

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 19TH APRIL, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor R D Feldman in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby, J Lewis,
K Renshaw and B Selby

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(VOTING)** Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden - Church Representative (Church of
England)
Mrs S Knights - Parent Governor Representative
(Primary)

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

124 Appointment of Chair

RESOLVED – That Councillor R D Feldman be appointed Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) for the duration of this meeting, as Councillor Bale, the appointed Chair of the Scrutiny Board for the 2006/07 municipal year had submitted his apologies for absence from the meeting.

(Councillor R D Feldman took the Chair)

125 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda a draft Scrutiny Board Statement regarding the 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds which was to be considered in relation to agenda item 12, a draft version of the Scrutiny Board's contribution towards the composite Annual Report for 2006/07 which was to be considered in relation to agenda item 13, and a report entitled, 'Progress with Area Management Boards Across the City' (Minute Nos. 135, 136, and 133 refer respectively).

Both the draft Statement regarding the 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds and the draft version of the Scrutiny Board's contribution towards the composite Annual Report had been unavailable at the time of the agenda despatch and needed to be considered and approved by the current membership of the Scrutiny Board, prior to the conclusion of the current municipal year.

The information contained within the report entitled, 'Progress with Area Management Boards Across the City', which had also been unavailable at the time of agenda despatch had recently been sought by the current membership of the Scrutiny Board, and therefore also needed to be considered prior to the conclusion of the municipal year.

126 Declarations of Interest

Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to the agenda item entitled, 'Progress with Area Management Boards Across the City', as she had been appointed onto the Area Management Board for North West Leeds (Minute No. 133 refers).

A further declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting (Minute No. 132 refers).

127 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of the Chair, Councillor J Bale, Councillors A Harrison, V Kendall, L Mulherin and Mr C Macpherson.

128 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 8th March and 29th March 2007 be approved as correct records.

129 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5th March 2007 be noted.

130 Young People's Scrutiny Forum - 'Catching the Bus'

Further to Minute No. 9, 9th June 2006, a report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought the Board's approval of the final report and recommendations of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum entitled, 'Catching the Bus', a copy of which had been appended to the report for Members' consideration. The Board was also invited to help ensure that the report was widely circulated and that formal responses to the Forum's recommendations were submitted for consideration to the July 2007 meeting of the Board, or its successor.

Diane Whiteley-McLean, Senior Youth Worker, Youth Service, Leanne Rivers, Reach Out and Reconnect (ROAR), and Gaby Paradis, The Project, were all in attendance to present the information detailed within the report and answer any questions raised. Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, was also in attendance.

Having received an overview of the key themes detailed within the report from those representatives present, the Board congratulated the Young People's Scrutiny Forum both on the way they had conducted the inquiry and on the production of the resulting report. A question and answer session then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Key Issues Arising from the Inquiry

- Members acknowledged that the inquiry had found the **issue of cost** to be the most significant barrier to young people travelling by bus in Leeds, and enquired what the anticipated cost of travel would be for young people if further concessionary fares were introduced;
- Having enquired about the financial impact that the **cost of travelling by bus to and from employment** had upon young people in Leeds, Members learned that as a considerable proportion of employment undertaken by young people was on a part time basis, the cost of travel could have a significant financial impact upon young people;
- Members endorsed the particular significance of several issues highlighted within the report, such as the **reliability of services and routes, the relationship between bus drivers and young people** and the **marketing of concessionary bus travel**;
- The Board emphasised the correlation between the reliability of bus services and other issues such as **passenger safety**, discussed the decreased frequency of bus services on an evening and the impact that this had upon the range of activities undertaken by young people during such times.

Proposed Actions Following the Report's Publication

- Members emphasised the need to ensure that the findings of the report were not lost sight of, and proposed that responses to the inquiry's recommendations were sought from all relevant parties. In response, the Board learned that a meeting had already taken place with representatives of the Youth Council in order to progress the issues raised by the inquiry, and that **formal responses to the report's recommendations** were to be submitted to the Scrutiny Board for consideration;
- The Board made reference to the possibility of using the recommendations within the report which related to concessionary bus travel, as part of a wider programme to promote **environmental issues** with young people;
- The Director of Children's Services congratulated the Young People's Scrutiny Forum on the production of the report, concurred with the views of the Board in relation to the value of the work undertaken, and stated that copies of the report had already been circulated to members of **Corporate Management Team** so that a co-ordinated approach could be taken when addressing the issues raised;
- The Chair of **Scrutiny Board (Development)** suggested that the report could be circulated to members of Scrutiny Board (Development) for consideration, as it was felt that several issues arising from the report fell within the remit of that particular Board;
- Following confirmation by the Young People's Scrutiny Forum that it hoped the Scrutiny Board would lend its support to the pursuit of the issues raised by the inquiry, Members proposed that the document was circulated to representatives of all relevant organisations, with formal responses to the report's recommendations being sought and submitted to the July 2007 meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), or its successor.

General Observations

- The Board discussed the relative **working conditions of bus drivers** in Leeds and the impact that such conditions had upon recruitment levels. Members then learned of the attempts being made to improve the levels of service provided by bus drivers in Leeds;
- The Board considered the **negative image** that was often associated with young people generally, and the need for such an image to be addressed.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked the Young People's Scrutiny Forum once more for the work which had been undertaken as part of the inquiry.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the final recommendations and report of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum entitled, 'Catching the Bus', be approved;
- (b). That formal responses be sought from all relevant officers and organisations to the recommendations within the report, and submitted to the July 2007 meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), or its successor;
- (c). That in compliance with the wishes of the Young People's Scrutiny Forum, the Board ensures that the report be widely circulated and given appropriate consideration by all relevant parties.

131 Implementing the Children Act: April 2007 Update

Further to Minute No. 90, 11th January 2007, the Board received the latest in a series of reports from the Director of Children's Services, which updated Members on the progress made in relation to the implementation of the Children's Act 2004 in Leeds. The report also sought to advise Members on the progress made in respect of a range of issues within the Director of Children's Services Unit, present an overview of key budgetary information as previously requested, and provide examples of several major activities which had taken place across the children's services portfolio.

Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Adam Hewitt, Public and Political Executive Support Manager, Children's Services Unit, and David McDermott, Strategic Leader, Resources and Assets, Children's Services Unit, were all in attendance to advise Members of the main issues detailed within the report and to respond to any questions raised.

Following a brief summary of the key issues within the report from the Director of Children's Services, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Development of Children's Trust Arrangements in Leeds

- Members asked how many new posts had been created as part of the **Director of Children's Services Unit** and where there had been internal transfers to the Unit from other departments, whether the original posts had been deleted in order to prevent duplication. In response, Members learned that no positions had been deleted to date, a situation which reflected new ways of working. The Board also noted that including

administrative staff and transfers from other departments, there was a total of 26 posts within the Unit;

- Clarification was sought on the role and responsibilities of the newly appointed **Public and Political Executive Support Manager**;
- Members discussed the recent appointment of the five **Locality Enablers** in Leeds.

Consolidation of Resources

- Clarification was sought on the budgetary information detailed within the report, and the extent of the **resources** allocated for the provision of children's services which fell within the Board's remit and could potentially be scrutinised;
- Following Members' enquiries into the review of the **financial reporting systems** which was currently being undertaken, the Board was advised that the systems were being reviewed in line with the recent changes to the children's trust arrangements in Leeds.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and Members' comments arising from the report, be noted.

132 The Joint Area Review and the Children and Young People's Plan Review

A report was submitted by the Director of Children's Services which sought to update Members on the progress made in relation to the preparation for the **Annual Performance Assessment (APA) and Joint Area Review (JAR)** of children's services later in the year, in addition to engaging the Board in the ongoing review of the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan.

In addition to the information detailed within the report, a summary of the emerging issues from the Children and Young People's Plan Review was tabled at the meeting for Members' consideration.

Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Adam Hewitt, Public and Political Executive Support Manager, and John Maynard, Strategic Leader, Intelligence and Innovation, all from the Director of Children's Services Unit, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Members of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) made the following comments arising from their discussion on the emerging priorities for the Children and Young People Plan Review:-

The Review Process for Leeds' Children and Young People's Plan and Issues for Possible Inclusion

- Members acknowledged the work being done to review the Plan, especially in light of **national changes in the requirements for the Plan**;
- Members stressed the need for **clear action plans** to complement the priorities identified within the finalised Plan;
- They also highlighted that there needed to be **clear and explicit links to the Vision for Leeds themes of Narrowing the Gap and Going Up a League**, demonstrating how the Children and Young People's Plan links

to the wider agenda for the city, and how resources were being targeted at the most deprived communities in partnership with other agencies in the city;

- That leaders within Children's Services needed to be aware and alert to the fact that policies instituted for good reasons may have unintended consequences, for example a deliberate drive to reduce **exclusions** from school resulting in additional stress for school staff that also needed to be addressed;
- The need to be wary of having only one **measure of success** for some issues. For example, Members indicated that the issue of behaviour should not just be measured in terms of the numbers of exclusions, as the underlying issues were far wider and more complex than simply the number of pupils permanently excluded from school, however positive a reduction in this figure was in its own right;
- The Board asked that officers considered whether there were issues arising from the Board's recommendations in its inquiry report on adoption in Leeds that should be reflected in the Plan;
- The Board indicated that the Plan should include reference to **transitional issues** between children's services and adult services.

Comments Relating to the Provision of Children's Services in Leeds

- Members welcomed the emphasis on **mental health services** as an identified priority, and stressed the need to increase the availability of preventive services and early intervention;
- Members challenged the availability of **effective child health measures**, recognising that this was considered to be a national problem. They noted that attempts were being made to address this challenge at a local level;
- Members had ongoing concerns about **community access to PFI schools** in relation to **extended services**;
- The Board raised concerns over the reduction in the number of staff who had experience of teaching young people with learning difficulties, and the resultant burden which was being placed upon Teaching Assistants;
- Clarification was sought on whether all schools in Leeds were part of an extended services cluster, with particular reference being made to the North West Leeds Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC).

General Observations

- Members noted the relatively low rates of children on the **Child Protection Register** in Leeds and sought further details on the Local Authorities which Leeds had been compared to as part of the process. In response, Members were assured that such information would be provided to the member in question.

In conclusion, Members resolved that they needed to agree arrangements for the Scrutiny Board to **monitor progress** against the priorities and actions in the revised Children and Young People's Plan on an ongoing basis in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the progress made against the priorities and actions in the revised Children and Young People's Plan be reviewed by the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), or its successor, on an ongoing basis throughout the new municipal year.

(At this point in the meeting, the Chair extended his best wishes, on behalf of the Board, to Councillor Cleasby, who had been nominated to serve as Leeds City Council's Lord Mayor for the 2007/2008 municipal year)

(Councillor Cleasby left the meeting at 11.30 a.m. at the conclusion of this item)

(Mr P Gathercole declared a personal interest in relation to this item due to being a representative of NCH which provided services to Looked After Children)

133 Progress with Area Management Boards Across the City

The Board received a report from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds which advised Members of the ways in which start up funding for Area Management Boards (AMBs) had been spent in addition to the proposals which had been made in relation to the current round of funding. The report also provided Members with a summary of the improvements made in relation to **behaviour levels and attendance management in Leeds**, in addition to the extent to which **systems of inclusion** had been established throughout the city.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the Terms of Reference and Performance Management Arrangements for Leeds' AMBs, in addition to the draft 2007/08 funding allocation for AMBs.

Bob Stott, No Child Left Behind Project Director, was in attendance to present the information detailed within the report and answer any questions raised.

Having received a brief summary of the information within the report, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- Having raised concerns over **behaviour** currently being experienced in Leeds' schools, Members enquired how Education Leeds and AMBs were actively addressing such behavioural problems, whilst also providing adequate **support to staff** in this field. Members then requested that further information on this issue was submitted to the Board, or its successor, in the new municipal year, and that when such information was submitted, appropriate representation from Education Leeds was requested;
- The impact that the development of the AMBs would have upon the role of **Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)** in Leeds;

- The Board discussed how the initial funding allocation for the AMBs had been spent;
- Members made enquiries into the links between **AMBs, Area Committees** and Children Leeds wedge structures in Leeds, and whether there would be an element of duplication between them.

In conclusion, the Chair stated that all the issues raised at today's meeting would be pursued, and requested that a further report addressing such issues was submitted to the Board in the new municipal year, with appropriate representation from Education Leeds being sought.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report and Members' comments arising from the report, be noted;
- (b). That a further report addressing the issues raised by Members at today's meeting be submitted to the Board, or its successor, in the new municipal year, with appropriate representation from Education Leeds being requested.

134 Scrutiny Board Draft Statement - Departmental Communications

A report was submitted on behalf of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought Members' approval of the final draft version of the Scrutiny Board's statement relating to Departmental Communications, a copy of which had been appended to the report for Members' consideration.

Following a referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this issue, Members agreed to establish a working group to consider those Departmental Communications which fell within the Board's remit. Having met with relevant officers in March 2007, a draft statement on behalf of the Board was produced for approval.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) statement concerning Departmental Communications, as appended to the report, be approved.

135 Scrutiny Board Draft Statement - 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought the Board's approval of the final draft version of the Board's statement relating to 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds, which had been circulated to Members for consideration prior to the meeting.

Following an additional meeting of the Scrutiny Board in March 2007, which had considered the Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds, a draft statement of the Board, incorporating Members' comments, was prepared and circulated prior to the meeting for Members' consideration.

Having agreed to incorporate several revisions to paragraphs 21, 24 and Recommendation 2 of the draft document, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That subject to the inclusion of several revisions which had been proposed, the statement of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) on the Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds be approved.

136 Annual Report 2006/2007

A report was submitted on behalf of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought Members' approval of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) contribution towards the composite Scrutiny Board Annual Report for 2006/2007.

Members noted that the final text of the Annual Report would be subject to the approval of the remaining Scrutiny Board inquiry reports from the current municipal year.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) contribution towards the composite Scrutiny Board Annual Report for 2006/07 be approved.

137 Minutes of Executive Board

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 4th April 2007 be noted.

(At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked all members of the Board for their attendance and contributions throughout the municipal year, and reminded all those present that subject to Members' availability, an additional meeting of the Board had been proposed for 9.00 a.m. on Thursday, 17th May, 2007, to formally approve the draft Scrutiny Board inquiry reports into the Implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority and Youth Services)

(The meeting concluded at 12.02 p.m.)