

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) – CALL-IN MEETING

THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens,
P Grahame, J Hardy, A Khan, A Lamb,
K Maqsood, M Rafique and G Wilkinson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

Ms A Craven – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative

Ms J Morris-Boam – Young Lives Leeds

95 Declarations of Interest

All Members of the Scrutiny Board declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Call-In – Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for September 2013, in their capacity as Governors at various primary and secondary schools across Leeds. (Minute No. 98)

Mr T Britten declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Call-In – Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for September 2013, in his capacity as a Member of Leeds Admission Panel. (Minute No. 98 refers)

96 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors B Gettings, P Latty, A McKenna and K Renshaw and Co-opted Members, Ms N Cox, Mrs S Hutchinson and Ms T Kayani. Notification had been received that Councillor P Grahame was to substitute for Councillor K Renshaw, Councillor J Hardy for Councillor A McKenna and Councillor G Wilkinson for Councillor P Latty.

97 Call In of Decision - Briefing Paper

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the procedural aspects of the call-in process.

Members were advised that the options available to the Scrutiny Board in respect of this particular called-in decision were:

Option 1 – Release the decision for implementation Having reviewed the decision, the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) could decide to release it for implementation. If this option was chosen, the decision would be released for immediate implementation and the decision could not be called-in again.

Option 2 – Recommend that the decision be reconsidered The Scrutiny Board may decide to recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board chose this option then a report would be submitted to the Executive Board. In the case of an Executive Board decision, the report of the Scrutiny Board would be presented to the next available meeting. The Executive Board would reconsider its decision and would publish the outcome of its deliberations within the minutes of the meeting. The decision could not be called-in again whether or not it is varied.

RESOLVED – That the report outlining the call-in procedures be noted.

98 Call-In - Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for September 2013

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, together with relevant background papers, relating to a decision of the Executive Board meeting held on 11 April 2012.

The decision had been called-in for review by Councillors A Lamb, P Wadsworth, B Anderson, G Latty and D Cohen on the following grounds:

‘Concerns around the move to five school preferences, specifically consultation on the decision, which Councillors believe was insufficient. Also concerns that the new preference system misrepresents the choices available to parents and concerns around how the data will be used to justify the position in relation to school choice.’

The Scrutiny Board considered the following written evidence:

- Copy of completed Call-In request form
- Report of the Director of Children’s Services
- Relevant extract of Executive Board minutes of 11 April 2012.

Councillor A Lamb attended the meeting to present the request for call-in.

The following Executive Members and officers were in attendance to explain the reasons for making the decision:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children’s Services)
- Councillor Dowson, Advisory Executive Member
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children’s Services
- Sarah Sinclair, Chief Officer – Strategy, Commissioning and Performance, Children’s Services
- Stuart Gosney, Head of Capacity Planning and Sufficiency, Children’s Services.

In explaining the reasons for calling in the decision, the key areas of discussion were:

- Concern that the change from 3 to 5 preferences would result in a greater number of parents not being allocated their first preference.
- Concern that there were insufficient good schools for parents to choose from and that greater emphasis should be directed towards achieving this.

In explaining the reasons for making the decision, officers made the following comments:

- The main reason behind the change was to provide parents with greater choice in stating their preferences, e.g. in some urban areas parents had 20 schools to choose from within a reasonable walking distance.
- Some neighbouring local authorities operated 5 preference system which disadvantaged Leeds parents, e.g. there were cases involving Bradford parents that had been allocated their 4th or 5th preference at Leeds' schools.
- Confirmation that there would be no changes to the reporting mechanism which identified the number of children allocated to their choice of schools currently broken down by first, second and third choice preferences.

RESOLVED – That the report and information provided be noted.

(Ms J Ward withdrew from the meeting at 12.30pm during the consideration of this item.)

99 Outcome of Call-In

Following consideration of the evidence presented and the options available to them, the Board resolved that:

Option 1 – Release the decision for implementation was the most appropriate action.

RESOLVED – That the decision of the Executive Board held on 11 April 2012 in relation to Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for September 2013, be immediately released for implementation.

(The meeting concluded at 12.55pm.)