

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

20th December 2011

Scrutiny Co-ordination

Committee Members Present: Councillor Blundell
Councillor Foster
Councillor Lakha
Councillor Mrs Lucas (Chair)
Councillor McNicholas (Deputy Chair)
Councillor M. Mutton
Councillor Ruane
Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Welsh
Councillor Walsh (substitute for Councillor Lancaster)

Co-opted Members Present: Mrs S. Hanson, Coventry Diocesan Board of Education

Other Members Present: Councillor Mrs Dixon
Councillor Kelly (Cabinet Member (Education))
Councillor Nellist

Employees Present: H. Abraham (Customer & Workforce Services Directorate)
E. Atkins (Finance & Legal Services Directorate)
C. Dear (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Green (Director of Children, Learning & Young People)
D. Haley (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)
G. Holmes (Chief Executive's Directorate)
R. Lickfold (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)
J. Parry (Assistant Chief Executive)
M. Salmon (Customer & Workforce Services Directorate)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Venn (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. West (Children, Learning & Young People Directorate)

Apology: Councillor Lancaster

Public Business

79. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

80. Minutes

- (a) The minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2011 were signed as a true record.
- (b) There were no matters arising.

81. Consideration of Call-in Stage 2 – Report on the Outcome of the Consultation on the Proposal that Corley Centre Changes from Day and Residential Special School to Day Special School

The Committee received a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People that had been considered by Cabinet Member (Education) (Minute 41/11 refers) and was Called-in by Councillors Mrs Dixon, Foster and Mrs Johnson.

The report presented the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to change the designation of Corley School from Day and Residential Special School to Day Special School and sought approval to publish a Statutory Notice proposing that Corley Centre changed from Day/Residential Special School to Day Special School with effect from 1st September 2012. The representations received during the 6 week representation period would be included in a report to Cabinet when they would decide the statutory notice. In addition to the report, the Cabinet Member had also considered a petition bearing 1629 signatures that had been submitted by Councillor Mrs Dixon and Councillor Nellist. Councillor Mrs Dixon, a Wyken Ward Councillor and Shadow Cabinet Member (Education) and the petition organiser, attended the Cabinet Member meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners and presented their concerns regarding the loss of the residential facility.

The Cabinet Member had agreed to the publication of a Statutory Notice proposing that Corley Centre changes from Day and Residential Special School to Day Special School with effect from 1 September 2012.

The reason for the call-in was to seek clarification re alternative provision for pupils who use the facility now and for future generations of pupils.

The Call-in had been deemed valid by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on advice from the Assistant Director (Democratic Services), in conjunction with the Council Solicitor/Assistant Director (Legal Services), the Call-in reason having met the requirements of the Council's Constitution Scrutiny Rules on the Call-in Procedure and the criteria decided by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.

Councillor Mrs Dixon and Councillor Foster were in attendance at the meeting and spoke in support of the call-in. They outlined their support for the residential provision that provided a high quality established facility and support pupils diagnosed with autism, offering familiarity and a safe and happy environment to those that attend the school. They expressed their concerns that the alternative provision of independence training and short breaks programme would not meet the pupils needs and requested retention of the facility at the Corley Centre for future generations. Councillor Foster tabled information from a member of the public that they requested be brought to the attention of the Committee.

The Committee received a Briefing Note of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People that responded to the Call-in. The Note confirmed that no students at Corley Centre had a Statement of Special Educational Needs which specified that they required residential education and none were foreseen because the needs of the students attending the Centre had changed (previously the Centre catered for students with moderate learning difficulties and now it catered only for students with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder). Corley Centre had allowed 19 day students to have overnight stays of 1 or 2 days as part of their social and independence training. If Corley changed from day and residential secondary special school to day secondary special school the social and independence training would continue as part of the core curriculum and extended school offer, but it wouldn't include overnight stays at Corley.

Some of the young people attending Corley were also eligible for support from the Short Breaks Service offered by the City Council's Children's Disability Team. The support, which could include evening activities, daytime activities (during weekends and school holidays) and overnight stays, provided further opportunities for social and independence training. The eligibility of other young people from Corley for support from the Short Breaks Service could be assessed once requested by parents and carers.

The Local Authority would work closely with parents and carers, Corley Centre and the Children's Disability Team to ensure that the transition to the new provision was effected with minimal disruption to the lives of the young people and their families. Each young person at Corley would have a transition plan to support a phased change to the new arrangements for social and independence training. Each plan would set out clear targets, timescales and specific activities spanning all sources of support including parents and carers, Corley Centre and the Short Breaks Service, where appropriate. The plan would be reviewed on a termly basis for at least the first year of the new arrangements.

The Cabinet Member (Education) made the following comments to the Committee:-

- It was recognised that some children were advantaged in the current provision because residential provision at Corley was not available to any other children and young people attending other special schools or with similar needs across the City.
- Students at Corley didn't necessarily have a higher level need for residential provision than other Coventry children and young people with SEN and disability.
- Changing the designation of the school from day and residential to day secondary special school would address the issue of equity and equality of opportunity and release sufficient funding to support the implementation of the SEN and Inclusion Strategy to the benefit of children and young people with special educational needs and Disability across the whole of the City.
- The equity and fairness of the proposed re-designation of Corley Centre had been carefully examined through both a Special Education Needs Improvement Test and an Equality Impact Assessment.
- The school budget still included funding for 27 residential places but the only use made of the facility was for social and independence training involving overnight stays for some of the students, in the 2010/11 school year this involved 19 students with 15 of them staying for one night per week, with a maximum of 8 residential places being used in any one night.
- The educational grounds for making residential provision were based on the identification of special educational needs that required a 24 hour curriculum. This identification was carried out through evidence-based assessment and written into a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Currently there were no students at the school for whom this was the case.
- The residential provision carried high overall fixed costs and with low utilisation, the unit cost was high. The high overall cost resulted in a disproportionate level of funding being directed towards this provision at a time when there were significant pressures in other areas of funding for children and young people with SEN & disability.

- For eligible young people the Children's Disability Team offered a range of short breaks through which social and independence skills could be further developed. The Team were committed to working with parents/carers and their children to ensure that the short breaks addressed the needs of the children and families. Eligible students at Corley could access this provision.
- Corley would continue to run a programme of social and independence training as part of its core curriculum offer. Where the Children's Disability Team was also involved in providing activities to further develop social and independence skills, these would complement that curriculum provision.
- There would be a 6 week representation period during which comments on the Statutory Notice could be made and the final decision on the proposal would be taken by Cabinet taking into account the responses during this period.

The Committee questioned officers on aspects of the report and received the following information:

- The Centre received £384,000 from revenue funding to provide 27 residential education places but was not currently used for its original purpose. It was now used to provide extended day provision as well as some overnight accommodation.
- The school was not run directly by the Local Authority and, as they set their own budget, could use funding as they wished.
- The proposed re-designation of the Corley Centre from day and residential to day secondary special school had resulted from a review of special school funding carried out in 2010/2011 to address the funding issues emerging through the implementation of the Local Authority's SEN and Inclusion Strategy and highlighted differential levels of funding across the special school sector.
- Currently approximately 32 pupils in the City had residential provision written into their SEN Statements, none of these were pupils of Corley School.
- In addition to the statutory assessments and statements, carried out in accordance with the prescribed and regulated legal process, which all students at Corley School received for day education, the school carried out its own internal annual assessments.
- Educational psychologists were involved in assessments on an individual needs basis.
- Those pupils currently accessing Corley's residential provision would need an assessment, which parents would need to request, to establish their eligibility for the Short Breaks Service. The short breaks were not comparable with residence. Some Corley pupils already had access to the Short Breaks Service.
- Coventry exceeded the requirements of the Special Needs Code of Practice.
- The dispute raised by the Unions related to a policy issue which would need to be looked into separately as these proposals were not a policy matter.
- Changes would be phased and the Children's Disability Team would work closely with Parents and children to support them with their individual transition plan.

- Many parents accessed the Direct Payments Scheme which enabled them to purchase services direct and made it difficult to measure outcomes or monitor the provision available.

The Committee considered the Call-in, the comments of the Elected Members supporting the Call-in and the response by the Cabinet Member (Education) and following a show of hands, decided to concur with the Cabinet Member (Education) decision.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee concurs with the decision of Cabinet Member (Education) to publish a Statutory Notice proposing that Corley Centre changes from Day and Residential Special School to Day Special School with effect from 1 September 2012.

82. Report Back on The Customer Management Review Task and Finish Group

Further to minute 06/11, the Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive that presented a report of the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Customer Management Review Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group had been established by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, following a briefing held on 23rd March 2011 for all Members about the Customer Management abc review, that was looking at improving and making more consistent the way in which the Council managed contacts with its customers. Members indicated that they wanted to be involved in the Review by means of a Task and Finish Group supporting specific aspects of the work. The Group comprised Councillors Fletcher (Chair), Johnson, Lucas, M. Mutton and Ruane and was supported by officers in City Services, Customer and Workforce Services and Chief Executive's Directorates. The Group's scope was to achieve improvements to the customer experience, both for the public and Elected Members; an improved feedback loop; and for Elected Members to be more aware of the process for members contact.

The Group held five meetings between August and November 2011 and also visited the Council's Contact Centre, to experience first-hand how the staff worked and the types of call they received. The Group agreed that the focus of its work would be the migration of services to the Contact Centre, particularly the design of the front/back office processes, with the aim of improving customers' (including Members') experience. In order to do this, it decided to use as examples the processes involved in the reporting of complaints/requests relating to potholes and bin collections. The main concern of the Task and Finish Group was the lack of communication between the back offices and the Contact Centre about the progress/completion of complaints/requests, which meant that, in turn, customers/Members could not be informed. They decided that this could be addressed in the short/medium term by improving current reporting processes and in the longer-term by enhanced IT, work on which was included in the scope of the Customer Management abc review.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, which were as follows:

- a) that the Customer Management abc Review includes the following :
 - i) an end-to-end review of the process for dealing with complaints/requests about potholes and bin collections, aimed particularly at improving the speed of feeding back information from the back office to the Contact Centre, so that responses to customers'/Members' requests are made more quickly. This work to be completed by February 2012.

Any proposals for improvement must be capable of being applied to all services, not just these two, and any future complaints/requests process must include service standards, particularly target response times.

ii) work to see how the City Services Business Services Centre could be used to address the issue of closing down service requests, with the current backlog being given top priority and cleared as a matter of urgency. This work to be completed by December 2011.

iii) work to see how the Customer Relationship Manager system (CRM) and IT solutions could be used to improve the service to customers/Members in the longer term, including how the Members' Casework Tool and the CRM could fit together. This work to be completed by end of April 2012.

b) that the Cabinet Member Community Safety and Equalities considers authorising the purchase of a "bolt-on" for the Council's website, which will make it more accessible for customers using smart phones and which will eventually allow customers to report issues/problems more easily.

c) that, at the same time, in order to improve customer contact as quickly as possible, the Cabinet Member asks officers to investigate the feasibility of providing appropriate mobile phone applications as an interim measure, which could be implemented should it become apparent that the "bolt-on" solution is likely to take some time to implement.

d) that, a report on the progress made on these recommendations be submitted to the Committee in six months' time.

83. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2011/2012

The Committee noted the Work Programme for 2011/2012 and that the item headed 'Young People Crime and Unemployment' scheduled for this meeting, 20th December 2011, would now be considered at the 4th January 2012 meeting of the Committee.

The Committee were reminded that the 'if required' meeting scheduled for 18th January 2012 would be required for consideration of the Call-in relating to 'Day Care in Sure Start Children's Centres'.

84. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues.

85. Meeting Evaluation

The Committee concluded that the Call-in, the subject of Minute 81 above, had been well conducted and the issues given a thorough airing. However, they were critical of a document tabled at the meeting and requested that in future all documentation should be sent out to them in advance to enable Members to consider them fully before the meeting.