

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 2017

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, D Cohen,
R Grahame, M Harland, P Latty, D Ragan,
K Renshaw and B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Ms J Hazelgrave – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative

48 Late Items

The following late information was submitted to the Board:

- Agenda item 8 – Children’s Centre Budget Response

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

49 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting.

50 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors N Dawson, J Elliott, C Gruen, M Iqbal and Co-opted Members, Mr A Graham, Ms C Hopkins and Mrs S Hutchinson.

Notification had been received that Councillor D Ragan was to substitute for Councillor N Dawson, Councillor M Harland for Councillor C Gruen and Councillor R Grahame for Councillor M Iqbal.

51 Minutes - 16 November 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

52 **Scrutiny Inquiry - The Impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance**

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented information as part of the Board's Inquiry into the impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Newcastle University – Poverty Proofing the School Day: Evaluation and Development Report (February 2016)
- Report of the Director of Children's Services to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) (December 2017).

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Andrew Eastwood, Chief Officer (Learning Improvement)
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnerships)
- Viv Buckland, Head of Service (Learning Systems)
- James Rogers, Director of Communities and Environment
- Lee Hemsworth, Chief Officer (Customer Services)
- Jane Hopkins, Head of Communities and Partnership
- Dave Roberts, Financial Inclusion Manager.

The Board received feedback from the recent scrutiny inquiry visits to schools and the inner east cluster partnership in late November.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The work of Children North East to poverty proof the school day and the opportunity to understand what could be effective in Leeds' schools to better support the education of children in poverty.
- Concern that there were currently 199 pupils on waiting lists for a primary school place with sibling priority and the impact of this on attainment.
- Children remaining on roll when the school is aware that they are no longer resident in the country. The Board were advised of safeguarding processes to ensure that the whereabouts of children are known before they are taken off roll.
- The role of the school placement team, particularly support for families transferring schools, referencing feedback that placement is being delayed due to the volume of work for the team. The Board were advised that high mobility is a problem but generally in 1 or 2 Clusters.
- Issues associated with low quality housing, overcrowding and private rented accommodation which impacts on learning.
- National funding pressures in relation to children's social care. The Board was advised about development of breakthrough projects and joint working with schools to address issues.

- Concern about the impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for free school meals.
- The positive development of community hubs in supporting children and young people with special educational needs.
- Confirmation from the Executive Board Member of the intention to re-establish the Child Poverty Outcomes Group.
- The Directors delegated responsibility for Child Poverty
- The need for better integrated working with the Financial Inclusion team and Children's Services to reduce and mitigate the impact of poverty in general.
- Concern about children gambling
- Families having multiple jobs to secure an income
- The role of Employment and Skills service in developing skills, supporting families into work

RESOLVED – That the issues raised as part of the Board's inquiry into the impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance, be noted.

53 Financial Health Monitoring and Budget Proposals for 2018/19 - Children's Services

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented information in relation to the financial health of children's services for period 7, the outline budget proposals for 2018/19, with additional detail regarding children's centre budget provision in response to recommendations as part of the Board's scrutiny inquiry report.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Report to Executive Board dated 13 December 2017 – Financial Health Monitoring 2017/18 – Month 7
- Children's centre budget response to recommendations 6 and 7.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Director of Children's Services
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer (Audit and Investment)
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance (Children and Finance).

The key areas of discussion were:

- An update on the considerable budget pressures facing children's services, particularly in relation to high needs block spending, which is a national issue.
- Confirmation that children's centre front line services and place numbers are protected for 18/19 and reduced income target for the next financial year due to income pressures in the current year.

- The proposal to reduce cost in Children's Centres of £0.3m without impacting on front line services
- Concern regarding the extent of saving proposals through staffing reduction. The Board were advised that this should be achieved through better practice.
- Concerns regarding short term grant funding, LAC numbers, outside placements and turning the curve model
- Concern regarding the proposed early use of partners in practice funding in 17/18 which may create pressure in 18/19 and future years.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board noted the financial position of Children's Services for period 7, 2017/18
- (b) That the Board noted the initial 2018/19 budget proposals relevant to the Board's portfolio.
- (c) That the Board noted the response of the Director of Children and Families to recommendations 6 and 7 of the Board's Inquiry Report into Children's Centres.

(Councillor K Renshaw left the meeting at 11.55am during the consideration of this item.)

54 Performance Update - April 2017 - September 2017

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which presented a summary of performance information in relation to outcomes for Leeds children and young people.

The following information was appended to the report:

- A commentary summary of the CYPP indicators
- CYPP indicators at city and cluster level
- An extract from the September 2017 specialist safeguarding and targeted services report
- The children and families settings inspections dashboard.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Director of Children's Services
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Performance Management and Improvement)
- Chris Hudson, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader.

The key areas of discussion were:

- The trend regarding the numbers of Children looked after. Leeds standing still statistically whilst comparator local authorities increasing.

- An update on work with children's centres, schools and partners such as Leeds Rhino's to tackle child obesity.
- The impact of the change of the Ofsted inspection regime and how this is reflecting on school judgements.
- Concern regarding reported performance information for safeguarding, targeted and specialist services. Reassurance was sought that the provision the support of the Director of Children's Services and Children's Services staff to Kirklees would not reduce focus and performance in Leeds. The Director of Children's Services advised the board of the partners in practice work. Backfilling of posts will be undertaken. There are fluctuations but performance is holding steady.
- The positive involvement of organisations regarding supporting internships for children and young people with special educational needs.
- Clarity regarding the complexity of cases where school attendance is a problem. The Board were advised that there are a core of difficult cases where a different approach would be needed and this approach needs to be reviewed.
- Confirmation that Attendance and NEET information is available by cluster and this information will be provided by Community Committees area's in the New Year.

RESOLVED – That the performance update for April to September 2017, be noted.

(Councillors M Harland left the meeting at 12.15pm and Councillor J Akhtar at 12.25pm during the consideration of this item.)

55 Best Council Plan Refresh for 2018/19 - 2020/21 – Initial Proposals

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which presented the Best Council Plan Refresh for 2018/19-2020/21 – Initial Proposals, due to be considered by Executive Board on 13 December 2017.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Steve Walker, Director of Children's Services
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Performance Management and Improvement)
- Chris Hudson, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader
- Coral Main, Head of Business Planning and Risk.

The key areas of discussion were:

- With regard to the Best City priorities proposed for 2018/19 – 2020/21 compared to the priorities in the current 2017/18 Best Council Plan there was strong opposition to the proposed removal of Child Friendly City. The Board felt that its removal may convey the message to the

wider city, particularly children and young people that this is no longer a priority.

RESOLVED –

- (a) The Board noted the Best Council Plan Refresh initial proposals.
- (b) The Board strongly recommended that 'Child Friendly City' remains in the Best Council Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21 and that the Principal Scrutiny Advisor reports this recommendation of the Board for further budget and policy framework considerations.

56 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2017/18 municipal year.

RESOLVED – That subject to any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

57 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 25 January 2018 at 9.45am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.45pm)