

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY
STRATEGY: COMMENTS FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **22nd May 2012**

From: **Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **2012/28** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **To summarise the comments arising from Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussion of the Cambridgeshire Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy.**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to consider the Committee's comments when determining the Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Ian Lambert	Name:	Cllr Shona Johnstone
Post:	Scrutiny and Improvement Manager	Portfolio:	Chairman Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Email:	Ian.Lambert@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Shona.Johnstone@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 727918	Tel:	01223 699173

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was invited to comment on the revised Cambridgeshire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy.
- 1.2 The Committee considered the Strategy at its meeting on 16th May 2012 and agreed to submit the following comments to Cabinet.

2. COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Committee recognises that developing a strategy that is effective for all children along a continuum which ranges from those who need a small amount of support to those with very complex needs who require assistance 24/7 is a major challenge. In view of this, members are concerned that children who have low or moderate levels of need may not always be identified or receive the support that they require. This needs to be taken into account in implementing the Strategy.
- 2.2 Members recognise the crucial importance of early identification and support for children with SEND, and therefore welcome the commitment in the Strategy to improve this. We particularly welcome the commitment to protect early years funding, in view of the positive impact this should have on identifying children with SEND at an early stage.
- 2.3 Members are concerned that children with dyslexia are identified early and given the support that they require, and we welcome the plans to develop a Dyslexia Strategy. Arrangements are needed to ensure that all children who may be dyslexic or have other learning difficulties are identified by their primary school at an early stage, and given appropriate support. We recommend that officers use the experience of other areas to identify appropriate diagnostic tests and effective interventions. The Committee has asked to receive the draft Dyslexia Strategy at its next meeting.
- 2.4 Councillors support the principle of developing six children's centres in different locations around the County into specialist SEND hubs where children with complex needs and their families can receive support. Members have requested details about the proposed location of these centres when this information becomes available.
- 2.5 It is however essential that children with mild to moderate support needs and their carers can access services close to where they live, without having to travel long distances or undertake complex or costly journeys. Services for this grouping should therefore be available from a large number of centres.
- 2.6 Members welcome the commitment in the SEND Strategy to developing a holistic approach to support, as this is not always the case at present.

- 2.7 The local authority has a key role as a 'champion for vulnerable children' in providing information, support and guidance to academies in relation to children with SEND, as well as to schools generally. The Committee is very concerned at the potential impact that the Department for Education's proposals for the way that schools and local authorities are funded may have on the capacity of the Council to implement the SEND Strategy.
- 2.8 The Committee recognises that the Strategy will need to be amended to take into account the Department for Education (DfE) response to the Special Educational Needs Green Paper, which was released on 15th May 2012. In particular, the Committee considers that the Strategy should be developed further in relation to the following areas which are highlighted in the DfE response:
- Access to better quality, vocational and work-related options post-16
 - An increased requirement to offer mediation services to resolve problems rather than parents having to take their case before a tribunal.
- 2.9 Members noted that the SEND Strategy consultation process may have excluded some parents by only inviting them to daytime meetings, and that future consultations should ensure that working and non-working parents are able to participate.
- 2.10 The Committee agreed to recommend to the future Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it review progress in implementing the SEND Strategy in late 2013 – early 2014.

<u>Source documents</u>	<u>Location</u>
Draft Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy	Shire Hall, Room 116 Contact Ian Lambert 01223 727918 Ian.Lambert@cambridgeshire.gov.uk