

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

MONDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors M Coulson, G Driver, B Gettings, W Hyde,
A Lamb, B Lancaster, P Latty, J Lewis, K Maqsood,
V Morgan and B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr J Granger	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

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

31 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the September meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), particularly Councillor Morgan to her first meeting of the Scrutiny Board, since her recent appointment at Council.

32 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda an updated Fostering Inspection Action Plan, to be considered as part of agenda item 10. (Minute No. 39 refers)

33 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest at this stage, however, declarations were made at later points in the meeting. (Minute Nos. 36, 37 and 40 refer.)

34 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Professor Gosden, Mrs S Hutchinson, Ms C Johnson, Ms J Morris-Boam and Mr B Wanyonyi.

35 Minutes - 16th July 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July be confirmed as a correct record.

36 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 17 – Performance Report Year End 2009/10 and Children's Services Improvement Plan – Monitoring Report

Minutes approved as a correct record at the meeting held on Thursday, 21st October, 2010

One Member referred to the increase in swimming visits from people aged 16 and under, which it was noted had increased by 43% across the city. The Scrutiny Board briefly discussed the benefits of free swimming, particularly in relation to work undertaken to tackle obesity.

(Councillor Selby declared a personal interest in this item as a user of local swimming facilities.)

37 Children's Services Improvement Plan - monitoring report / Performance Report 2010/11 - Quarter 1

The Scrutiny Board agreed to jointly consider agenda item 7, Children's Services Improvement Plan – monitoring report, and agenda item 8, Performance Report 2010/11 – Quarter 1.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Bill McCarthy, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board, and the following Executive Members and officers:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Councillor Dowson, Executive Member (Learning)
- Eleanor Brazil, Interim Director of Children's Services
- Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care.

The Independent Chair of the Improvement Board provided a brief update on the work of the Improvement Board as follows:

The Improvement Board was maintaining an overview of 5 key areas:

- consistency of practice, particularly focussing on training and development programmes
- partner relations – more practical work to be undertaken
- delivering improvements on a sustainable basis – ensuring correct processes and procedures were in place
- recognition of changes in officer leadership and the impact on progress made to date
- economic climate – difficult financial decisions to be made.

On behalf of the Scrutiny Board, the Chair thanked Eleanor Brazil, for her hard work and positive contribution as Interim Director of Children's Services. It was reported that her replacement, Nigel Richardson, was due to start work on 30th September.

The Chief Executive of Education Leeds provided a brief update on exam results as follows:

- positive outcomes at foundation and Key Stage 2
- primary – good progress being made in literacy and numeracy

- secondary – 5% increase in provisional 5 A*-C including English and Maths GCSE results – 9% increase in 5 A*-C grades or equivalent
- improvements in relation to Key Stage 5 (A-levels), looked after children and ethnic minorities
- challenges remained around persistent absenteeism.

The Chair then invited questions and comments from the Scrutiny Board and the key areas of discussion were:

- The benefits of 1-2-1 tuition and developing local working arrangements, particularly in supporting vulnerable young people.
- New multi-agency arrangements being established to formalise arrangements and strengthen provision.
- Update provided on social care recruitment and the positive impact of recently appointed advanced practitioners.
- Recognition of the need for further improvements at the 25 primary schools still below Key Stage 2 floor targets and prioritising work with families.
- Success of the National Strategy Programme and family support strategies.
- Concern about the three red areas in the Improvement Plan relating to child protection. The Scrutiny Board was informed that in relation to the delivery of child protection conferences, 5 conference chairs had been appointed. A review of child protection arrangements was also taking place.
- The types of support available to parents, particularly in relation to tackling persistent absenteeism and the range of strategies and interventions in place.
- Concern about the level of consultation with unions and staff representatives regarding the transformation programme. The Interim Director of Children's Services reported that discussions had taken place with Joint Consultative Committees about the potential impact of the changes. Further information was being made available in October and November.
- Support for robust monitoring of work taking place on the ground.
- Work being undertaken with SILC's, outreach work, etc to improve special educational need provision. The recent Ofsted national report on SEN was referred to.

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

(Councillor W Hyde joined the meeting at 10.15 am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in this item as LEA Governor at Carr Manor High School.)

38 Children's Services Update (September 2010)

The Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated the Board on key developments across Children's Services.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Councillor Dowson, Executive Member (Learning)
- Eleanor Brazil, Interim Director of Children's Services
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care
- John Kearsley, Chief Officer, Resources and Strategy.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:

- Managing the effect of in-year budget reductions (area based grant reduction of £5.2m)
- Social care expenditure particularly in relation to placement. Actions being taken to address this were as follows:
 - robust action plan around child placements
 - improvements to in-house services
 - identified need for more robust contract arrangements.
- Improvements to leadership and accountability arrangements.
- Clarification regarding membership of the Children's Services Programme Board. The Scrutiny Board was informed that membership comprised senior representation from children's services, NHS, police, heads of primary (Queensway) and secondary schools (Ralph Thoresby).

RESOLVED – That the update report be received and noted.

39 Fostering Inspection Report

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested the Scrutiny Board to consider the fostering inspection report's findings and the action plan produced in response to the recommendations.

Appended to the report was the following information:

- Scrutiny Board – Fostering Inspection Plan (August 2010)
- Leeds City Council Fostering Service – Ofsted Inspection Report.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Eleanor Brazil, Interim Director of Children's Services
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care

- Sue May, Head of Looked After Children
- Sarah Johal, Service Delivery Manager – Fostering Adoption and Family placement.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Members welcomed the positive assessment of LCC fostering service and congratulated staff involved.
- Clarification that additional independent members were being recruited to serve on fostering panels.
- Identifying new ways of recruiting foster carers.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the inspection report's findings and response to the recommendations be noted and that staff be congratulated; and
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board receive 6 monthly update reports to assist in monitoring progress against the inspection report and action plan, as well as the success of recruitment initiatives.

(Mr T Britten and Ms C Foote left the meeting at 11.40 am during the consideration of this item.)

40 Request for Scrutiny - Connexions

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited the Board to consider a request for scrutiny relating to the future of the Connexions service and the potential impact on young people.

A copy of the request for Scrutiny was appended to the report for Members' information.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Dave Ferris and Josie Hoy, Connexions Leeds Unison Stewards, to present the request for scrutiny and respond to Members' questions and comments, and John Paxton, Head of Integrated Youth Support Services, to respond to the request.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Concern about the reduction in area based grants and the potential impact on the employment of connexions staff and on services for young people. The Scrutiny Board was informed that a report on grant reductions had been submitted to the Executive Board.
- Discussions had taken place with Prospects and igen about the proposed cuts to services and transferring some universal responsibilities to schools.

RESOLVED – That the request for scrutiny, insofar as it related to the potential impact on young people's employment prospects, be considered as

part of the Scrutiny Board's overall work programme when the Board considers a second major inquiry for the year.

(Councillor Lamb declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as a Regional Board Member of the Prince's Trust.)

(Councillor J Lewis left the meeting at 12.15 pm at the conclusion of this item.)

41 Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030 - progress with development and next steps

The Scrutiny Board received a report from Leeds Initiative which provided an update on work undertaken to date to develop a new Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a copy of the consultation document 'What if Leeds ...', consultation and communication plans for the Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030, together with a consultation timetable.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Martin Dean, Head of Leeds Initiative, and Jenny Hill, Project Officer, to present the report. Officers provided detailed information on the consultations being carried out with children and young people.

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

42 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of recommendations from previous scrutiny inquiries.

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

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Services for 8-13 year olds (recommendation 9) – stop monitoring. This recommendation is no longer achievable.
- Entering the Education System (recommendation 2) – sign off as achieved.
- Entering the Education System (recommendation 8) – continue to monitor, as single funding formula not in place yet.
- Safeguarding Interim Report (recommendation 1) – continue to monitor.
- Meadowfield Primary School (recommendation 1) – continue to monitor until new complaints arrangements in place.

- Meadowfield Primary School (recommendation 4) – continue to monitor pending confirmation that all work is completed.
- Meadowfield Primary School (recommendation 5) – continue to monitor until benchmarking complete.
- Attendance Strategy (recommendation 1) – good example from West, but continue to monitor until all areas have targets in place.
- Attendance Strategy (recommendation 2) – continue to monitor until extended leave policy completed.
- Attendance Strategy (recommendation 4) – continue to monitor pending confirmation that all schools have a named governor for attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
 (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

43 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 extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st September to 31st December 2010, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meetings held on 21st July, 16th August and 25th August 2010.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- Due to national funding issues, the Scrutiny Board agreed to suspend the work of the Youth Services Commissioning Framework working group and replace it with the School Balances working group.
- Service Redesign – volunteers sought for programme of visits. The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to e-mail the Scrutiny Board with suggested dates.
- Leeds Strategic Plan report no longer being submitted to October Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the work programme as amended be approved.

44 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 21st October 2010 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.28 pm.)

Minutes approved as a correct record at the meeting held on Thursday, 21st October, 2010