

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Friday, 9th June, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby,
V Kendall, L Mulherin, K Renshaw and
B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):	Mr E A Britten	Church Representative (Catholic)
	Mr R Greaves	Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):	Ms C Foote	Teacher Representative
	Mr P Gathercole	NCH Representative

1 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), particularly those who had been recently appointed to the Board.

2 LATE ITEMS

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda the minutes from the Executive of the Children and Young People's Partnership from the meeting held on 12th April 2006 which were to be considered as appendix 5 of agenda item 9, entitled 'Work Programme'. The minutes had been unavailable at the time of the agenda despatch.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Members declared personal interests, due to their respective positions as either school or college governors:-

Councillors Bale, Cleasby, Kendall, Mulherin, Renshaw, Selby, Mr E A Britten and Mr R Greaves.

A further personal interest was declared at a later point in the meeting with regard to agenda item 9, entitled 'Work Programme' (Minute No. 9 refers).

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors R D Feldman, Harrison, Murray, Professor P H J H Gosden, Mr C Macpherson, Mr T Hales, Mrs S Hutchinson and Ms G Cooper.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) meetings held on 6th April and 26th April 2006 be approved as a correct record.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Youth Service Post Ofsted Action Plan (Minute No 132 refers)

Further to Minute No. 132, 6th April 2006, Members questioned whether the statistics requested by the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) had been received in relation to the number of youth workers who had undergone training. In response, the Board was advised that the data in question had been received and would be circulated to Members for their information.

Following Members' enquiries into the length of time it had taken to obtain such statistics, a discussion ensued relating to the actions which could be taken by the Scrutiny Board to ensure the prompt receipt of information from departments.

7 CO-OPTIONS TO THE BOARD

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought Members' approval for co-options to the Scrutiny Board.

Members were advised that Article 6 of the Council's Constitution required the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) to include both a Church of England and Roman Catholic diocesan representative together with three parent governor representatives as voting co-opted members of the Board. Members noted the nominations which had been received for the Roman Catholic and Church of England diocesan representatives, in addition to the current parent governor representation, for which a vacancy currently existed.

Members noted that Article 6 of the Council's Constitution also permitted each Scrutiny Board to appoint up to five non-voting co-opted members. The Board was then invited to consider whether they wished to maintain the arrangements for non-voting co-opted membership which had been previously agreed by the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People), comprising two teacher representatives together with representation from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, NCH and Leeds Youth Work Partnership, or to adopt an alternative approach which could include representation from Leeds VOICE Children and Young People Services Forum. The Board noted that Mr P Gathercole, a non-voting co-opted member of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) during 2005/06 was already a member of the Children and Young People Services Forum.

The Chair then thanked Ms G Cooper, a non-voting co-opted member of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) during 2005/06 for all the commitment she had shown during the previous municipal year, as she had recently indicated that she was no longer able to sit on the Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the information detailed within the report be noted;
- (b). That the re-appointment of Professor P H J H Gosden (Church Representative – Church of England) and Mr E A Britten (Church Representative – Roman Catholic) as voting co-opted members of the Board for 2006/07 be confirmed;
- (c). That the continued appointment of Mr R Greaves (Parent Governor Representative - Secondary) and Mr C Macpherson (Parent Governor Representative - Special) as voting co-opted members be confirmed and that the one vacancy which currently existed on the Board's voting co-opted membership for the position of Parent Governor Representative – Primary, be noted;
- (d). That Mr T Hales and Ms C Foote (Teacher Representatives), Mrs S Hutchinson (Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership Representative), Ms T Kayani (Youth Work Partnership Representative) and Mr P Gathercole (NCH Representative) be appointed as non-voting co-opted members of the Board for 2006/07, and that further consultation be undertaken with Leeds VOICE in relation to representation on the Board.

(Ms C Foote joined the meeting at 9.45 a.m. during the consideration of this item)

8 SCRUTINY BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which outlined and invited Members to note the changes to the remit of the Scrutiny Boards which were now aligned to Executive Member portfolios. The report also advised Members of several operational changes which had been made to the Scrutiny process, following the Annual Meeting of Council on 22nd May 2006.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a document entitled, 'Scrutiny Alignment with Executive Member Portfolios', together with a copy of the Scrutiny Board's Terms of Reference and a document entitled, 'Process for Agreeing Scrutiny Board Inquiry Reports'.

Members raised concerns over the possible delays which could be experienced in the publication of final Scrutiny Board reports following the recent changes to the Scrutiny procedure and questioned whether it was envisaged that the relevant Executive Members would attend Scrutiny Board meetings on a regular basis. In response the Board was assured that both the Children's Services Lead Executive Member and the Children's Services Support Executive Member had shown a desire to work closely with the Scrutiny Board in the future, and had agreed to attend the next meeting of the Board. Members were also reminded that despite the substantial workload undertaken by the Board during 2005/06, all Scrutiny Board inquiries had been completed within the same municipal year.

With regard to the attendance of relevant Executive Members at Scrutiny meetings, the Board acknowledged that it was of equal importance to receive the answers given by such Members as it was for the Board to have the opportunity to question them.

RESOLVED – That the key constitutional changes relevant to the Scrutiny arrangements, as appended to the report, be noted.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought Members' views on the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the 2006/07 municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Member and Support Lead Member for Children's Services, together with a draft Scrutiny Board work programme for 2006/07, a copy of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st June 2006 to 30th September 2006, a copy of the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Board held on 17th May 2006 and the minutes from the meeting of the Executive of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership held on 12th April 2006.

In attendance at the meeting to answer Members' queries and questions were Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds and Ruth Chiva, Deputy Chief Executive, Education Leeds.

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services which updated Members on the current position regarding the provision and development of children's services in Leeds. In summary, the following issues were raised:-

- The process of design, development and learning which was currently being undertaken by the Director of Children's Services Unit;
- The progress which had been made in relation to the formation of the Children and Young People's Plan and the comprehensive communications strategy which was intended to accompany it;
- The protocol and timescales relating to the Annual Performance Assessment;
- An overview of the key service management issues currently being faced by the Director of Children's Services Unit;
- Timescales and issues relating to the Joint Area Review process;
- The key work proposed to be undertaken by the Director of Children's Services Unit in the future, which included the establishment of partnership arrangements at both local and city wide level and the development of a comprehensive change programme.

A question and answer session then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The nature and extent of the consultation for the Children and Young People's Plan and the procedures in place to monitor the Plan's delivery;
- How Executive arrangements for the delivery of children's services in Leeds currently compared to other core cities in the UK;
- Methods which could be used to raise public awareness of both the five national outcomes within the Every Child Matters agenda and the Scrutiny process in Leeds;
- The cross-border initiatives being undertaken by Leeds and surrounding local authorities to tackle regional issues and the desire for Leeds to become a regional leader in the delivery of children's services;

- The areas covered by and the processes surrounding the recent Annual Performance Assessment for Leeds.

Members then received a brief update from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds which provided Members with an overview of the organisation's current position.

In conclusion the Chief Executive briefly outlined three key areas in which the Scrutiny Board could assist in the development of the service provided by Education Leeds. They were:-

- The establishment of a cohesive and joined up partnership approach when delivering children's services in Leeds;
- The establishment of governance and leadership models when delivering such services, and the methods which could be used to encourage community based governance;
- The efficient use of resources when investing in the e-learning agenda.

Following a proposal that a meeting could be scheduled into the work programme to monitor progress on a number of key issues that were not the subject of a full inquiry, Members were invited to highlight any areas which they deemed appropriate for inclusion within the Scrutiny Board work programme for the forthcoming municipal year. The following issues were raised and discussed:-

- The Leeds City Region principle and the development of a partnership approach with neighbouring local authorities;
- The availability and accessibility of services and resources provided by youth services throughout Leeds and the youth entitlement. Members proposed that as part of an inquiry into youth services, a piece of work could be commissioned which would enable young people to express their views on the subject. The Board also proposed that an update of the Ofsted Action Plan and an audit of the resources currently available to young people in Leeds could be incorporated into the inquiry;
- That the responses to the Housing Inquiry reports produced last year by the Children and Young People and Thriving Communities Scrutiny Boards were circulated for Members' information;
- The initiatives which were being undertaken to assist young people during the transitional period from primary to secondary education;
- With regard to the education admissions policy in Leeds, the Board proposed that an update on the current admissions policy and school appeals could be submitted to the Board by the Admissions Forum later in the municipal year;
- In response to a Member enquiry specifically relating to Carr Manor School, the Chief Executive of Education Leeds undertook to provide the Member in question with an update on the situation;
- Issues relating to adoption and fostering in Leeds;
- The involvement of young people in the Scrutiny process, potential issues which could be addressed by an inquiry conducted by young people and the various ways in which young people could interface with the Scrutiny Board in the future.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for October 2006 be used to monitor progress on a number of key issues that were not the subject of a full inquiry, including for example children's services, school admissions and appeals, extended schools, transition and safeguarding;
- (c). That the Scrutiny Board liaise with the Youth Council to identify potential issues which could be addressed by young people in the form of an inquiry and that further discussions be conducted with the Youth Council to identify other ways in which both the Scrutiny Board and the Youth Council could interface with one another in the future;
- (d). That an inquiry into the youth services and the youth entitlement in Leeds be scheduled into the work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and that a working group comprising of Councillors Cleasby, Kendall, Mulherin, Mr E A Britten and Ms C Foote be established to draft terms of reference for the inquiry;
- (e). That an inquiry into adoption and fostering in Leeds be scheduled into the Scrutiny Board work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and that a working group comprising of Councillors Bale, Chapman, Renshaw and Mr P Gathercole be established to draft terms of reference for the inquiry.

(Mr P Gathercole declared a personal interest in this item, due to being a representative of the NCH, who provide both adoption and fostering services)

10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 13th July 2006 at 9.30 a.m. in the Civic Hall, Leeds. (Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.00 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.)