

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Professor Sir Anthony Coates, Bt, BSc, MD, FRCPath, FRCP
(Chairman)

Councillor Robert Atkinson

Councillor Judith Blakeman

Councillor Victoria Borwick

Councillor Barbara Campbell

Councillor Tim Jones

Councillor Elizabeth Rutherford

Councillor Emma Will

Co-opted Voting Members

Dr Samer Al-Zaher (Parent Governor)

Mr John O'Donnell (Roman Catholic Diocesan Board of Education)

Mr Paul Quinn (Parent Governor)

Co-opted Non-Voting Members

Mr Kieran Parsons (Teacher)

Others in Attendance

Councillor Elizabeth Campbell (Cabinet Member for Education and
Libraries)

Councillor the Rt Hon the Baroness Ritchie (Cabinet Member for Family
and Children's Services)

Officers

Mrs Anne Marie Carrie, Executive Director for Family and Children's
Services

Ms Libby Blake, Deputy Executive Director for Family and Children's
Services

Ms Rebecca Matthews, Director for Schools, Quality and Standards

Ms Karen Tyerman, Director for Community Learning

Mr Mark Jarvis, Head of Resources

Mr John Page, Head of Family and Care Resources

Ms Bernadette Alexander, Virtual School Headteacher

Ms Clair Bantin, Scrutiny Development Manager

Ms Lara Valle, Governance Administrator

Mr Ivor Quinn, Principal Governance Administrator

A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Daley and Dalton, and Revd Taylor and Mrs Williams.

A2 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

A3 MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed members and officers, and said that he thought the new committee would make an excellent team for the year ahead. On behalf of the committee he congratulated Councillor Baroness Ritchie on her appointment as a life peer.

A4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 March and 26 May 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Arising thereon -

Work Programme for the Year Ahead

The Chairman said that he had been discussing with the Vice-Chairman the way in which the committee might operate in the coming year. The Vice-Chairman had suggested that a period of time should be set aside at each meeting for a deep level scrutiny of an issue previously agreed by the committee. The Chairman said that the objective of such deep scrutiny was to provide proper scrutiny of topical and important subjects in real time. This would help the Cabinet in its decision making process, and help the Council as a whole to come to grips with key issues. The topic for the next meeting, and perhaps the main one for the year, ought to be the Stronger Families Transformation Programme.

The Chairman suggested that the process might start with members emailing their chosen topic for future meetings to him. Each member would carry out their own investigation into the topic and would come prepared to comment on it for one minute at the meeting. Members would be allowed a maximum of two questions as a follow-up to their item. The optimum result of the discussion would be a set of priorities and perhaps a group of questions which required another meeting to be answered, with one or two extra people called in for questioning e.g. the Director of Finance. The outcome would be a report to the Council. The committee agreed that this was a very good idea, and that the first topic would be the Stronger Families Transformation Programme.

The Chairman went on to say that the scrutiny topic would take up the first hour of the meeting, and the remainder of the agenda

would be taken up with a limited number of written reports and he would aim to finish meetings by 8.30pm.

Visits

Councillor Baroness Ritchie suggested that members might find it helpful to visit some of the FCS premises as part of their scrutiny work. The committee agreed and asked Mrs Carrie to report to the next meeting on a suggested programme. Mrs Carrie pointed out that all members would need to have an up to date enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The Chairman asked Mrs Carrie to remind members of the CRB rules.

Action: EDFCS

A5 SERVICE AREAS AND POLICY AND SERVICE CHALLENGES IN THE PERIOD AHEAD: STRONGER FAMILIES PROGRAMME

Mrs Carrie gave a presentation about the Stronger Families Transformation Programme (a copy of the slides have been included in the Minute Book). She spoke about the key messages of the programme; reviewed the past few years; highlighted some of the issues to do with high quality services but also high costs and the options for change.

Mrs Carrie said that since the formation of the FCS Business Group in 2006 external inspections had consistently judged its services as being outstanding. The business group had enjoyed strong backing from Councillors and had benefited from the political stability of the Council. However, the benchmarking information which the Council was required to provide (the Section 52 statement) showed that the Council provided high quality services but at the highest cost. For some services, other local authorities provided equally good services but at a lower cost. The Council needed to know what its unit costs were and needed to ensure that public subsidy went to those most in need. Children's Services accounted for 30% of Council spending.

Mrs Carrie concluded by saying that the programme sought transformational change to achieve a 10% reduction in costs. She had already received 200 ideas from staff and feedback had been positive. Since April 2010 she had been spending two days a week leading on the programme and the interim reporting arrangements would be that Ms Blake would act as her deputy.

During the discussion the main points made were:

- Councillor Borwick said that care would need to be taken to consider reductions in the round so that the knock-on effects were thoroughly thought through.

- Mr O'Donnell said that analysis and audit would be needed, e.g. had the funding for extended schools raised the performance of pupils?; what would be the impact of reduced schools funding?
- Councillor Blakeman asked whether the Council was considering sharing services and staff with neighbouring boroughs as had been reported in the media.
- Councillor Atkinson suggested that decisions should not be made in haste and the committee should be part of the thinking behind any decisions to make changes. He added that sensible suggestions should be supported; those in the greatest need should be protected and therefore means testing and geographical location of facilities would need to be considered carefully.
- Members should visit a range of FCS premises and services so that they might judge for themselves proposals for change.
- Mr Parsons suggested that the Council should err on the side of caution in respect of the timing of dealing with the new academies proposal for schools.

Mrs Carrie responded to the comments by saying that the Stronger Families Programme would seek to provide a framework for prioritising services and a financial model to measure the effects of proposed changes. No decisions had been made about sharing services, but the committee's sub-group had suggested that this was something that ought to be considered. She added that an Academies Bill and an Education and Children's Bill had been introduced on 26 May to enable more schools to achieve academy status, give teachers greater freedom over the curriculum and allow new providers to run state schools. The Young People's Learning Agency would be responsible for funding academies. Mrs Carrie said that she had engaged a business analyst to consider the financial effects of schools withdrawing from the Council and becoming academies. Schools would make a decision based on their best interests. Six schools had so far registered an interest for further information about the academies plan - Cardinal Vaughan; Fox; Holland Park; St Barnabus and St Philip's; St Mary Abbots; Servite. Mrs Carrie also advised the committee that the Communities and Local Government Department had announced a 24% reduction (£1.3m) in the Council's education specific grants for 2010/11.

The committee agreed that at the next meeting half the time should be spent on an in-depth review of this extremely important subject. It was agreed that the slides from the presentation, report A6 below, Section 52 agreement information and any other relevant material, should be sent to members and form part of the agenda. The committee agreed to support the systematic and holistic

programme management approach of the Stronger Families Transformation Programme.

Action: EDFCS

The Chairman thanked Mrs Carrie for an excellent and thought provoking presentation.

A6 REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND PRIORITIES SUB-GROUP

The Chairman said that unfortunately Councillor Dalton, the chairman of the sub-group, was unable to attend today's meeting. He thanked Councillor Dalton and the other members of the sub-group for an excellent report. As already agreed, the report would form part of the background reading for the in-depth review of the Transformation Programme.

During the discussion the main points made were:

- Councillor Blakeman said that the phrase in paragraph 2.2 that savings could be made without having "too significant" an impact on social outcomes was vague and clearly suggested that there would be an impact. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell commented that the sub-group recognised that a 10% reduction would be harder to achieve without having a significant impact on some service areas, but the group wished to see that impact minimised as much as possible. Mrs Carrie confirmed that the transformation programme aimed for a 10% reduction.
- Following a comment from Councillor Barbara Campbell that it was unacceptable that social workers spent such a limited amount of time directly with families because of bureaucracy (paragraph 5.4), it was noted that this did not just apply to Kensington and Chelsea, but reflected the national picture.
- Councillor Atkinson said that his daughter, as a former Councillor and member of the sub-group, had been promised a copy of the final report and had not received one. She had told him that this version was blander and vaguer than previous drafts. Councillor Atkinson said that he and the Labour Group would support the rigorous approach of the transformation programme, but they did not support this report.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by saying that the report would be considered again, with other papers, at the next meeting.

A7 FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES - SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2010 TO 2011

The Chairman said that the Service Delivery Plan was part of the background papers that would need to be considered when the

committee discussed the policy and service challenges in the period ahead.

The plan was noted.

A8 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2009/10

The Chairman said that if members had detailed questions they should submit them to the officers in writing. Bernadette Alexander, the headteacher of the Virtual School, attended for this report and answered members' questions.

John O'Donnell referred to the fact, pointed out in paragraph 2.2, that when Looked After Children from other boroughs were included Sion Manning had the highest concentration of such children. As chairman of governors of the school he was aware of complaints from other pupils that Looked After Children could break the rules with impunity because they knew that they would not be excluded. Ms Alexander commented that the statutory guidance stated that before a permanent exclusion was made "every practicable means" must be taken to avoid it and that exclusion should only be "an absolute last resort" for Looked After Children. She added that other children at the school should not know that a child was looked after as this should be confidential. Mr O'Donnell said that he was aware of this, but the problem was that the looked after child told others of their status. He was raising this point so that, at least, there would be an acknowledgement that the problem existed.

In response to a question from Councillor Atkinson about the variation at Key Stage 4 in the percentage of children with a statement of SEN, Ms Alexander replied that the variation was not unusual and it was a matter of chance.

Following a question from Councillor Blakeman about RaiseOnLine, it was noted that this was a valuable online tool for interpreting school improvement data.

The Chairman thanked the officers for an excellent report and thanked Ms Alexander for attending.

A9 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT

Councillors Elizabeth Campbell and Baroness Ritchie answered members' questions on their report.

Summer in the Borough 2010

Copies of the brochure were tabled.

Inspection - St Francis of Assisi RC Primary School

The committee placed on record its congratulations and thanks to all the staff and pupils at the school which had been judged outstanding in almost every respect.

Middle Row and St Mary's Primary Schools

Following a question from Councillor Atkinson, the committee noted that there was a risk to funding for the Primary Capital Programme. Mrs Carrie reported that the first instalment of finance had been received and the Council would be considering its options if there was a funding gap.

Kensington Academy

Councillor Blakeman referred to the consultation on the feasibility of building the academy on the Kensington Leisure Centre site. She said that the residents of Lancaster West Estate had not been able to take part in the consultation and there was already a groundswell of opposition to the proposal. Mrs Carrie replied that the consultation that had taken place so far had been carried out by the Planning and Borough Development Department and the FCS consultation was still to happen. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell said that Cllr Blakeman's comments were helpful as the Council needed to consult properly and know of concerns about possible proposals as early as possible.

In response to a question from Councillor Jones about the timetable for approval of the academy proposal, Mrs Carrie said that the Council needed to hear from the Department for Education by December this year if the academy was to open by 2014 as planned.

Key Decisions

Following a suggestion from Councillor Borwick, it was agreed that progress on Key Decisions which were marked as two or three diamonds on the Forward Plan should be reported in the Cabinet Members' report.

Action: EDFCS

A10 IN-YEAR REVENUE BUDGET SAVINGS 2010/11

Mr Jarvis introduced the report and explained the background to the FCS business group identifying £400,000 of contingent savings proposals achievable from July 2010.

In response to a question from Councillor Blakeman about whether staff on local (Hay) salary ranges would still get a bonus in 2010/11

despite the pay freeze, Mrs Carrie replied that she would need to check and reply in writing.

Action: EDFCS

The committee thought it would be helpful to the Cabinet if the point about additional income from Children's Centres was explained more fully.

Action: HR

The committee noted the proposed reductions and was broadly in support of the report.

A11 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2009/10

Mrs Carrie referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report and drew the committee's attention to the fact that the net revenue position for the FCS Business Group showed an overall overspend of only £0.082m on a total gross expenditure of £164.9m. It was agreed that this was an excellent achievement.

The main points made were:

- An explanation was sought by Councillor Atkinson of the net cost of supporting Special Education Needs (SEN) placements. Ms Matthews undertook to circulate a briefing note.
Action: DSQS
- Mr Quinn asked about the overspend on the cost of home to school transport for SEN pupils and enquired about the type of transport used. Mrs Carrie explained the increase in both numbers of pupils and their varying needs and how the Council tried to match transport to need in the most economical way.
- It was noted that the slippage on the budgets for the Holland Park School Design Project and the Holland Park School Redevelopment did not mean that the budgets were overspent - the overall expenditure was the same, but the finance would be carried forward from 2009/10 to 2010/11. This was a technical accounting requirement.

The report was noted.

A12 VITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRESS

The committee noted the progress on the Council's Vital Improvements Programme.

A13 2009/10 END OF YEAR VITAL SIGNS

The committee noted that of the eight Vital Sign indicators that belonged to FCS, seven had been fully met or only narrowly missed the target and date was not yet available for one.

The report was noted.

A14 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Forward Plan

In response to a question from Councillor Borwick about the renewal of funding for FCS voluntary organisations, Mrs Carrie commented that all of the contracts had been extended and there was no substantial difference in funding.

NHS Kensington and Chelsea Priorities Sub-Group

Mr O'Donnell said that he had been the committee's representative on this Health Scrutiny Committee Sub-Group. He commented that it had been an enlightening experience and the sub-group had worked hard to produce a detailed report on a complex subject.

The report was noted.

A15 ANNUAL REPORT ON ADOPTION AND PERMANENCE SERVICES

Mr Page introduced the report and spoke about the work of the adoption and permanence team during 2009/10.

In response to comments from Councillor Blakeman and Mr O'Donnell, the committee discussed the OFSTED inspection referred to in paragraph 9 of the report and, in particular, the recommendation about improvements to later life letters. Mr Page explained the new procedures introduced, which were set out in paragraph 9.3.

The report was noted.

A16 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN PUBLIC ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERED URGENT

There were none.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the proceedings by virtue of the private nature of the business to be transacted, as follows:

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2010

The minutes were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a question from Councillor Borwick about the contract review of St Quintin's Children's Centre, Mrs Carrie said that she was pleased to report that the scheme was £30,000 under the revised budget. She added that all of the recommendations made by the Cabinet and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee were being rolled out across the Council. The management of capital contracts was now more robust in the FCS Business Group and the two Cabinet Members received a monthly progress report on every FCS capital project.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

Chairman