Virtual Head should give oral feedback and reports to alternative meetings of the Board. This appeared to have been omitted in the Terms of Reference brought forward for consideration. Members, and senior officers present, agreed that the Virtual Head should be a permanent member of the Board.

38.4 A member questioned how, whilst working within the realms of confidentiality, members could have an oversight of how children in care improve within schools and offered their support to all parties. The Director for Children's Services suggested that this comment should be referred back to the Corporate Parenting Panel for discussions as to how members could best support looked after children.

38.5 It was noted that the proposed Terms of Reference briefly referred to the Board's safeguarding function, and it was agreed that this should be given more prominence.

#### **Recommended**

39. That the Cabinet be recommended to agree the Terms of Reference for the new Corporate Parenting Board, subject to the following:

- (i) inclusion of the Virtual Head listed within the Board Management under reference number 4; and
- (ii) A greater prominence being given on the Board's safeguarding function.

#### **Admission Arrangements 2015-16 and Sixth Form Transport**

40.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that summarised the consultations that had taken place on changes to school admission arrangements and invited members to recommend approval of changes in order to meet the Local Authority's statutory requirements. The report also included proposed changes concerning sixth form transport.

40.2 Members noted the legislative consultation timeframes and that the documents had received a wider audience than in previous years. In order to greater promote knowledge of the Admissions Policy once approved, and in particular its implications for post 16 eligibility for free transport, a number of alternative communications were proposed.

40.3 Officers highlighted that the success of the Admissions Policy was borne out by the recent notification of secondary school preferences. For those children moving from primary school to secondary school, 95% received their first preference; and for those moving from middle school to secondary school, 98% received their first preference. Improvements in the process had also meant that by the end of the day of notification, 1300 acceptances were received online.

40.4 Members sought amendment to the report's recommendation, on the basis that the guidance produced for families of the armed forces should be adopted, rather than noted.

40.5 Clarification was given that the documents referred to the standard admissions round, rather than late submissions. Members commented on the

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comprehensive report and gave recognition that improvements had been made. However assurances were sought that the schools themselves, as a vital link, were also assisting families and providing the appropriate information.

40.6 Members acknowledged that there was a priority order and criteria applied in regards to oversubscribed schools and welcomed the promotion of "child in care" in relation to the priority order for sixth form admissions. However a member asked whether a similar priority criterion should be applied to the "in year fair access policy". The Group Manager, Funding and Efficiency Team advised that a child only needed to meet one or more of the criteria listed to be considered in line with the policy. When asked who would receive a single remaining space if two children qualified, the Director for Children's Services agreed to obtain an informed answer and refer back to the member.

40.7 Officers were asked to ensure that any policies adopted were well publicised and due to the scarcity of school places in some areas, that support was given and information disseminated on how to proceed when the application for a preferred place was unsuccessful.

40.8 Another member raised a concern regarding the possibility of two siblings being located at different sites and the challenges this gave to families. The Director for Children's Services noted members' concerns however she informed them that criteria had to be applied to ensure fairness and to pass auditors' scrutiny. She assured members that families were dealt with sensitively, with officers trying to do their best for them. The process was not overly complicated and there was an appeal process available. Should any member have an example of where a family was let down, she invited members to tell her about this.

40.9 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications asked members to consider the wider context and reiterated previous statements in relation to the number of successful first preference placements. A parent governor representative added that only a small number of sibling related appeals occurred, but he commented that the definition of a sibling could be more effectively inserted within the documents.

40.10 In response to a question, officers confirmed that parents were given guidance when they considered moving, but only if support services were aware of their intentions. Information was also available on several websites to assist families. Members asked that armed forces families be made aware that while the County Council tried to ensure they were not disadvantaged because of their Service, they were not guaranteed a school place.

40.11 The purpose of the proposed Armed Forces Policy was to recognise the Armed Forces Covenant which was a promise between the Government, the Nation and the Armed Forces. The County Council was committed to recognising problems these families might face because of their part in the Armed Forces Community, and to assist in finding solutions to those problems. A member commented that there should be a joint responsibility between the Armed Forces and the County Council when trying to accommodate placements in schools. Greater lines of communication between the County Council and the Forces would greatly help the families thinking of moving into the area. The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance advised she would look into the levels of communication that currently existed.

40.12 A member highlighted that paragraphs two and four of the Policy for Armed Forces Families were slightly contradictory regarding the need not to disadvantage them when applying for a school place. The Director for Children's Services confirmed that this would be reviewed to ensure clarity.

40.13 Members noted that the Schools Admissions Code had been revised to enable schools to admit service children, despite exceeding the 30-pupil limit for infant classes in order to accommodate service children, and they asked that this significant change be more widely publicised.

40.14 In regards to home to school transport, members noted the proposal to increase the cost of concessionary fares to £460 from September 2014 and that a number of reviews were currently taking place. One member believed that it was unsafe to expect a child to walk 10 miles per day in a rural location, but it was recognised that this was outside of the County Council's remit. Another member commented that further financial information within the report would have been helpful. The Children's Services Group Finance Manager agreed to provide this information but advised members that this budget fell within the Environment Directorate and would not directly impact on the overspend referred to later in respect of transport for children with SEN or attending Learning Centres.

40.15 Members noted that, in regards to Sixth Form Home to School Transport Policy, the Department for Education had published new statutory guidance on 5 February 2014. Previously it had been non-statutory guidance. Minor changes to the policy were highlighted and members informed that there was no entitlement to post 16 transport, however the County Council had said that it would support this, and pick up the cost to ensure young people were able to attend school.

40.16 Members welcomed the positive changes and reiterated the need to inform all parties of these and of the new guidance. Officers confirmed that young people would be advised of the changes.

40.17 Clarification was given to the criteria to qualify for concessionary fares, and it was acknowledged that last year, some young people weren't aware of the application time period. In addition some applications were received late as a direct result of the date exam results were received. The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications advised that the next edition of 'Your Dorset' would include information relating to Post 16 Transport.

40.18 Members noted that no submissions had been received from local division members in regards to the changes to Purbeck School's admission number or Sherborne Abbey's catchment area.

### **Recommended**

41. That the Cabinet formally adopt the following:
- (i) The guidance produced for Families of the Armed Forces;
  - (ii) The Admission Arrangements for 2015/16 incorporating the Local Authority Admissions Policy, the In Year Fair Access Protocol and Co-ordinated Scheme;
  - (iii) The changes in concessionary fares for home to school transport;
  - (iv) The changes to the sixth form section of the transport policy in line with statutory guidance;
  - (v) The changes to Purbeck School's admission number;
  - (vi) The changes to Sherborne Abbey's catchment area.

### **Special Educational Needs Provision Review**

42.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that provided a further update to an earlier report circulated to Committee members in January 2014. That report presented early messages arising from responses to a consultation, conducted during November and December 2013, on the specialist provision

that the County Council made for children with a statement of special educational needs (SEN).

42.2 The report also outlined the County Council's response to the key themes that emerged from the consultation and set out how they would be addressed during the implementation of the changes proposed within the review. Implementation was proposed over a 3 year period, organised around a number of key phases. Phase 1 was being undertaken, with parents about to be consulted. Members were advised that a similar report had been considered by the Dorset School's Forum, who had given their support to the proposals, but asked that a more detailed report be brought forward for approval of the specific actions once they had been developed.

42.3 The Joint Interim SEN Strategic Lead advised that following consultation, the proposals had received general approval, however some concerns had been raised at the scale, complexity and continuity of service for children. Officers had responded to these concerns.

42.4 In response to a member's question, the Committee were advised that statistical information regarding the number and location of children with SEN were contained within the original consultation document. The Head of Learning and Inclusion advised that forward trends were difficult to identify, at the current time, as a result of new reforms being introduced from September 2014.

42.5 Members noted that the implementation process must align with and complement work to implement the far reaching SEN reforms set out in the Children and Families Bill. This had received royal assent on 14 March 2014. A member reiterated that members needed to be made aware of any strategies, policies etc that had an impact on children.

42.6 The Joint Interim SEN Strategic Lead Joint Interim Strategic Lead SEN gave an example of the transition relations to assure members that a child would receive the same level of care throughout their time at school, and with agreement of their parents, establish the most appropriate place to make any transitions. Assurances were also given that there was an intention to have capacity in main stream schools to supply the same level of support. Officers were currently working with schools to produce real life case studies. These may be helpful to members and would be brought back to the Committee to review.

42.7 Members noted that the SEN Reform Project Board reported to the Children's Trust Board, who in turn reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board. A member questioned how the Committee would stay in touch with developments and voiced his concern regarding this. The Director for Children's Services advised that the work of the SEN Reforms Board would become a programme of change and in line of sight of the Forward Together Board. She believed that the Committee needed to take a view of the whole Children's Services Directorate and stated that she was hoping for new mechanisms to be put in place to allow this.

42.8 Members asked officers to ensure that they received timely progress reports. It was therefore anticipated that further reports would be presented in June/September 2014. This was however, a 3 year programme and lessons would be learnt along the way.

42.9 A member asked for detailed consultation numbers and he voiced concerns that potentially, only the vocal majority had responded. The Joint Interim SEN Strategic Lead understood that 21 people had actually replied, with a large number stating that they were in favour of the proposals. Detailed consultation response numbers would be sent to the member, but assurances were given that officers had spoken directly to various groups.

**Resolved**

43.1 That the outcome from the consultation process and the proposed implementation process be noted.

43.2 That progress reports and key points during the implementation process be brought before the Committee.

**Corporate Performance Monitoring Report Third Quarter 2013-14  
(1 September – 31 December 2013)**

44.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services which set out the results of the monitoring of the County Council's Budget and Corporate Plan for the third quarter of 2013-14 and presented the Corporate Balanced Scorecard. In addition, members received a copy of the Corporate Plan 2014-15 and were asked to offer comments on the document and support its contents.

44.2 The Senior Policy and Performance Manager advised members that previously the Corporate Plan had been a much larger document with a substantial number of aims and indicators. The revised Plan had been developed with a different approach, in particular moving from a 3 year to a 1 year document, with 2 (rather than 5) cross cutting areas of focus. The finalised Plan would be presented to the Cabinet on 9 April 2014.

44.3 A member welcomed the general approach taken, the clarity within and the cost cutting basis, but believed that too many indicators remained. Having reviewed other local authorities' Plans, he thought that the document should be more refined, punchy and relevant to the County Council's key areas. In addition, while he accepted that the Plan was only for 1 year, he stated that it should financially acknowledge where the Authority would likely be in 3 years time. Another member welcomed the simplicity of the document, in comparison with the previous Plan.

44.4 The Director for Children's Services thanked members for their comments, advising that these were of a similar vein to those given in response to the Children and Young People's Plan. In regards to Children's Services, predictions of future aims could instigate a better understanding of what the future would look like, both financially and service based.

44.5 She then introduced the Corporate Performance Monitoring report. At the end of quarter three, 62% of indicators met or exceeded their targets, and 67% of actions were reported to be on course or completed. For Aim 3 of the plan (Support and encourage Dorset's children to reach their full potential and protect those who are most vulnerable), the average performance indicator score was "Green", with most being on target and others reflecting national trends. The projected year end budget was rated as "Amber" with a projected overspend of 4%, with 81% of actions on course.

44.6 The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance referred members to previous discussions regarding establishing data sets to measure and monitor Children's Services. She advised that work was ongoing and it was hoped that relevant strategic data would be available to members soon. A member commented that officers needed to have a mechanism to catch members' requests for information, as detailed in the recorded minutes, and ensure that this was presented to members within a reasonable time frame and by an appropriate method. The Director for Children's Services advised that she was considering how to disseminate data to members as part of a wider view. Conversations were ongoing with Democratic Services regarding this.

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44.7 Members noted the well established budget tensions, but asked how this impacted on children. Officers were asked that future reports include a balanced narrative with qualitative information in addition to performance statistics.

44.8 In response to a member's question, officers clarified why there was currently no indicators present on performance indicators CS6 (Provide essential administration and business support that is fit for purpose and cost effective so we can focus on delivering frontline services) and CS7 (Secure efficient and cost effective transport to enable children and young people in Dorset to access education).

**Noted****Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14, including Forward Together (Residual Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) update)**

45.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which gave a forecast overspend against service budgets for the County Council of £4,462k compared to £5,665k at the end of November 2013, and an update on the Forward Together (residual Meeting Future Challenges Programme).

45.2 The Group Finance Manager highlighted that the position for the Children's Services Directorate was a forecast overspend of £1,577k. Overall, the projected overspend showed very little change since the November 2013 forecast.

45.3 In the respect of the Children and Families budget, the number of independent sector placements had now increased to 60, which in a full year (if these placements continued) would increase the underlying projected overspend in this service (including fostering and adoption) to around £3M. Members noted a forecast overspend of £870k on the transport recharge in respect of children with SEN or attending a Learning centre. The budget for transport for children with SEN and children in learning centres was the responsibility of both the Children's Services Directorate and the Environment Directorate. The directorates were continuing to work together to address the overspend, although it was anticipated to continue in 2014/15.

45.4 Members referred to the previous agenda item regarding the Special Educational Needs Provision Review and questioned the impact of proposals therein upon the overspend. The Head of Learning and Inclusion confirmed that there was some overlap, but there were also some fundamental issues surrounding how transport was provided. Challenges had been encountered when trying to obtain transport data to make informed decisions. Data on SEN transport has been improved, but data in respect of travel costs to Learning Centres remains a challenge. It was anticipated that this may be resolved following the introduction of a new IT system in the Dorset Passenger Transport team. The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families echoed members' frustrations over the apparent lack of progress in obtaining the necessary data, but advised that efforts were ongoing to focus the appropriate teams and strengthen their communication links.

45.5 A member questioned the underspend on Children's Field Social Work teams of £295k. He was advised that vacancies were as a result of the recent transitional phase, rather than a deliberate decision to hold vacancies open. Recruitment generally took from 3 to 6 months, which immediately gave the service a saving. Unfortunately the data did not indicate any impact on services or the number of vacancies. Members were informed that following changes to the County Council's recruitment policy, there was now a more streamlined recruitment process.



45.6 In response to a further question, members were informed that the overspend forecast for the Joint Provision Service (£132k) related to sports centres across the County. The costs of the Joint Provision service were determined by the contractual arrangements in place. Clarification was also given on the way in which Early Years budgets (schools) were calculated.

**Noted**

**Update on Academies and Implications for the Local Authority**

46.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that provided an update on the academy programme, the recent changes and the potential impact on education in Dorset. In addition, the report informed members about the Corfe Hills Academy consultation on a proposal to change from 3 tiers to 2 tiers and the implications for the Local Authority and other Dorset schools.

46.2 Members were advised that there had been a relatively slow uptake for Dorset schools to transfer to academy status. There were now 16 academy schools in Dorset, with some of Dorset's larger secondary schools being the first to convert. The government were strongly encouraging schools to become academies, as were a number of Dioceses in the County.

46.3 Officers informed the Committee that the academies programme had now subtly changed. Schools becoming individual, stand-alone academies were no longer favoured. There was now a presupposition that schools would work to support each other and become part of a Multi-Academy Trust or Umbrella Trust. The main differences of each were highlighted, as were the potential financial reporting arrangements.

46.4 Members noted that the County Council had always worked cooperatively with all schools, whether they chose to become academies or not, as there was a common goal of ensuring the best educational provision and opportunities for children and young people in Dorset. Dorset's academies continued to play a key role in joint work with the Authority and with other schools through the new Dorset Learning Partnership arrangements.

46.5 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications commented that consideration may need to be given as to the Authority's policy on academy statuses, as more schools were considering making the conversion.

46.6 The Director for Children's Services advised that the Authority could not stop a school converting and until now the County Council had retained a neutral position. It was paramount that regardless of the governance arrangements of a school/academy, that they worked in partnership with the Local Authority to support children and parents. A paper would be presented at a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the matter further.

46.7 In regards to Corfe Hills, should they change both its age of transfer and admission number from the present 3 tier to a 2 tier system, this would have major implications for local schools that fed into that pyramid (and on neighbouring pyramids) both in Dorset and Poole.

46.8 The Borough of Poole and Dorset County Council proposed to lead a comprehensive process to consider the future options for the Corfe Hills pyramid. It was anticipated that this process would take up to 12 months to complete.

**Noted**

## **Policy Development Panels**

### Policy Development Panel in relation to Children in Care

47. The Chairman of the Policy Development Panel in relation to Children in Care gave members a brief update on the work being carried out by the Panel. Members noted that the next meeting of the Panel was to take place on 31 March 2014 and agenda papers would be available shortly.

### Establishment of future Policy Development Panels

48. No topics for future Policy Development Panels were identified.

## **Work Programme**

49.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which detailed the updated work programme for 2014.

49.2 The Director for Children's Services agreed to circulate an information paper to members on why children and young people who achieved less well and received extra support to help them catch up in their learning and lives, had not shown improvements in their achievement. She advised that if required, a further report would be presented to the Committee at a later date.

49.3 A member sought confirmation on whether the Children's Poverty Strategy had been presented to the Committee. Officers confirmed that it had been to the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board, who had agreed that all partners were responsible for achieving its aims. This would be sent to members as an information note or via a hyperlink.

49.4 Further items were to be added to the work programme as agreed at the meeting.

### **Noted**

## **Schedule of Member Seminars and Events 2014**

50. The Committee received a schedule of forthcoming seminars and events arranged for members in 2014. The Chairman encouraged members to attend the seminar listed.

### **Noted**

## **Member Briefings**

51.1 No subjects for future member briefings were identified. However members were advised that there would be an invitation to all members to a seminar on Children's Services, in the widest sense, later in the year.

51.2 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications raised the need for members to receive yearly updates on basic needs as it was anticipated that these would increase in the next 5 to 10 years.

## **Outside Bodies**

52.1 The County Council Member for Bride Valley forwarded a brief report for two recently attended Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meetings. In his absence, the Chairman read out his report.

52.2 The Cabinet Member for Education and Communications, gave members a resumé of the two outside bodies on which she sat: the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education and the Dorset Schools Forum. She advised that there was a lot of synergy between the Diocesan's Building Committee and the County Council's. At the Board of

Education's Annual General Meeting, discussions were held regarding the possible reduction of the membership from 43 to 10-20 members. The Cabinet Member confirmed she was happy for the County Council's representative to lose their voting rights, but thought that they should still be included within discussions. In regards to the Dorset Schools Forum, she confirmed information was available on the website.

52.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families reviewed a recent meeting of the Dorset Safeguarding Children's Board that she had attended. She advised members that a new Chairman had been appointed (Clive Turner) who was also chairman of the Bournemouth and Poole and Wiltshire Boards. This was an independent appointment. The meeting highlighted the dangers of social media and raised the issue that children and adults had very different thoughts on this. She also advised that a serious case review was to be published today. She assured members that lessons had been learnt.

### Questions

53. No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

### Exempt Business

#### Exclusion of the Public

##### Resolved

54. That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for minute numbers 55 to 56 because it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs indicated of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing that information.

#### **The future of DCC Nursery and Out of School provision (North Dorset) (Paragraph 4)**

55.1 The Committee considered an exempt report by the Director for Children's Services that informed members of the progress made in relation to the previous proposals to consider resolving the current budget pressures associated with the two Dorset County Council nurseries and out of school provision in North Dorset.

55.2 The Head of Family Support introduced the report and summarised the outcome and implications of the recent review carried out to ensure the delivery of a cost effective nursery model. Members were asked to note that staff at the nursery had made an alternative proposal regarding service delivery at Blandford that was currently being considered.

55.3 Parents, local schools and staff had been consulted on the proposals. Work was ongoing with nursery staff to promote the services on offer via different marketing methods.

55.4 The County Council member for Blandford advised that he had not been kept abreast of developments and neither had the Archbishop Wake Church of England Primary School. He then highlighted the initial weakness in the financial management of the nurseries and asked why steps had not been taken earlier. The Head of Family Support responded and advised that Children's Services were still within the consultation period. The financial management issue had been reviewed and subject to agreement of the proposed model, a financial administrator would be appointed to strengthen the process.

55.5 A parent governor representative also questioned the level of consultation that had taken place and asked about the primary lead in the decision making process. He also highlighted that an equality impact assessment had not yet been undertaken. The

Head of Family Support advised that any proposal had to be financially viable, offer a more flexible service and efficient use of staff. She assured the Committee that consultations had taken place both face-to-face and by internet; and that the equality impact assessment was currently being undertaken.

55.6 The Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Families advised that many lessons had been learnt and communications improved following the initial announcement in October 2013. She advised that parents would be seen prior to a final decision being made, but hoped the proposal in place was an acceptable compromise. She reminded members that the service was not statutory, but one which the County Council provided over and above the basic requirements. In response to the County Council member for Blandford's comments, the Cabinet Member would take this up on his behalf.

**Recommended**

56. That Cabinet be recommended to:
- (i) support the implementation of a new engagement and consultation plan in regard to the proposed model with both staff and parents/carers who currently use the nursery and out of school provision managed by Dorset County Council;
  - (ii) note the timescales in which the consultation will take place; and
  - (iii) support the new proposed model of operational delivery for both Shaftesbury, Blandford nurseries and the Out of School Club (Oscars).

Meeting Duration: 10:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.