

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 26TH JULY, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors C Gruen, A Hussain, A Khan,
P Latty, M Rafique, K Renshaw and B Urry

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Ms N Cox – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative

Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative

Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative

Ms J Morris-Boam – Young Lives Leeds

23 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the July meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families).

24 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

25 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Gettings, Lamb and Sobel and Co-opted Member, Ms A Craven.

26 Minutes - 20th June 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2012 be approved as a correct record.

27 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Academy status

The Chair sought clarification about recent publicity in the local media regarding 34 schools in Leeds converting to academy status, according to a Department of Education source. The Department of Education advised that they had no knowledge of the article. The Deputy Director (Learning, Skills and Universal Services) informed the Scrutiny Board that the article may have been linked to the Secretary of State's commitment to acceleration of the

academy programme, which was highlighted in a recent ministerial speech, although no schools in Leeds were specifically mentioned.

John Smeaton Community College

The Chair requested an update about the need for rapid improvements at John Smeaton Community College, since the announcement that the school had fallen into special measures. The Scrutiny Board was advised that the school was in the process of converting to academy status and United Learning Trust was likely to be approved as sponsor. Arrangements were currently in place to appoint a new headteacher. It was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information in due course.

(Councillor Khan left the meeting at 10.00am during the consideration of this item.)

28 Children's Services Budget Update - 2012-13 (First quarter report)

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented an update on the Children's Services revenue budget for the 2012-13 financial year.

Appended to the report was a detailed analysis of individual service areas.

The following Executive Member and officer attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Neil Warren, Head of Finance, Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

29 Children's Homes Review

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided an update on progress with the review of Leeds City Council children's homes.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services)
- John Bywater, Principal Finance Manager, Children's Services.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Clarification that a 12-18 month improvement programme was anticipated in relation to children's home provision.
- The benefits of family group conferencing.

- Joint working undertaken with health professionals to meet the needs of children affected by autism and development of in-house provision. It was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information about these developments.
- The role of the Corporate Parenting Group in relation to children's home provision.
- Concerns about the number of looked after children aged 1 and under, particularly challenges linked to parents suffering from mental health issues, drug and alcohol misuse.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

30 Recommendation Tracking - External Placements Inquiry

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of recommendations in relation to the scrutiny review of external placements published on 28th February 2012.

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

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director – Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 2 – achieved. Next report due January 2013
- Recommendation 3 – achieved. Projected savings not achieved due to reasons stated in the report
- Recommendation 4 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 5 – achieved
- Recommendation 6 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 7 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 8 – achieved
- Recommendation 9 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 10 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 11 – achieved
- Recommendation 12 – achieved.

In relation to the project strand, 'edge of care / exit from care' it was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with updates regarding the expansion of family group conferencing and ongoing work to develop Cramner Bank. It was also agreed to provide an updated version of the Looked After Children (LAC) obsession programme plan with the next recommendation tracking report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

31 Directors Response - Scrutiny Inquiry into Improving Attendance

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented his response to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Inquiry into Improving Attendance.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Jancis Andrew, Head of Service (Attendance Strategy)

The main points of discussion were:

- There was a need to develop greater partnership working in relation to co-ordination of planned school closure dates for holiday periods, teacher training days and religious festivals.
- Confirmation that advice from other local authorities was that zero tolerance policies were unlawful and could expose schools and the local authority to legal challenge.
- Further information to be submitted to the Scrutiny Board about development of the pathfinder approach.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the response to the recommendations be noted
- (b) That recommendation 9 be agreed by the Director of Children's Services.

(Councillor Khan rejoined the meeting at 11.30am during the consideration of this item.)

32 Directors Response - Scrutiny Inquiry into Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented his response to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Inquiry into Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Early Years Service
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnership, Development and Business Support).

The key areas of discussion were:

- Updated guidance on child poverty to be forwarded to the Scrutiny Board Child Poverty Working Group.
- Concerns about the stigma attached to children receiving free school meals and the need to ensure that initiatives were in place to overcome this.

RESOLVED – That the response to the recommendations be noted.

(Celia Foote left the meeting at 11.55am during the consideration of this item.)

33 Directors Response - Scrutiny Inquiry into Services for Children with Disabilities, Special Educational Needs and Additional Health Needs

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented his response to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Inquiry into Services for Children with Disabilities, Special Educational Needs and Additional Health Needs.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director – Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services
- Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader – Performance, Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the response to the recommendations be noted.

34 The Sustainable Economy and Culture inquiry report into the Engagement of Young People in Culture, Sporting and Recreational Activities and the Directors response

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented information to inform the Scrutiny Board about the recommendations made by the Sustainable Economy and Culture Board in April 2012 and the subsequent Director's response.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Report of the Director of City Development and Director of Children's Services to the Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) on 12th July 2012
- Scrutiny Inquiry Report – The Engagement of Young People in Culture, Sporting and Recreational Activities on 19th April 2012.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Catherine Blanshard, Chief Officer (Libraries, Arts and Heritage).

The key points of discussion were:

- Concern about cuts to the free swimming programme, particularly the impact on young people.
- The benefits of developing links with the voluntary sector to provide free swimming sessions, especially during quieter periods.
- Utilising PFI school, academies and school trust provision. Children's Services agreed to provide further information about this.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and the Director's response be noted
- (b) That future tracking information considered by the Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) be delegated to the Youth Services Working Group (a working group of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)).

(Councillor Urry and Co-opted Member, Ms Cox, left the meeting at 12.05pm during the consideration of this item.)

(Ms Kayani left the meeting at 12.25pm at the conclusion of this item.)

35 Terms of Reference - Inquiry into Private Care Homes

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to agree terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Private Care Homes.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor, Sandra Newbould, presented the report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Private Care Homes, be approved

Minutes approved as a correct record at the meeting held on Thursday, 23rd August, 2012

(b) That the terms of reference be subject to amendment where necessary, including incorporation of additional information should the Scrutiny Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witnesses or evidence.

36 Terms of Reference - Inquiry into Private Fostering

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to agree terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Private Foster Care.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor, Sandra Newbould, presented the report.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into Private Foster Care, be approved

(b) That the terms of reference be subject to amendment where necessary, including incorporation of additional information should the Scrutiny Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witnesses or evidence.

37 Work Schedule

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

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 20th June 2012, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st August 2012 to 30th November 2012.

Members noted various requests for further information that were raised at the meeting, which it was agreed to forward to the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be approved.

38 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 23rd August 2012 at 9.45am with a Pre Meeting for Board Members at 9.15am

(The meeting concluded at 12.32pm.)