

CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 19 April 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor Williams (in the Chair), Councillors Hawthorne, Sanderson and J A Walker

OFFICERS: R Broad, A Crawford, S Harker, R Horniman, R Steel, K Warnock and W Whatmore

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ismail and Taylor.

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point of the meeting.

****MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2011 were taken as read and approved as a true record.

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (BSF) UPDATE

The BSF Project Officer presented a report to update the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of progress on the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Project and outline the programme that would take the project to its completion.

Acklam Grange School had opened in September 2010 as planned and works were currently ongoing to finalise the external area. The external areas were due to be completed by May 2011 and the temporary construction access road would be removed and the meadow reinstated. The scheme would be fully completed by August 2011.

Ormesby and Priory Woods Schools, a mainstream and a special school, had joined together in an innovative co-located scheme. The new build school shared facilities and opened on schedule in September 2010. The school had a central heart which housed the hall spaces and students mixed together on a daily basis, working together on projects and during their free time. At Priory Woods, there was a hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms and gardens, plus a rebound room. Ormesby's refurbished engineering block linked into the new blocks providing the full range of curriculum spaces. All works were now completed.

The new Ashdale Pupil Referral Unit, which was the smallest build in the programme, opened its doors in November 2010 and the external works had just been completed ahead of schedule.

Beverley and Prince Bishop Schools were due to open on 26 April and 5 May 2011 respectively and would be co-located in a new building. Currently part of the BSF Team was based in the new building, co-ordinating the moving-in process. The external works were still ongoing with the demolition of the old school buildings due to commence soon. The full site would be completed by mid September 2011.

Trinity Catholic College was a new build school for 1,200 students on Trinity's existing Saltersgill Avenue site. The construction works of the building would be completed in July 2011 and the new building would open in September 2011. The full site including the external area was due for completion by the end of November 2011.

The final scheme in the programme was Oakfields Community College. A new 1,350 place school on Hall Drive would provide space for innovative new ways of teaching in large open areas. Construction commenced in October 2010 and work was well underway on the steel frame and external areas. The new school would be open in September 2012, with external works completed in February 2013.

By the end of 2012, the Building Schools for the Future programme would have provided all of Middlesbrough's secondary and special schools with brand new buildings and ICT infrastructure. At £110m, the programme was the single biggest investment in education in the town's history, benefiting 5,200 students today and many more for years into the future. All projects had been completed within budget.

AGREED as follows that:-

1. the information provided be noted.
2. a site visit to Ormesby and Priory Woods Schools would be arranged for Members of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel later in the year.

DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Principal Development Officer gave a presentation to inform the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel of progress made in fulfilling Middlesbrough Council's obligations under the Child Poverty Act 2010. The Government's target was to eradicate child poverty in the United Kingdom by 2020.

The Government had published their first Child Poverty Strategy – "A New Approach to Child Poverty Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives". The Strategy set out a new approach to tackling poverty for this Parliament and up to 2020 and was focussed on encouraging responsibility, promoting work, guaranteeing fairness and providing support to the most vulnerable. The Strategy was in response to the requirements of the Child Poverty Act 2010, which established income targets for 2020 and a duty to minimise social disadvantage.

The new approach aimed to:-

- Tackle the causes of poverty which underpinned low achievement, aspirations and opportunity across generations.
- To deliver social justice with a focus to combat worklessness and education failure.
- Support family relationships and the most disadvantaged groups in society.

The National Strategy also identified a number of Child Poverty Indicators, which were categorised into three sections:-

- Family resources – income based indicators, material deprivation and persistent poverty.
- Family circumstances – children in workless households, in work poverty and transition from childhood to labour market.
- Children's life chances – low birth weight, child development, attainment, teenage pregnancy, youth offending and family structures.

The Strategy recognised addressing the root causes of poverty and not just the symptoms meant recognising the importance of how a child was raised, alongside family income and education.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 required local authorities to undertake a local child poverty needs assessment, which would inform the development of a local Child Poverty Strategy. Middlesbrough's Child Poverty Strategy was in draft form and currently out for consultation. A copy of the draft Strategy was circulated for Members' information. The focus of Middlesbrough's Strategy was consistent with the National Strategy and aimed to tackle the three key causes of child poverty in Middlesbrough which were:

- Low aspiration – individuals lacked the motivation and support to achieve their potential.
- Low income – family income was insufficient to ensure a good quality of life.
- Poor environment – physical, social and emotional surroundings had a negative impact upon life chances.

Middlesbrough's Strategy built on other pieces of work undertaken within the Local Authority and the Middlesbrough Partnership, and was not a stand-alone document. It would be used to ensure that all partners worked collaboratively to tackle child poverty in a way that reflected the

local conditions and experiences of Middlesbrough families living in poverty. The development of the Strategy had involved consultation with statutory partners, the Community and Voluntary Sectors and Council Directorates. The Child Poverty Strategy supported a range of other town-wide strategies including Middlesbrough Sustainable Community Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan and the Middlesbrough Council Strategic Plan 2011.

The Middlesbrough Partnership and the thematic groups would play a key role in ensuring that child poverty was a priority in strategies and plans, leadership and accountability for child poverty was clear, there was a focus on partnership working and impact was measured and progress reviewed on a regular basis.

It was highlighted that a briefing on the Middlesbrough Strategy would be arranged for Members of the Council after the Local Elections on 5 May 2011. The Strategy had been scheduled to be presented to the Executive in June, however this would be delayed until after the Members' briefing.

AGREED that the information provided be noted.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE

The Chair requested that the Panel note the content of the submitted report which provided an update on business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 8 March 2011 namely:-

- Attendance of Executive Members at the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
- Executive Member – Streetscene and Transport.
- Executive Forward Work Programme.
- The regional review into the Health of the Ex-Service Community – North East Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Children's Centres – Final Report of the Health Scrutiny Panel.
- Anti-Bullying Work in Middlesbrough Schools – Final Report of the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel.
- Scrutiny Panels – Progress Reports.

NOTED