

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 23RD JUNE, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors R Charlwood, G Driver,
P Ewens, A Khan, A Lamb, P Latty,
K Maqsood, M Rafique and K Renshaw.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Professor P H J H Gosden – Church Representative (Church of England)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Ms C Johnson – Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative
Ms A Choudhry – Leeds VOICE Children and Young People Services Forum
Representative

1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the first Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) meeting of the new municipal year and invited everyone present to introduce themselves.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor B Gettings; and Co-opted Members, Mr E A Britten, Ms N Cox and Ms T Kayani.

4 Minutes - 19th May 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2011 be approved as a correct record.

5 Appointment of Co-opted Members

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which sought Members' approval for the appointment of co-opted members to the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That Professor P H J H Gosden (Church Representative - Church of England) and Mr E A Britten (Church Representative - Roman Catholic) be re-appointed as voting co-opted members of the Scrutiny Board for 2011/12
- (b) That the continued appointment of Ms J Ward (Parent Governor Representative - Secondary) and Ms N Cox (Parent Governor Representative - Special), be noted
- (c) That the election process currently taking place for the vacant position of Primary Parent Governor Representative, be noted
- (d) That Ms C Foote and Ms C Johnson (Teacher Representatives), Mrs S Hutchinson (Early Years Representative), Ms T Kayani (Youth Work Partnership Representative) and Ms A Choudhry (Leeds VOICE Children and Young People Services Forum Representative) be appointed as non-voting co-opted members of the Scrutiny Board for 2011/12.

6 Changes to the Council's Constitution in relation to Scrutiny

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided the Board with information on recent amendments to the Council's Constitution, as agreed by Council on 26th May 2011, which directly related to and/or impacted on the work of Scrutiny Boards.

RESOLVED – That the amendments to the Council's Constitution as outlined in the report, be noted.

7 Sources of work and areas of priority for the Scrutiny Board

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which provided information and guidance on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Scrutiny Board's terms of reference.

Relevant information was attached to the report to assist Members as follows:

- Terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)
- An extract of the draft City Priority Plan 2011-15 relevant to the Scrutiny Board's terms of reference
- Minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 18th May 2011
- An extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1 July 2011 to 31 October 2011

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services) and Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services:

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- A focus on 3 'obsessions' in the Children and Young People's Plan which impacted on children's life choices:
 - Reducing the numbers of looked after children
 - Improving attendance

- Increasing the number of young people in education, training and employment.
- The outcomes based accountability approach being adopted
- Establishing effective partnership arrangements to ensure all agencies were working together.
- Concern about the current economic climate and the impact on families, potentially resulting in more looked after children.
- Development of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and support for agencies in how to apply them.
- Concerns about fragmentation of services – reports of academies charging LEA schools for specialist provision.

The Scrutiny Board was invited to suggest other potential areas for scrutiny and the following issues were raised:

- Review of admissions policy
- Bullying and the impact on attainment
- Developing a city wide response to changes in school provision.

RESOLVED –That the report and contributions made during the discussion be taken into account when the Board is finalising its work programme and deciding its priorities.

8 Green Paper - Support and aspiration; a new approach to special educational needs and disability

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the recent government Green Paper on special educational needs and disability and invited the Board to contribute views to the corporate response to this government consultation.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader – Performance, Children's Services
- Andrea Robinson, Children's Services.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Confirmation that Chairs of Governors, head teachers of schools with specialist provision and the voluntary sector had been consulted in developing the council's response to the Green Paper.
- Concern for families with more complex support needs, particularly that the most vulnerable in society will be left behind.
- Concern about proposed funding arrangements impacting on the flexibility of schools to deliver services.
- The need to establish a single point of contact for parents.

- Concern about issues of affordability, particularly if parents were able to supplement their personal budgets.
- Members encouraged Ms Foote to submit her extensive comments as an individual response to the Green Paper

RESOLVED –

(a) That a summary of Members' comments be produced by the Principal Scrutiny Advisor and agreed by email circulation, for submission to Children's Services as a contribution to developing the council's response to the Green Paper.

(b) That a copy of the final response submitted by the council be circulated to Board members for information.

9 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

A draft work schedule was appended to the report for Members' consideration.

Further to earlier discussion, the following key areas were highlighted:

Inquiries set by the Council

- Reducing the numbers of looked after children
- Improving attendance
- Increasing the number of young people in education, training and employment.

The Scrutiny Board agreed to continue the cross-party working group on the review of the Children's Social Care Record System. Councillor Renshaw was added to membership of this group to replace Councillor James Lewis.

Members discussed establishing further working groups throughout the year as and when required. To assist with this process it was agreed to receive an update at the next meeting on key issues within Children's Services.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted

(b) That the Principal Scrutiny Adviser produces an updated work schedule to be confirmed at the next Scrutiny Board meeting.

10 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The Chair reported that the meeting date in December may be subject to change.

RESOLVED – That the following dates be noted and approved:

- 23 June 2011
- 21 July 2011
- 8 September 2011
- 6 October 2011
- 10 November 2011
- 8 December 2011 (provisional)
- 12 January 2012
- 9 February 2012
- 15 March 2012
- 26 April 2012

All at 9.45am (Pre-Meetings at 9.15am).

(The meeting concluded at 11.53 am.)