

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 25TH MARCH, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, D Coupar, G Driver, B Gettings,
G Kirkland, B Lancaster, K Renshaw and B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms N Cox	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mr B Wanyonyi	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative

101 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

102 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda as supplementary information an update on the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST), which was to be considered as part of agenda item 9, Recommendation Tracking. (Minute No. 108 refers)

The Chair also admitted to the agenda as supplementary information the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions, which was to be considered as part of agenda item 11, Work Programme. (Minute No. 110 refers).

103 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Driver declared personal interests in agenda item 7, Children's Services Improvement Plan, and agenda item 8, Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan Update, in his capacity as Governor at Windmill Primary School. (Minute Nos. 106 and 107 refer)

Councillor Selby declared personal interests in agenda item 7, Children's Services Improvement Plan, and agenda item 8, Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan Update, in his capacity as Governor at Grange Farm Primary, Cross Gates Primary and the Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee. Also in his capacity as Member of the Parent Partnership Advisory Board. (Minute Nos. 106 and 107 refer)

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting. (Minute Nos. 106 and 107 refer)

104 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors R D Feldman and E Taylor and Co-opted Member, Ms T Kayani.

105 Minutes - 25th February 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

106 Children's Services Improvement Plan

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the Children's Services Improvement Plan, agreed by the Executive Board on 10th March 2010, as well as providing details of the Improvement Board, and the final Improvement Notice issued by the Secretary of State. Also included as background information was the quarter 3 performance report and the following appendices:

- **Appendix 1** – Action trackers from the Leeds Strategic Plan (and Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)) which were relevant to the Scrutiny Board; and
- **Appendix 2** – Performance indicator report containing quarter 3 results for all performance indicators reported in year from the Leeds Strategic Plan, CYPP indicators, National indicator set and any key local indicators which were relevant to the Scrutiny Board.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Bill McCarthy, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board and Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services).

The Chair also welcomed the following officers to the meeting:

- Eleanor Brazil, Interim Director of Children's Services; and
- Nicola Engel, Head of Performance, Policy and Improvement, Children's Services.

The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board provided a brief update on the work of the Improvement Board. It was reported that the Improvement

Board was established in the new year and to date had met 3 times. Significant progress had been made in ensuring that the scope of the improvement plan was comprehensive with appropriate focus on the main priority areas.

The following key areas were also discussed:

- An overview of some of the key themes of the improvement plan was provided. The main focus was around the need for operational improvement.
- Improvements in social care were dependent on effective multi-agency working. There was a need to ensure that all partners contributed fully.
- A new Children's Trust Board was being established in April in line with statutory guidelines. This Board will provide a strategic overview on outcomes for young people.
- Review of Local Safeguarding Children Board – the Board was to be re-established due to concerns about the level of robustness and the need for more senior representation.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Board and the main areas of discussion were:

- The Scrutiny Board's commitment to supporting the improvement work.
- Consultation with unions, particularly issues relating to staff workload and IT systems.
- Establishing support for managers on training and development issues.
- Improvement Board reporting arrangements – reports to the Children's Minister every 2 months.
- Leadership and governance arrangements – The Improvement Board would provide assurance that appropriate changes were being delivered. The intention was to disband within 18 months.
- Risks of operating paper based information systems and the need for clear accountability.
- Development of universal services for young people and reducing the need for targeted activity.
- Actions taken to address slippage in the improvement plan. Acknowledgement that the improvement plan was wide-ranging and the short-term focus was on the following key priority areas;
 - referral process into social care
 - young people identified in clusters and ensuring the right response.
- Investment in additional resources, particularly in relation to looked after children.
- Making best use of IT systems and further investment in administration resource to support social care workers.
- Need to bring together locality workers and tightening up on reporting arrangements.
- Concern about NEET and not known figures. The Head of Performance, Policy and Improvement, Children's Services, reported that there had been significant improvement in NEET figures recently.

- Identifying actions as part of taking forward emerging work of the Improvement Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board receives regular reports back on the work of the Improvement Board and School Improvement Plan.

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

107 Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan Update (March 2010)

As part of the process of receiving regular progress reports on the Council's Children and Young People's Plan, the Board considered a report submitted by the Director of Children's Services which included updates on two particular aspects of the Plan;

- The Children and Young People's Plan Priority of reducing teenage conceptions, with a particular focus on sex and relationships education in schools; and
- The strategic development area of new school arrangements.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the following information:

- Children's Trust Arrangements Consultation Document (Executive Summary)
- Summary of how Leeds was responding to 6 areas where particular action was being taken to drive up the quality of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in schools
- Summary of responsibilities and opportunities across governance models
- Table showing the current and emerging distribution of trust schools in the city.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services);
- Eleanor Brazil, Interim Director of Children's Services;

Teenage conceptions

- Paul Bollom, Priority Outcome Commissioner, Children's Services
- John Freeman, Head of Service, Health Initiatives and Well Being, Education Leeds

- Marilyn Raby, Healthy Schools Consultant, Primary SRE / PSHE, Education Leeds
- Pat Santin, Lead Consultant for Secondary PSHE, Education Leeds
- Keira Swift, Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator, Education Leeds

School arrangements

- Pat Toner, Director of Organisational Improvement, Education Leeds.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion relating to the two key priority areas were:

Teenage conceptions

- Concern about the relative effectiveness of different models of delivery in relation to PSHE (Personal Social Health Education), particularly SRE (Sex and Relationships Education).
- The benefits of involving health professionals, teenage parents, etc as part of PSHE programme.
- Development of 'speak easy' programme aimed at equipping parents with the right skills to talk about a range of PSHE issues.
- Development of work at primary and secondary phase and links with the youth service.
- Preventative work taking place across localities, particularly in areas with high rates of teenage conception.
- Role of Elected Members and Children's Champions.
- Concern that delivery of PSHE was fragmented. It was reported that a multi-stranded approach was the most effective.
- Concern that greater support was needed to assist primary schools.

School arrangements

- The responsibility of trusts, academies and federations to be part of children's services in Leeds.
- Establishment of trusts and transfer of admission arrangements.
- Clarification that the Council was a key partner to trusts.
- Concern about how the consultation process had been managed.
- Concern about changing practices, especially transfer of local authority control.
- Accountability arrangements under Freedom of Information.

RESOLVED – That the update report be received and noted.

(Councillor Coupar declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Governor at Corpus Christi Catholic College, Cockburn and Sharp Lane Primary School.)

(Ms N Cox declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Member of Garforth School Partnership Trust.)

(Councillor W Hyde declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as Governor at Colton Primary School.)

(Councillor Kirkland declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as Foundation Governor at Prince Henry Grammar School.)

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Governor and Vice-Chair at Carr Manor High School.)

(Councillor Gettings left the meeting at 11.32 am, Mr Wanyonyi at 11.45 am, Councillor Renshaw at 11.49 am and Councillor Kirkland at 12.28 pm, during the consideration of this item.)

108 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of Children's Services scrutiny recommendations.

Appended to the report was the recommendation tracking flowchart and draft status of recommendations.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Board approves the status of recommendations, subject to further inquiries in relation to staffing issues as part of recommendation 5 on the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST).

109 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Statement - Attendance

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's work on school attendance.

It was agreed to obtain clarification for Members on the work of Attendance Advisors, funding arrangements and how the posts were allocated.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board's final report and recommendations be approved; and
- (b) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports.

110 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 together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 10th March 2010.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be approved.

111 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 22nd April 2010 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm.)