

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors B Gettings, P Grahame,
C Gruen, A Hussain, A Khan, A Lamb,
P Latty, M Rafique, A Sobel, B Urry

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 C Raftery – Teacher Representative

Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative

Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative

Ms J Morris-Boam – Young Lives Leeds

106 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the February meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families).

107 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

108 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors K Renshaw and Co-opted Member, Mrs S Hutchinson. Notification had been received that Councillor P Grahame was to substitute for Councillor K Renshaw.

109 Minutes - 17th January 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2013 be approved as a correct record.

110 Welfare Reform and Child Poverty

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which reviewed progress against recommendations made in the Raising Aspirations and Combating Child Poverty Inquiry. The report also sought to promote debate about the implications of welfare reform and the impact on child poverty.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation Tracking – Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations
- Leeds Children’s Trust Board – Child Poverty – Update on progress and national consultation
- Advice Services Review and Commissioning – Members’ Briefing Note – December 2012
- Leeds Benefit Changes Booklet
- Welfare Reform Strategy Board – Terms of Reference.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting and responded to Members’ questions and comments:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children Services)
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnership Development Business Support)
- Steve Carey, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Early Help Services
- Neil Warren, Head of Finance, (Children’s Services)
- Stephen Featherstone, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Clarification sought about the criteria for receiving free school meals and details about any planned changes. Members were advised that the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had not yet made a decision, although an income threshold may be introduced.
- Concern about the impact of payment in arrears on families. Officers advised that the Local Support Services Framework had commissioned Job Centre Plus to provide support to those individuals that were most in need.
- Further information requested about development of the Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI). Officers agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information.
- Work being undertaken by clusters to encourage take-up of free school meals. Reference was made to development of the Healthy Schools Network and links with public health.
- Clarification that the 5 Electoral Wards most affected by child poverty were as follows:
 - Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
 - City and Hunslet
 - Gipton and Harehills
 - Hyde Park and Woodhouse
 - Middleton Park.
- Budgetary risk that may manifest for Children’s Services due to welfare reform.

- The challenges facing vulnerable families due to welfare reforms and what steps had been taken to identify and engage with these families.
- Clarification sought about planned development of social housing.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices be noted
- (b) That the recommendation tracking element of the report be deferred to the April Scrutiny Board.

(Councillor A Sobel declared a significant other interest on the basis that his wife was Manager of St Vincent's Advice Centre.)

111 Progress Report on the Replacement of Children's Services (Children's Social Work Service) Electronic Social Care Records System (ESCR)

A report of the CSCS Project was submitted which updated the Scrutiny Board on the progress of the implementation of a new information and case management system for Children's Social Work Service to replace the current in-house system named ESCR.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Steve Walker, Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services)
- Jon Nevill, Service Delivery Manager
- Nadine Snowden, CSCS Project Manager
- Angela Gilchrist, CSCS Project Team.

A powerpoint presentation was provided which provided further information about the new system, key principles and training. A demonstration of the system was also provided.

The key points of discussion were:

- Confirmation that the contract with Corelogic was budgeted at £1.6m over 5 years. The total project cost was £6.5m.
- Investment in new infrastructure, which included the option of utilising different servers across the Council to ensure greater flexibility.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(Ms C Foote left the meeting at 12 noon during the consideration of this item.)

112 Work Schedule

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the current municipal year.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 14th March, 2013

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 9 January 2013, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 10 September 2012 to 4 February 2013.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be approved.

113 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 14th March 2013 at 9.45am
(Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.26pm.)