

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, G Driver, R D Feldman,
B Gettings, G Kirkland, K Renshaw, B Selby and
E Taylor

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)
Mr B Wanyonyi	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

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

45 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

46 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 late item, to agree the report arising from the Scrutiny Board's decision to refer back the called-in decision 'to award a contract for the delivery of Connexions Intensive Support Services – Wedge Based Services'. The report was not available at the time of agenda despatch, and in accordance with the Council's Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules, needed to be submitted to the decision maker within three working days of the meeting (Minute No. 51 refers).

47 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at this point, however declarations were made at later points in the meeting (Minute No. 52 refers).

48 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Lancaster and Co-opted Member Ms Kayani.

The Chair reported that Mr Falkingham had resigned as the Scrutiny Board's Parent Governor Representative (Special). Nominations were being invited for a replacement representative to serve on the Scrutiny Board.

49 Minutes - 17th September 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

50 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 30 – Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to forward a copy of the Executive Board report in relation to City of Leeds High School to Scrutiny Board Members.

51 Late Item - Report on Call-In of Delegated Decision - Ref: D35924

The Chair admitted to the agenda a late item which invited Members to approve the report arising from the Scrutiny Board's decision to refer back the called-in decision 'to award a contract for the delivery of Connexions Intensive Support Services – Wedge Based Services'.

RESOLVED – That the report arising from the Scrutiny Board's decision to refer back the called-in decision 'to award a contract for the delivery of Connexions Intensive Support Services – Wedge Based Services', be approved.

52 Scrutiny Inquiry - The impact of population growth on children's services in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the first formal session of the Board's Inquiry into the impact of population growth on children's services in Leeds.

The following organisations submitted information and evidence for the Board's consideration;

- Office for National Statistics;
- Local Government Association;
- School of Geography, University of Leeds;
- Education Leeds on behalf of Children's Services; and

- Leeds City Council, Business Transformation Team.

The following information was also provided;

- Agreed terms of reference - The impact of population growth on children's services in Leeds;
- Audit Commission briefing - 'Is there something I should know?'; and
- City and County of Swansea – 'Everybody Counts!' Scrutiny Report.

Representatives from a number of external organisations attended the meeting as follows;

- Guy Goodwin - Director, Population, Health and Regional Analysis, Office for National Statistics;
- Professor Tim Allen - Programme Director: Analysis and Research, Local Government Association; and
- Peter Boden - Centre for Spatial Analysis and Policy, School of Geography, University of Leeds.

In addition, the following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments;

- Jackie Green, Director of Strategic Planning, Education Leeds;
- George Turnbull, Head of Service – School Organisation, Education Leeds; and
- Arfan Hanif, Head of Strategy, Business Transformation Team.

The evidence which had been submitted was introduced and presented to the Board as follows:

Guy Goodwin, Office for National Statistics

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) employed a team of demographic experts focussing on a range of scenarios and uncertainties – it was reported that population estimates could be rolled forward years into the future.
- The reasons for population growth were due to a range of factors including:
 - International migration
 - Increases in natural growth associated with fertility rates.

Questions and comments were invited as follows:

- Concern about the impact of population growth on primary school places.
- The need to undertake work at a local level, e.g. exploring uncertainties around fertility rates.
- Using birth data to identify patterns at a national level.

- Increase in young mums, although some variances dependant on area.
- Challenges keeping track of specific groups.

Peter Boden, University of Leeds

- The need to develop local authority projections, particularly in terms of pupil numbers and the implications arising from this.

Questions and comments were invited as follows:

- Whether projections had a built in margin of error. It was advised that there was error in all methods used.

Professor Tim Allen, Local Government Association (LGA)

- Challenges in terms of migration and development of the e-borders system.
- Fertility rates highest since the late 1970's – some areas of Leeds experiencing rapid growth. Likelihood of characteristics to be explored.
- National Insurance registrations lower than average – indication that migration had slowed.
- Pressure on school places not unique to Leeds – difficulty tracking movement in and out of the area.

Questions and comments were invited as follows:

- Identifying housing and development trends, e.g. some areas with high levels of rented accommodation, etc.
- Sharing good practice, e.g. Sheffield Children's Profile Website.

Issues identified by officers:

- The importance of joined up working, particularly in relation to local developments.
- Challenges in terms of the lack of a complete dataset.
- School places and acknowledgement of acute pressure in certain parts of the city.
- The need to be more rigorous about local projections.

Members' questions and comments were invited and in brief summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The effect of the economic crisis on school numbers, e.g. parents opting to send their children to state schools instead of being privately educated.
- School provision across the city, local pressures and challenges in terms of surplus place arrangements, maximum class size, etc.
- Concern that there was an over reliance on birth data and the need to collate data from other sources.

- Reported increase in the number of primary and secondary school appeals.
- The need to develop a multi-agency approach and the role of technology.

The Chair thanked officers and external representatives for their attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED – That the issues raised at the first session of the Inquiry, be noted.

(Mrs Knights declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Chair of Governors at Little London Primary School).

(Councillor Renshaw declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Governor at Rodillian High School, Seven Hills Primary and East Ardsley Primary).

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.54 am, Councillor E Taylor at 12.15 pm, Mr Wanyonyi at 12.40 pm, Ms Morris-Boam at 12.43 pm and Councillors Driver, R F Feldman and Selby at 12.53 pm during the consideration of this item).

53 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the remainder of the current municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, an update on working group activity and an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October 2009 to 31st January 2010, which related to the Board's remit.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to provide Members with confirmation of future meeting dates and times for the Scrutiny Board's working groups.

RESOLVED – That subject to the comments raised at the meeting, the work programme be approved.

54 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 12th November 2009 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm).