

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 29TH MARCH, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor R D Feldman in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby, V Kendall
and J Lewis

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mr R Greaves	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)**

Mr T Hales	- Teacher Representative
Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative

119 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)

120 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made at this point, however two declarations of personal interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute No. 122 refers).

121 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of the Chair, Councillor J Bale, Councillors A Harrison, L Mulherin, K Renshaw, B Selby, Mr C Macpherson, Mr P Gathercole and Mrs S Hutchinson.

122 Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds

A report was submitted on behalf of the Chief Executive of Education Leeds which provided Members with further information on the 14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds, as had previously been requested by the Board. The report from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds had previously been submitted to Executive Board on 24th January 2007 for consideration.

Appended to the report for Members' information was an extract from the Review of 14-19 Provision in Leeds, which had been prepared by Cambridge Education in November 2006. A complete version of the Review had been circulated to Members for information prior to the meeting.

Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, and Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator, both of Education Leeds, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Having received an overview of the main points detailed within the report, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Sixth Forms

- Members raised concerns about the impact of the proposed **changes in Sixth form funding** from April 2008. They agreed with officers that there was an urgent need for a proactive plan to mitigate the effect of these changes and secure continuity of provision for young people;
- In particular, the Board emphasised the important role of smaller inner city Sixth Forms, stating that such environments had been very beneficial for young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds who may not have felt confident enough to attend a larger institution.

Proposed Rationalisation of the Further Education Estate

- Members asked how a proposed **centralised Further Education college** would operate in practice, and how such proposals would ensure that a wider provision of services was available to all young people residing throughout the city;
- The Board discussed the tension between the desire to **remove duplication** and the need to ensure an adequate range of **provision in local areas** for students to access;
- Concerns were raised over the ways in which the proposed rationalisation of Further Education provision would impact upon those residing on the outskirts of Leeds, in addition to those who were currently underachieving;
- Members made reference to the **Leeds Learner Entitlement**, enquired how the rationalisation of Further Education would enable 'access to the widest choice of learning pathways' and asked how attainable the vision for the Learner Entitlement was;
- The Board raised concerns over the effectiveness of a single Principal overseeing a large number of different sites.

Multi Agency Collaboration

- The Board stated that the joined up thinking which had been referred to as an outcome of the review was only evident within the realms of traditional education, and highlighted the need to ensure that a wide range of **facilities from various agencies** were fully utilised when providing education and training to 14-19 year olds, for example youth services, libraries and sports facilities. In response, the Board was advised that negotiations with the Youth Service were currently being undertaken to ensure that an extensive youth offer was developed;

- Members emphasised the importance of embedding a more co-ordinated and **multi-agency approach** when developing the revised provision, in order to ensure that the opportunities available to young people were maximised.

Service Provision for Students and Pupils

- The Board raised concerns over the provision of education and training for those young people with **special educational needs**, and the need to recognise that often they would transfer to higher level courses at a later stage than their peers. Members felt that the review needed to address their specific needs more explicitly;
- Members emphasised the need to develop young people's '**soft skills**' to equip them for adult life and work, and the need for future models of provision to adequately address this aspect of learning;
- The Board asked about the impact that the proposals would have upon those young people who were achieving average attainment levels in traditional subjects;
- Members raised concerns over the **long term costs to society** if the educational needs of **disaffected and disengaged young people** were not met;
- The Board emphasised the need to ensure that appropriate **transportation links** were established throughout the city which would assist all young people, including those residing in the outskirts of Leeds, to access appropriate provision. Members also emphasised the need to ensure that **co-operation with neighbouring Local Authorities** on this issue was undertaken.

Reorganisation Process

- Members were very concerned about the apparent **lack of consultation with young people** to date, and were also concerned to learn about the limited consultation requirements which would apply to the Learning and Skills Council's formal proposals for reorganisation;
- Having enquired whether the review of Further Education would lead to **redundancies**, Members were assured that redundancies would be avoided at all costs;
- Members highlighted the need to ensure that appropriate levels of support and resources were provided to all the institutions concerned by Education Leeds and the Learning and Skills Council, so that the **transition** could be managed successfully.

Green Paper 'Raising Achievement'

- Members were concerned that some families would face financial difficulty as a result of lost income if young people were required to stay in education until the age of 18 as proposed in the Green Paper. They felt that the financial support currently available to students and their families would need to be reviewed;
- Members referred to the provision of **apprenticeships** in Leeds, made enquiries into the level of training received, in addition to the financial incentives which currently existed for young people undertaking such programmes. In response, Members noted the ways in which

apprenticeships had developed in recent years, with reference being made to the revised funding arrangements which were now in place.

General Observations

- Reference was made to the proposals relating to a revised mechanism for monitoring **performance**, moving away from an institution based system. Members were advised that such proposals were aimed at ensuring that all young people in Leeds were encouraged to engage in Further Education, with the most appropriate curriculum being offered to each individual;
- The Board also recognised the importance of the ICT infrastructure and the development of Individual Learning Plans as a tool to help achieve the aims of the 14-19 review;
- Members were concerned about the implications of the review for the provision of **adult learning opportunities**;
- Members made reference to the currency of some of the statistics detailed within the Review. In response, Members noted that the next report which was intended to be submitted to Executive Board would provide a more up to date set of statistics.

In conclusion, the Board reiterated the major issues which had been discussed, and emphasised the need for future reports to include more operational and practical information on the **implementation of change**.

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

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to having three children currently undertaking Further Education and Mr E A Britten declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to being a Governor of Notre Dame Sixth Form College, which had featured within the report)

(Councillor J Lewis and Mr E A Britten both left the meeting during the consideration of this item at 11.25 a.m. and 11.55 a.m. respectively)

123 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 19th April 2007 at 9.30 a.m.
(Pre-Meeting scheduled for 9.00 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.)