

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 7TH JULY, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors S Burke, E Flint, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, C Gruen, Z Hussain,
J Illingworth, S Lay, A Marshall-Katung,
K Renshaw, J Senior and R Stephenson

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)

Mrs K Blacker - Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Ms C Foote – School Staff Representative

Ms H Bellamy – School Staff Representative

9 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interests.

10 Meeting note of 9th June 2021

RECOMMENDED – That the note of the meeting held 9th June 2021 be noted.

11 Youth Work Review and Future Vision

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented further information on the new youth work delivery model, informed by the findings of the youth work review, as well as a shared vision for future youth work in Leeds.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Mary Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work

The Director of Children and Families introduced the report, highlighting the need for a clear vision and recognition of the impact of youth workers on the lives of young people across the city. Members were advised that there are

three strands set out within the future vision - a core offer of universal youth work undertaken by youth work services within the local authority, additional third sector provision for greater demand, and a small grant scheme for smaller organisations with alternative reach.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Communications.* Members acknowledged the need to maximise opportunities to improve communications with young people about services and schemes available and sought clarity on plans for future communications and engagement with young people. Linked to this, Members were advised that a comprehensive communication strategy will be developed as part of the action plan.
- *Small grant scheme.* Members were supportive of a more exploratory approach to the smaller grants scheme and requested examples of more diverse projects. Members were advised that ad-hoc flexible projects to date have included support for addressing youth violence and resilience programmes for young women and girls.
- *Quality assurance.* It was reported that a number of support functions had been identified as essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of the agreed model of delivery of youth work, with particular reference made to the importance of having a robust quality assurance process for all youth work provision.
- *Mapping of existing provision.* It was noted that a thorough mapping exercise of local authority and community run building assets would be undertaken. Members therefore requested that this information be shared with the Board in due course.
- *Sharing best practice.* Members recognised the success of a range of projects delivered by community organisations and queried the approach taken to sharing best practice. Members were advised that the first city wide youth work conference was held in 2020 and will now continue on an annual basis as an opportunity to celebrate and learn from the range of services and providers in Leeds.
- *Provision for travelling communities.* In response to a query, Members were advised that Gypsy and Roma Travellers are supported predominantly by the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE), as well as intervention from council youth work teams on an ad hoc basis in response to new encampments in the city.
- *Timescales for implementation of the new model.* Members sought assurances that services are on track to meet the timescales for implementation set out in the report. The Director confirmed that he was confident that the new model would be fully implemented by April 2022. The Board therefore suggested that it would be timely for a further update to be brought back to scrutiny in March 2022.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

12 Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that summarised the inquiry work undertaken to-date by the Scrutiny Board in relation to exclusions, elective home education and off-rolling and presented further information to assist the Board in considering appropriate next steps.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Val Waite, Head of Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Learning Improvement

The Head of Learning Inclusion introduced the report, providing an update on the current trends for the beginning of the new academic year 20/21 where unverified data is now available, as well as plans to address concerning trends that have arisen throughout the pandemic.

Members discussed a number of matters, which included:

- *Suggested areas of evidence gathering.* Members expressed an interest to receive data surrounding permanent exclusion rates in order to explore any potential hotspot areas across the city. Members were also keen to receive data surrounding fixed-term exclusion rates to identify schools with particularly high rates. Other information requests related to elective home education rates; school behaviour policies; Education Health and Care Plans; links with youth work provision.
- *Suggested witnesses.* Members identified the need to ensure that head teachers / CEOs from a range of schools are given the opportunity to engage in future inquiry sessions. Members also felt it would be useful to hear from young people and their families who have chosen to home educate their children, as well as families whose children have been previously excluded. Linked to this, it was also suggested that the Board engage with young offenders to understand their experiences of school too.
- *Inquiry timeline.* The Chair suggested that November appeared to be the most suitable time for the Board to recommence the inquiry, to ensure that relevant data will be available and schools have settled into the new academic year. Members were agreeable to the timeline suggested.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser confirmed that terms of reference relating to the next stage of the Board's inquiry would be drafted to reflect the Board's comments and brought back to the Board's next formal meeting for consideration and agreement.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

13 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

In introducing the report, the Principal Scrutiny Adviser explained that the latest version of the work schedule reflected the Board's discussion in June around possible areas of scrutiny work to undertake this year. Members were invited to consider whether they would like to make any further suggested changes to the work schedule at this stage.

The report also referred to the Board's draft report around tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families. As well as monitoring and helping to inform some of the immediate responses needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the former Children and Families Scrutiny Board had used its final meeting in March to begin exploring what the potential long-term impacts of Covid-19 are likely to be on children and their families.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser explained that during the Board's June meeting, it was proposed that a draft report summarising the Board's views and potential recommendations arising from its March discussion - but also reflecting any developments since March - be considered and formally approved by the Board in July. However, given the consultative status of the Board's July meeting, it was now noted that the Board would not be able to formally approve its report.

The Chair explained that the Board's draft report had been circulated separately to Board Members in advance of the meeting and that Members had agreed to use the work schedule item as an opportunity to share initial views on the draft report so that these may be reflected as part of a final draft to be brought to the Board's next formal public meeting for approval. It was also explained that the draft report would be made publicly available on the council's website as supplementary information immediately following the meeting.

During the Board's discussion on the draft report, the Chair reminded Members that the work undertaken by the Board was primarily aimed at identifying key priority areas for the Board to maintain a watching brief or to potentially undertake further detailed work in the future.

RECOMMENDED –

- (a) That the draft work schedule be noted.
- (b) That a final draft version of the Board's report around tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families be brought to the Board's next formal public meeting for consideration and approval.