

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)**

**THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors D Cohen, C Gruen, M Iqbal,  
P Latty, A Ogilvie, K Renshaw and B Selby

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)  
Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)  
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)  
Ms J Hazelgrave – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)**

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative  
Ms M Owen – Teacher Representative  
Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative  
Ms C Hopkins – Young Lives Leeds

#### **86 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents**

#### **87 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

#### **88 Late Items**

The following late information was submitted to the Board:

- Agenda item 8 – Reception Allocations for September 2018

The above information was not available at the time of agenda dispatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

#### **89 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared at the meeting.

#### **90 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors J Elliot, J Akhtar and N Dawson.

#### **91 Minutes - 15 March 2018**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

**92 Scrutiny Inquiry - The impact of Child Poverty on Achievement, Attainment and Attendance - Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report**

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented the draft inquiry report into the impact of child poverty on achievement, attainment and attendance.

The following were in attendance:

- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member for Children and Families
- Andrew Eastwood, Chief Officer for Learning Improvement
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- David Roberts, Financial Inclusion Manager

The Director of Children and Families was invited to provide advice to the Board prior to agreeing the report. He welcomed the inquiry report and recommendations, with no further advice to the Board.

The key areas of discussion were:

- An acknowledgement of the need for partnership working across the Council, but also with external partners such as the Child Friendly Leeds (CFL) Ambassadors and the universities. The Board were informed of CFL Ambassadors generous contributions to the holiday hunger programmes taking place in the city.
- Concerns around the reduced resources in Leeds to support education and deliver the desired outcomes from the inquiry and wider educational aspirations.
- The need for specific considerations to be made in further work to address child poverty, in relation to the impact of poor quality private rented sector housing on educational outcomes.

Following discussion, the Board requested a further recommendation to be included regarding the negative impact of poor or overcrowded housing on educational attainment, achievement and school attendance.

**RESOLVED -**

- a) That an additional recommendation, to the Director of Children and Families and the Director of Resources and Housing, be included in the inquiry report.
- b) That subject to the inclusion of an additional recommendation, the draft scrutiny inquiry report be approved, and the Board defer approval for the final wording of the additional recommendation to the Scrutiny Chair.

- c) That a formal response from the Director of Children and Families be scheduled into the work programme for consideration in the next three months.

### **93 Learning Places for Leeds Overview**

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which summarised the work undertaken to ensure the Council's statutory duty to provide sufficient learning places is met. The report also outlined the challenges to overcome in the future.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Harehills Situation
- Secondary 2018 Allocations
- Leeds Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2018-2019
- Reception Allocations for September 2018 – minute 88 refers
- Roundhay Primary Places

The following were in attendance:

- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member for Children and Families
- Andrew Eastwood, Chief Officer for Learning Improvement
- Viv Buckland, Head of Learning Systems
- Richard Amos, Partnership Team Senior Manager
- Rebecca McCormack, Lead for Admissions and Family Information

In introducing the report, the Head of Learning Systems outlined the significant increase in birth rate for the city since 2010 and the complexity of predicting future school places.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The requirement for the local authority to provide sufficient school places not to fulfil parental preferences.
- The prevalence of renting properties to gain a place at a preferred school, and then vacating the property. Members were concerned that this may disadvantage families who live in the area. Officers confirmed that they were aware of the problem, and have a number of strategies in place to investigate suspected cases, which can lead to withdrawal of school places.
- The impact of children from the same family attending a number of different schools, particularly on working parents who rely on public transport. Officers confirmed that the sibling rule exists to ensure children from the same family attend the same school, but unfortunately cannot always be applied, particularly when families move in year.

- Members sought clarification of the long term approach to providing adequate school places in the Roundhay and Harehills areas. Officers explained the process as a partnership through consultation with housing and health colleagues, along with birth rate and migration analysis. The Board resolved to propose a working group in the next municipal year which would focus on areas with significant and growing pressures for school places.
- The lack of control over academy and free school place allocations as these admitting authorities are not under the control of the council, and the challenges this presents when school places are urgently required.
- Members sought clarification around the circumstances in which school places are automatically allocated, and the potential for those families to be given priority for desired schools via school waiting lists. Officers explained that the five preferences that parents provide do not always include the nearest school, and can often be influenced by current popularity of schools. The Board were also informed that the School Admissions Code sets out that those who are automatically allocated schools cannot be treated favourably, in terms of school waiting lists.
- The lack of available land to build permanent school provision, and the prevalence of this issue both locally and nationally. Members were informed of ongoing conversations regarding transfers of assets from other government organisations. The Board agreed to write to the Local Government Association (LGA) to highlight the necessity for government owned land, such as NHS land, to be utilised for school provision in areas where places are needed.
- Take-up of funded Early Years provision across the city. Members were informed that funded places are more commonly utilised by working parents seeking childcare, and of the challenges of engaging non-working parents.
- Modelling of school catchment areas. The Board requested information on future developments in this area as it evolves.
- The advice provided to parents around choosing their five preferable schools. Members were assured that parents are encouraged to preference their closest school, and are provided with the likelihood of gaining a place at that school. The Board requested the 'invitation to apply' letter to be circulated to all Members.

## **RESOLVED -**

- a) That a letter be written to the LGA on behalf of the Board,
- b) That consideration be made by the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) to undertake a working group in the next municipal year which will focus on areas with significant and growing pressures for school places.
- c) That the information requested be circulated to the Board.
- d) That the contents of the report and comments made during discussion, be noted.

## **94 Springwell Leeds - Specialist Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Provision**

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided an update on the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) services in Leeds, with particular reference to the partnership work with the Wellspring Academy Trust.

The following were in attendance:

- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member for Children and Families
- Andrew Eastwood, Chief Officer for Learning Improvement
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health

The key areas of discussion were:

- Clarity about working arrangement and health and safety of staff within SEMH provision, and the impact on the safeguarding of children. Officers were aware of the issue and assured Members of the strong relationship between the Learning Improvement Team and the Wellspring Academy Trust.
- Members sought clarity around the historical performance of the Wellspring Academy Trust and were informed of recent research which presented the Trust as an example of good practice for their provision in Barnsley. Members were also informed that the Wellspring Academy Trust are considered to perform well with most of their current schools across the north of the country which is reflected in their OfSTED inspections.
- Members sought clarity as to whether school places were available to those outside of the local authority boundaries, and were informed that provision is exclusive to children from Leeds.
- Members sought clarity regarding the continual focus on the quality of support provided by Springwell Academy for SEMH children. The Board were advised that this was continually assessed.
- The Board sought reassurance that the school could not be selective with regard to admissions and were advised that this was not the case.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report and comments made during discussion, be noted.

## **95 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held in June 2018. Precise date and time to be confirmed.

## **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

The Chair conveyed her thanks to all the Members of the Scrutiny Board for their commitment and hard work throughout the 2017/18 municipal year. The

Chair also conveyed her thanks on behalf of the Scrutiny Board to officers for their ongoing commitment and dedication to improving the lives of children and young people, and to those who have responded to the Boards requests for information during this municipal year. The Board also thanked Andrew Eastwood and wished him well in his retirement.

The Scrutiny Board and the Director of Children's Services in response thanked Cllr Bentley as the retiring Chair of the Scrutiny Board for her hard work and rigorous challenge during her time as Chair.