

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 22ND APRIL, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor R D Feldman in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, B Gettings, G Kirkland,
B Lancaster, K Renshaw and B Selby

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms N Cox	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative

112 Appointment of Chair

RESOLVED – That Councillor R D Feldman be appointed Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) for the duration of the meeting, as Councillor W Hyde, the appointed Chair of the Board for 2009/10 municipal year, had submitted his apologies for absence.

(Councillor R D Feldman took the Chair)

113 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda as supplementary information, the draft scrutiny inquiry report on school organisation consultations, which was to be considered as part of agenda item 10. (Minute No. 120 refers)

114 Declaration of Interests

Mrs Knights declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Leeds School Balances, and agenda item 10, Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report – School Organisation Consultations, in her capacity as Governor at various schools, including one of the feeder schools to City of Leeds High School. (Minute Nos. 117 and 120 refer)

Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Leeds School Balances, in her capacity as LEA Governor and Vice-Chair at Carr Manor High School. (Minute No. 117 refers)

Councillor Selby declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Leeds School Balances, in his capacity as LEA Governor at Cross Gates Primary and Grange Farm Primary Schools. (Minute No. 117 refers)

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting. (Minute Nos. 117 and 119 refer)

115 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors D Coupar, W Hyde and E Taylor; and Co-opted Members, Ms C Foote and Mr B Wanyonyi.

116 Minutes - 25th March 2010

The following suggested amendments were raised at the meeting:

Minute No. 106 – Additional resolution b) to be inserted to read ‘That the Scrutiny Board receives regular reports back on the progress of the Improvement Board and Improvement Plan.’

Minute No. 107 – Addition to read ‘Councillor Kirkland declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as Foundation Governor at Prince Henry Grammar School.’

RESOLVED – That subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

117 Leeds School Balances

The Chief Executive of Education Leeds submitted a report which presented the Scrutiny Board with the levels of school balances and the mechanisms in place to recover large surplus balances and support schools with deficit budgets.

Appended to the report was the following information:

- Balances for primary, secondary and special schools as at 31st March 2009

- List of schools with surpluses above the prescribed limits in 2008/09 together with the recommendations of the Schools' Forum panel.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Patrick Fletcher, Head of Financial Services to Schools, to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Concern about the build up of large surplus balances by some schools.
- Concern about the effect of carrying forward balances on existing children at schools. It was reported that most schools had strategic plans in place to deal with specific items and projects in the longer term.
- Reviewing Ofsted reports of schools with large surplus balances, particularly in terms of ensuring that services being provided were up to standard.
- Proposals to establish a small working group to consider the issue in more detail in the new municipal year. The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to prepare draft terms of reference.
- Concern about the pressures on schools to spend surplus balance.
- Possible appointment of Scrutiny Board representative on the Schools' Forum panel.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the process in place for dealing with school balances be noted; and
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board establishes a small working group in the new year to consider the issue in more detail.

(Councillor Kirkland declared a personal interest in this item in his capacity as Foundation Governor at Prince Henry Grammar School.)

(Mrs Knights declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as Member of Leeds Schools' Forum.)

118 Annual Report 2009/10

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the Board's contribution to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2009/10.

RESOLVED – That the Board's contribution to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2009/10 be approved.

119 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Statement - Youth Service Surveys

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's work on youth service surveys.

Members agreed to send the report to all Area Committees to make them aware of scrutiny's work. They also indicated that they may wish to undertake further scrutiny work on youth services, dependent on the outcome of the Youth Services Commissioning working group which had yet to meet.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board's final statement and recommendations be approved;
- (b) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports; and
- (c) That the report be sent to all Area Committees.

(Councillor Lancaster declared personal interests in this item in her capacity as Trustee of Karate for Inner City Kids (KICK) and Member of West Yorkshire Police Authority.)

(Councillor Driver left the meeting at 10.40 am during the consideration of this item.)

120 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report - School Organisation Consultations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's work on school organisation consultations.

Amendments to the draft scrutiny inquiry report were agreed as follows:

- Addition at the end of paragraph 26 to read 'Although we understand that this was an unusual situation, we also acknowledge that a good consultation process must include adequate timescales for participants to give a considered response.'
- Amendment to recommendation 1 to read 'That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds revises the school organisation consultation guidelines to automatically include the full governing body and all Elected Members at the informal Stage A in the process.'

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor also agreed to e-mail Scrutiny Board Members with a suggested amendment to recommendation 2, in relation to the proposed communications strategy being brought back to the Board for comment prior to being finalised.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That subject to comments raised at the meeting, the Scrutiny Board's final report and recommendations be approved; and
- (b) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports.

121 Suggested Date and Time of Next Meeting

On behalf of the Scrutiny Board, the Chair thanked Sue Knights for her positive contribution to the Board's work over the last 8 years. It was reported that Sue was shortly coming to the end of her term of office as parent governor representative (primary).

It was also suggested that a letter be written to those Members of the Scrutiny Board who were not standing at the forthcoming local elections to express gratitude for their hard work and support.

RESOLVED – That an additional meeting be arranged to take place on Thursday 20th May 2010 at 12 noon (no pre-meeting), to agree the Board's draft scrutiny inquiry report in relation to safeguarding.

(The meeting concluded at 10.54 am.)