

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, N Dawson, C Dobson,
J Elliott, S Field, M Iqbal, A Lamb, P Latty
and K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms L Nichols – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Mrs J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Ms J Hazelgrave – Parent Governor Representative (SEN)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative
Ms C Hopkins – Young Lives Leeds
Ms C Bewsher – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

21 Late Items

There were no late items.

22 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

23 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor C Gruen and Co-opted Members, Ms C Foote, Mr A Graham and Ms K Jan.

24 Minutes - 21 July 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

25 Matters arising from the minutes

The Board was advised that Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services was retiring from the Council at the end of September 2016. Members thanked Nigel for his hard work and positive contribution to Leeds Children's Services and wished him all the best for the future.

26 Co-opted Membership of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

The Head of Scrutiny submitted a report which sought the Board's formal consideration for the appointment of a voluntary sector representative (Young

Lives Leeds) and provided an update regarding the election of the Parent Governor Representative (Primary).

RESOLVED –

- (a) That Claire Hopkins be appointed as Young Lives Leeds Representative on the Board for the remainder of the 2016/17 municipal year.
- (b) That the Board notes the election of Louise Nichols as Parent Governor Representative (Primary) on the Board for a term of 4 years.

27 Increasing the Number of Young People in Employment Education or Training

The Head of Scrutiny submitted a report which presented information following the Board's Inquiry into 'Increasing the Number of Young People in Employment Education or Training' published on 14 March 2013.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications
- An update on progress in relation to Increasing the Number of Young People in Employment, Education or Training
- NEET Scrutiny Report 2016 – Data tables.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Mohammed Rafique, Executive Member (Employment, Enterprise and Opportunity)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Services (Learning for Life)
- Sally Lowe, Partnership Manager 14-19.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Progress made to reduce the number of people who had been NEET since September 2015.
- The reporting changes from September 2016 onwards. Concern about tracking of 18 and 19 year olds – clarification was sought to identify who was supporting this age range and ensuring they were work ready. The Board was advised that local tracking would still be undertaken. Community Hubs may provide an opportunity to provide better support.
- Concern about the lack of quality work experience opportunities or mentoring and that work experience was no longer a statutory

responsibility for schools. It was advised that post-16 students were still expected to undertake work experience or some form of work-related training. The Board was advised about work being undertaken with young people as part of the better jobs breakthrough project. In addition, a report was being submitted to Executive Board (September) which outlined engagement activity with employers.

- The way that young people in Leeds accessed IAG. The Board was advised about the Leeds Pathways website – a useful on-line tool which provided information about jobs and skills.
- Clarification sought about specific programmes that raised awareness about employment in primary schools. The Board discussed possible development of Leeds Pathways links for programmes at primary level that schools could link into.
- Recognition of the good work being done across the city and concern that not all school clusters and governing bodies had been made aware about programmes aimed at reducing the risk of NEET. The Board emphasised the importance of sharing information and good practice.
- Raising aspiration of parents and the information, support and events that had been put in place.
- An acknowledgement of the issues in relation to children's mental health linked to NEET.
- The need for greater engagement with small businesses. It was suggested that small businesses be encouraged to provide opportunities for work experience and potentially visit schools to provide advice.
- The challenge of reducing sustained / complex NEET.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 6 – Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 7 – Achieved
- Recommendation 10 – Achieved
- Recommendation 11 – Achieved.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board notes the contents of the report
- (b) That the above status of recommendations be approved.

(Councillor J Akhtar left the meeting at 10.35am during this item)

28 Draft Terms of Reference - Inquiry into Children's Centres

The Head of Scrutiny submitted a report which presented draft terms of reference for the Board's Inquiry into Children's Centres.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Services (Learning for Life).

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the terms of reference for the Board's Inquiry into Children's Centres, be approved.
- (b) That the Board notes that the terms of reference may incorporate additional information during the inquiry should the Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witnesses or evidence.

29 Children's Services 2016/17 budget

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services submitted a joint report which presented information in the context of the reported projected overspend for the Children's Services 2016/17 budget and provided an update on the latest financial position in relation to Children's Services and whether future budgets could be done differently.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Alan Gay, Deputy Chief Executive
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance (Children's Services Finance)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding Specialist and Targeted Services).

The key areas of discussion were:

- The principles behind setting the children's services budget and the assumptions made regarding external pressures.
- The need for financial constraints and discipline particularly when the whole council was facing significant budget challenges.
- Maintaining successful strategies which were becoming increasingly difficult as budgets decreased.
- Concern regarding predicted overspend at this stage in the financial year. To provide context to risk the Board was advised that this

represented about half a percent of the Council's overall budget which was a small margin.

- The significant need for early investment and intervention to deliver longer term savings. The Board considered the financial challenges facing the Council, particularly in terms of balancing financial pressures across key service areas.
- The improvement of outcomes with a reducing budget, continuing to build on partnerships and seeking additional external funding.
- That future budget reports distinguished demand led and the core budget.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(Councillor M Iqbal left the meeting at 11.45am during this item.)

30 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Request for Scrutiny – School transport for children in East Keswick and Bardsey
- Extracts of relevant ombudsman cases investigated in relation to school transport
- Report to Executive Board dated 22 June 2016 – Children's Transport Changes – deputation to Full council
- Extract of minutes from Executive Board meeting on 22 June 2016
- Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) work schedule for 2016/17
- Minutes of Executive Board meeting on 27 July 2016.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnership Development and Business Support)
- John Bradshaw, Programme Manager, Children's Services.

In relation to the request for scrutiny, the key areas of discussion were:

- The existing forums already had oversight of the issue raised in the request for scrutiny, including the Local Government Ombudsman.
- The mitigation of risk to prevent similar situations arising in the future.

- The opportunity already provided to raise their concerns to Elected Members of Council via a deputation and via the formal complaints procedure, appeal and ultimately the Local Authority Ombudsman.
- Current commitments in the Board's work programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board would not adopt the request for scrutiny regarding school transport for children in East Keswick and Bardsey into the work programme.
- (b) That the Board's work schedule be approved.

31 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 13 October 2016 at 9.45am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.55pm)