

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor J Bale in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby, R D Feldman,
A Harrison, L Mulherin and K Renshaw

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(VOTING)** Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden - Church Representative (Church of
England)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)** Ms C Foote - Teacher Representative
Mr T Hales - Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson - Early Years Development and
Childcare Partnership
Representative
Ms T Kayani - Leeds Youth Work Partnership
Representative

72 **Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the December meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

73 **Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared personal interests in relation to agenda item 9, 'Inquiry into Secondary Achievement – Progress Report', due to their positions as either school or college governors (Minute No. 78 refers):-

Councillors Bale, Chapman, Cleasby, R D Feldman, Harrison, Mulherin, Renshaw, Mr E A Britten.

A further declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting. (Minute No 78 refers).

74 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors V Kendall, T Murray, B Selby, Mr C Macpherson, Mrs S Knights, and Mr P Gathercole.

75 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 2nd and 16th November 2006 be approved as a correct record.

76 **Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6th November 2006 be noted.

77 Children's Services Performance and Inspection and Children and Young People's Plan Review

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated Members on the inspection and performance of children's services in Leeds, detailed proposals for continuing this work via the Children and Young People's Plan and summarised the preparations in place for the Joint Area Review inspection.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a copy of the correspondence received by the Director of Children's Services which summarised the findings of Leeds City Council's 2006 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of children's services.

Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services and John Maynard, Performance Manager, Children's Services were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Following a brief summary of the key points detailed within the report, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- In response to Members' enquiries regarding the range of organisations responsible for monitoring the provision of children's services, the Performance Manager undertook to provide Members with a list of all those bodies involved in the inspection process;
- The level of detail included within the inspection process and how such a level was reflected within the APA letter;
- The methods used to identify those areas which would be focussed upon in preparation for future inspections;
- The likelihood of the management arrangements adopted by Leeds City Council in relation to children's services being used for the purposes of a case study.

Members were then invited to consider in more detail the issues arising from the short film entitled, 'When I was a child I used to dream', which was shown at the beginning of the meeting. In response, it was proposed that the film could be explored further at a future meeting of the Board.

Following a brief discussion regarding how the role of Scrutiny was depicted in relation to children's service arrangements, the Director of Children's Services was requested to address Members on this issue at the January 2007 meeting of the Board.

Further to Minute No. 58, 2nd November 2006, the Board received a summary which outlined the current position of Leeds City Council in relation to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. This was followed by a question and answer session. The main areas of debate were:-

- Concerns were raised in relation to the nature and appropriateness of some data remaining on an individual's record which could be included within a CRB check;

- The level of costs associated with CRB checks and the appropriateness of individuals being checked every three years;
- The issue of duplication within the CRB check process and the methods which could be used to minimise such duplication;
- The work being commissioned to explore the establishment of an 'umbrella' CRB checking facility for Children's Services.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That further consideration be given to the issues arising from the short film entitled, 'When I was a child I used to dream', at a future meeting of the Board;
- (c). That further information regarding how the role of Scrutiny is depicted in relation to the arrangements for children's services be submitted by the Director of Children's Services to the January 2007 meeting of the Board;
- (d). That the Director of Children's Services provides an update on CRB checking at a future meeting of the Board.

(Councillor Chapman left the meeting at the conclusion of this item)

78 Inquiry into Secondary Achievement - Progress Report

Members received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced two reports from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds detailing the progress made in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) arising from the Board's inquiry into Secondary Achievement. The reports also provided information on the strategy for Personalisation and Individual Learning Plans.

Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator, Mike Cooper, Area Manager, Learning Communities Team and Rachel MacHutchon, Individual Learning Plan (ILP) Development Officer, all of Education Leeds, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Following a brief summary of the information detailed within the reports, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- With regard to the provision of ILPs and mentoring, Members questioned whether tensions existed between successfully delivering a universal service and focussing upon those young people who particularly needed support;
- The actions being taken to encourage the constituent organisations of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to provide a greater number of work placements for young people in Leeds, including 500 health placements;
- Proposals to develop 'smarter' placements by using a portion of the LEGI funding which had been recently awarded to Leeds;
- The impact that the introduction of electronic ILPs would have on the young people of Leeds;

- Following Members' questions relating to the actions being taken to ensure that the young people of Leeds were reaching ICT attainment levels which allowed them to compete with others from the surrounding region, the deputy Chief Executive of Education Leeds undertook to provide Members with details of ICT attainment levels achieved by young people residing throughout the city region;
- Further to Members' enquiries, the Chair stated that consideration could be given to issues relating to educational achievement later in the municipal year if there was sufficient capacity within the Board's Work Programme;
- The trends in Leeds relating to the range of subjects being studied by young people and how this reflected the national situation;
- The extent to which young people had been consulted on the introduction of ILPs and the ways in which the success of the programme would be monitored in the long term;
- Whether young people who had successfully been involved in past initiatives could be encouraged to undertake mentoring roles in order to assist current participants.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted and that the Board continue to monitor progress against the action plans.

(Councillor Renshaw joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m. during the consideration of this item and Mrs S Hutchinson left the meeting at 10.40 a.m. at the conclusion of this item)

(Professor PHJH Gosden declared a personal interest in relation to this item due to being a member of the School Organisation Committee)

79 Youth Services Inquiry - Session Three

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced the information to be considered as part of the third formal session of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Youth Services.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the agreed terms of reference for the inquiry, in addition to evidence relating to Community Safety, the Youth Offending Service, igen, Connexions and the Arts and Events Team.

John Paxton, Head of Youth Service, was in attendance throughout this item in order to answer any questions raised.

Also in attendance to specifically advise Members on the role played by the voluntary, community and faith sector in relation to youth services were Jeni Sawdon, The Marketplace, Louise Megson, St Luke's Cares, Brent Lumley, Willow Young Carers and Mark Law of BARCA. The main areas of debate were:-

- Members questioned the actions which could be taken by the Council to assist those voluntary, community and faith organisations which delivered youth services;
- The wide ranging and extensive support needed to assist young people today, who were increasingly faced with a range of challenging situations;
- The extent to which certain services, primarily based in a single location, could assist young people residing throughout the city;
- The large number of organisations which existed in this sector and the need to ensure that a greater level of collaboration between such groups was developed in order to enable a more cohesive provision of services to be established;
- The geographically uneven provision of youth services by the voluntary, community and faith sector, the reasons for this and the ways in which such service provision could be enhanced;
- The extent to which cluster groups were aligned with local schools and the ways in which the consistency of such groupings could be improved;
- The differing forms of deprivation experienced by young people and the geographical spread of such deprivation throughout Leeds.

Andy Mills, Head of Service, Community Safety, Jim Hopkinson, Youth Offending Service Manager and Peter Hunter, Leeds Prevention Programme were in attendance to answer Members' questions relating to youth service provision and Community Safety. A question and answer session followed a brief summary of the evidence submitted. The main areas of debate were:-

- Members discussed the work carried out by the junior Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs) and considered the potential increase in impact that could be experienced if they were all linked to senior YIPs;
- The extent to which individuals were referred to the YIPs in Leeds prior to being issued with an Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- Whether individuals receiving Acceptable Behaviour Contracts were being signposted to relevant services in Leeds;
- The relationship between youth service provision and the prevention of youth crime;
- The need for a more co-ordinated approach to be taken by all agencies who delivered services aimed at the reduction of youth offending levels;
- The primary objectives of a local authority's youth service provision and whether any services were aimed at the family as a whole rather than solely focussing upon the young person;
- The levels of funding available for providing services in this field, whether any further funding could be obtained from additional sources and the need to ensure that the funding received was used resourcefully;
- The strength of the relationship which existed between those bodies providing youth services and law enforcement agencies and the ways in which the relationship between such bodies could be developed further.

Terry Walsh of igen Leeds Careers and Shaid Mahmood of Connexions were in attendance to answer Members' questions on the provision of services relating to Information, Advice and Guidance. Following a brief summary of

the evidence detailed within the reports, a discussion ensued. The main areas of debate were:-

- The ways in which a balance was struck between a 'universal' and a 'targeted' approach when delivering information, advice and guidance to young people;
- The methods used to provide information, advice and guidance to young people who could not be accessed via the formal education system;
- The extent to which igen Careers Leeds and Connexions provided information to young people aged 16 years and over;
- The need for young people to be made aware of the wide range of opportunities open to them from an early age;
- The forthcoming government guidance which would extend the age range covered to those aged 11 years and over.

Andrew MacGill, Head of Arts and Events, Kris Nenadic, Parks and Countryside, Sara Birkinshaw, Sports and Active Recreation, Mike Kinnaird, Head of Policy and Performance and Britta Heyworth, Arts and Reader Development Manager, were in attendance to answer Members' questions on issues relating to youth services provided through the Learning and Leisure department. The main areas of debate were:-

- In response to Members' questions relating to the proportion of young people 'reached' by the services provided by the various sections of the department, the Head of Arts and Events undertook to provide Members with such 'reach' statistics;
- The work which had been undertaken by the Council to improve the facilities within local parks throughout Leeds;
- The diverse range of sports and library based facilities currently provided for young people throughout Leeds and how the extensive provision of such facilities could be developed further;
- The possibility of music and arts venues becoming available for use;
- A request for additional information on heritage provision for young people;
- The relationship which existed between youth service provision and adult education in Leeds.

Ken Morton, EiC Director and Mark Smith of John Smeaton Community High School were in attendance to answer Members' questions relating to Extended Services. The main areas of debate were:-

- The extent to which young people were being signposted to the variety of services available to them in Leeds, via the provision of extended services;
- The possibility of certain organisations establishing satellite units throughout the city in order to accompany the provision of extended services;
- The extent to which the primary objective of the Youth Service was to fill any gaps in service provision.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;

(b). That the issues raised during the third session of the Board's inquiry into youth services be incorporated into the draft version of the Board's final report.

(Councillors Harrison, R D Feldman, Renshaw and Ms C Foote left the meeting at 11.30 a.m., 12.00 p.m., 12.05 p.m. and 12.50 p.m. respectively during the consideration of this item)

80 Youth Services Inquiry - Session Four

Members received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced the information to be considered as part of the fourth formal session of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Youth Services.

Appended to the report for the Board's consideration was a series of reports concerning the use of PFI facilities within schools by the community, services for young people with a learning difficulty or disability, the Childcare Act and Local Youth Work Networks, as had been requested by Members. Also submitted to Members for information were the write ups from the Board's site visits to various organisations providing youth services.

David Outram, Chief Officer, Public Private Partnership Unit and Shirley Parks, Deputy Programme Director for Building Schools for the Future, Education Leeds, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Following a brief overview of the current situation concerning the facilities within PFI schools and their availability for use by the local community, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were:-

- The need to ensure that contracts drawn up for PFI schools were flexible enough to cater for the needs of the local community;
- The financial costs associated with using PFI facilities and the difference in costs for using such facilities on different days of the week;
- The importance of effectively promoting the PFI facilities which were available for use;
- The current under use of facilities compared to the amount of time already allocated within PFI contracts;
- The need for greater publicity of the contact details for the Community Lettings Unit;
- The need for community groups to receive advice about the most appropriate facilities for their use, as this may not always be PFI facilities;
- The need to avoid overuse of facilities such as playing pitches, as they needed to be available for school use;
- The work being undertaken by officers to assist in responding to specific access issues.

The Head of Youth Service summarised the work that was being carried out in response to the Education and Inspections Bill, and the opportunities to develop proposals for an integrated youth support service. Members noted that this would encourage strategic links to be made across service providers and enable economies of scale to be established compared to the existing plethora of infrastructures. This was in addition to the Local Area Agreement

which would allow a more flexible use of funding to address identified gaps in provision.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the issues raised during the fourth session of the Board's inquiry into youth services be incorporated in to the draft version of the Board's final report.

81 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's Work Programme, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st December 2006 to 31st March 2007 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 15th November 2006.

Having noted that there was capacity in the Board's Work Programme to undertake a minor inquiry in the new year, it was proposed that an inquiry relating to the implications of Trust schools for the local authority could be undertaken.

Regarding the issue of departmental communications, a matter which had been referred to all Scrutiny Boards by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members proposed that a Working Group could be established in order to consider the corporate communications which were published by those departments within the Board's remit.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report and the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report, be noted;
- (b). That an inquiry relating to the implications of Trust schools for the local authority be undertaken by the Board and that draft terms of reference for such an inquiry be submitted for approval to the January 2007 meeting of the Board;
- (c). That a Working Group be established to consider the issue of corporate communications published by those departments within the Scrutiny Board's remit.

82 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 11th January 2007 at 9.30 a.m.
(Pre-Meeting scheduled for 9.00 a.m.)

(Meeting concluded at 1.10 p.m.)