

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 26TH JUNE, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, G Driver, R D Feldman,
J McKenna, K Renshaw and E Taylor

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr I Falkingham	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the first Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) meeting of the municipal year 2008/09.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations at this point, however declarations were made at later points in the meeting (Minute Nos. 6 and 7 refer).

3 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors J Elliott, B Lancaster and V Morgan and by Mr R Greaves and Mr T Hales.

4 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th April, 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

5 Co-options to the Board

Final minutes - Approved at the meeting
held on Thursday, 17th July, 2008

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 noted that Article 6 of the Council's Constitution required the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) to include both a Church of England and a Roman Catholic diocesan representative, together with three parent governor representatives as voting co-opted members of the Board.

Members also noted that each Scrutiny Board was permitted to appoint up to five non-voting co-opted members for the duration of the current municipal year. In addition, each Scrutiny Board could appoint up to two non-voting co-opted Members to assist with a particular scrutiny Inquiry.

The Chair highlighted the co-opted Members' significant contribution to the Board's work.

Members discussed the possibility of co-opting a young person onto the Board. They were advised that there was already an established Young Person's Scrutiny Forum. The Principal Scrutiny Adviser pointed out that it would be difficult for a young person involved in full-time education to attend Scrutiny Board meetings as currently scheduled. Members were reminded that the Board currently had a full quota of co-opted Members.

RESOLVED –

(a) 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 2008/09 be confirmed;

(b) That the continued appointment of Mr R Greaves (Parent Governor Representative - Secondary), Mr I Falkingham (Parent Governor Representative - Special) and Mrs S Knights (Parent Governor Representative - Primary) be noted;

(c) 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 Ms J Morris-Boam (Leeds VOICE Children and Young People Services Forum Representative) be appointed as non-voting co-opted members of the Board for 2008/09;

(d) That the option to co-opt a further two individuals for the duration of specific inquiries be noted; and

(e) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser report back on the possibility of co-opting a young person onto the Board.

6 Input to the Work Programme 2008/09 - Sources of Work and Establishing the Board's Priorities

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which provided information and guidance to assist the Board with developing its work programme for 2008/09.

A range of core information relevant to the Board's responsibilities was attached to the report to assist Members with identifying priorities for the coming year's work programme.

Councillor R Harker, Executive Member (Learning), Keith Burton, Deputy Director - Children's Services, John Maynard, Strategic Leader - Children's Services and Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive - Education Leeds, were all in attendance.

The Executive Member (Learning) thanked the Board for the work undertaken in 2007/08. It was reported that the authority was currently involved with a range of activities aimed at improving Children's Services.

The Deputy Director, Children's Services, provided the Board with an overview of the range of issues currently facing the Children's Services portfolio in Leeds.

The main highlighted points were:-

Strategy and Development

- Child poverty with a focus on Early Years Health Inequalities was high on the Government agenda.
- The 'Think Family' approach would involve joint working with Adult Social Services.
- The future of social care - focus was on prevention work, linked with 'Beyond Care Matters' and the changing role of social workers.
- The Education and Skills Bill - new powers to be introduced and changing role for the local authority.
- New Migrant Families - supporting young people to make transition with particular focus on vulnerable and under-performing groups.

Challenge

- Development of performance management, particularly focusing on high risk areas, including; young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), teenage pregnancy, attendance and roll out of 14-19 provision.

High Public Interest

- Primary Capital Programme - changes planned for primary infrastructure.
- Transport - emphasis on role of extended services and value for money.

- Persistent absence - improving attendance by encouraging greater parental involvement.

Continuous Monitoring

- Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) Review - draft review expected in January 2009.
- Internal Audit processes - outcomes arising from Inquiries into Services for 8-13 year olds and Education Standards.

Questions and comments were then invited and the main areas of discussion were:-

- How schools and families were being prepared for forthcoming changes to the benefits system.
- Various aspects of secondary and post-16 education and training.
- The Board discussed the possibility of undertaking an Inquiry in relation to teenage conceptions. The Chair advised that a working group had been set-up last year, which had recommended further work.
- The Board also discussed the Youth Service and data quality issues. The Board requested a copy of the action plan to address this problem.

The Chair then thanked the Executive Member (Learning) and officers for their attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

(Councillor K Renshaw declared a personal interest in this item due to being a Governor of Rodillian High School, Seven Hills Primary School and East Ardsley Primary School and also due to her employment as a Nursery Nurse.)

7 Determining the Work Programme for 2008/09

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report to assist the Board with determining its work programme for 2008/09.

Appended to the report was the inquiry selection criteria and an outline work programme.

Having considered the information detailed within agenda item 8, and having discussed relevant issues with the Executive Member (Learning) and Deputy Director, Children's Services, the Board was invited to consider formulating a draft work programme.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:-

- Members discussed receiving a summary of the work that had been undertaken to assist the Board with formulating its work programme.

- One Member suggested that some key areas could be linked together, e.g. young people's access to diplomas and reducing NEET.
- The Board considered looking into the role of voluntary and community sector providers and extended services clusters.
- One Member referred to the review of 14-19 provision. It was suggested that further work could be undertaken, focussing on young people with additional needs.

(Ms T Kayani declared a personal interest in this item as Chief Executive of a voluntary sector organisation.)

RESOLVED – That the Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser be requested to update and timetable the Board's work programme for 2008/09.

8 Dates of Future Meetings

RESOLVED – That the following dates be noted and approved:-

- Thursday 17th July, 2008
- Thursday 18th September, 2008
- Thursday 16th October, 2008
- Thursday 13th November, 2008
- Thursday 11th December, 2008
- Thursday 8th January, 2009
- Thursday 5th February, 2009
- Thursday 5th March, 2009
- Thursday 2nd April, 2009.

(The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.)