

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors J Bowden, E Bromley, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, N Harrington, Z Hussain,
J Lennox, A Maloney, L Martin, D Ragan,
K Renshaw and J Senior

46 Election of Chair

Councillor Lamb advised the Board that he would need to leave the meeting before its conclusion, and as such, nominated Councillor Flynn to assume the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting following his departure.

RESOLVED: That, at the point at which Councillor Lamb leaves the meeting, Councillor Flynn be appointed as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

47 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

48 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

49 Late Items

There were no late items.

50 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

51 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

The Board received apologies from Councillor Howley, Councillor Stephenson, Councillor Richards, Councillor Bithell, Councillor Ragan, Councillor Heselwood and Andrew Graham.

In attendance as substitute members were Councillor Flynn for Councillor Stephenson, Councillor Harrington for Councillor Richards, Councillor Lennox for Councillor Bithell and Councillor Maloney for Councillor Heselwood.

52 Minutes - 30th November 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th November 2022 be confirmed as an accurate record.

53 Children and Young People's Plan refresh: summary of consultation

The Board received the report from the Director of Children and Families on the refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan and were invited to give views on the recently completed consultation recently completed.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- 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
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources & Strategy
- Val White, Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Children / Adults lead), Intelligence & Policy Service
- Chris Hudson, Performance Programme Manager, Intelligence & Policy Service

The following issues were raised during the Board's discussion:

- In regard to the numbers of obsessions, and whether adding health as one would minimise the impact of the obsession framework, the consultation has suggested that consolidating the educational obsessions of attainment, attendance and achievement (the three A's) and supporting those Not In Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into one and creating health as an obsession is the preferred option.
- It was noted that the Consultation was shared with school governors, including at a governor focused event and in governor newsletters, however statistics on their engagement with the consultation were not gathered.
- The impact of school journeys on the climate emergency were noted.

In conclusion, it was noted that the Plan would be presented to Full Council in the summer, and would be launched subject to such formal approval.

RESOLVED: That the views of the Board on the response to comments received from the consultation (within appendix 1 to the submitted report), as expressed during the meeting, be noted;

That the route to the Plan's adoption by Full Council in the summer, be noted.

54 **Best City Ambition Update**

The Chief Officer, Strategy and Improvement submitted a report which updated the Board on the Council's Best City Ambition.

In attendance for the item:

- 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
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources & Strategy
- Val White, Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Children / Adults lead), Intelligence & Policy Service
- Chris Hudson, Performance Programme Manager, Intelligence & Policy Service
- Mike Eakins Acting Head of Intelligence and Policy

It was noted that the Ambition would be reviewed in full in 2023, to take account of the outcome of the recent Local Government Association peer review, as well as the refreshed Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth strategies which were due to be published in spring/summer 2023.

The Board discussed the following:

The Ambition is a city-wide initiative which Leeds City Council is a part of, and provides an internal steer to strategies, with a view to reduce the number of strategies the Council uses. It was noted that the positive ownership of the Ambition both within the Council and with partner organisations has exceeded expectations and will be integrated back into the Ambition.

The Board noted that the recently developed Social Progress Index (SPI) will be used to monitor the performance, alongside the conventional performance monitoring with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As more data is integrated into the SPI it may become the primary method of measuring the Ambition's impact.

It was highlighted that the KPI's will prioritise children and young people's mental health, which includes a targeted programme working with GP's. Reading is also a considered KPI

The Board noted that the SPI will assist Councillors in their work.

RESOLVED: That the content of the submitted report, together with the comments made by Members, be noted.

55 Performance report for the financial year 2022/23

The Board received the Performance Report for the financial year 2022/23 from the Director of Children & Families.

In attendance for this item were;

- 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
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources & Strategy
- Val White, Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Children / Adults lead), Intelligence & Policy Service
- Chris Hudson, Performance Programme Manager, Intelligence & Policy Service
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead

The performance report, provided twice a year, presented Scrutiny with the latest available data related to delivering council and city priorities in line with the council's performance management framework, including offering assurance around the health of the social care system in Leeds. The performance data also included some refreshed measures for monitoring performance against the Best City Ambition, though this work is still ongoing. It was noted that national comparator information was included where appropriate.

The Board discussed the following:

Children Looked After

- The Board was informed that there is an increase in the number of looked after children in the city, and the Board noted that some of the factors for this include poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. There is a significant number of asylum-seeking children, which the city is supportive of as a Sanctuary City, and this has a notable impact on the figures.
- There is an objective to reduce the number of looked after children, particularly adolescents with complex needs and high degrees of trauma.
- Where possible, children are placed under kinship fostering arrangements, with an offer being developed for those families
- The breakdown of the CLA figures in terms of those in kinship care and those with foster carers. A key area of interest being whether the current economic climate has impacted on kinship careers due to rising costs. It was noted that the offer in Leeds to kinship and foster carers is substantial both in terms of finance and support and the centrality of family in the ethos of the service was also highlighted.
- The challenge around care and support for adolescents was also discussed with a similar focus on emphasising family and ongoing work to enhance support to this age group.

Attainment

- Improved attainment at Key Stage 4 was noted for the city and the recent results were the first set of statistics produced since COVID-19. The Progress 8 figures at KS4 were particularly noteworthy being

above national average, statistical neighbours, core cities and the Yorkshire and Humber average.

- There is work required to capture data about young people who leave the Leeds city area by working with other Local Authorities.
- There has been partnership work with Nesta and two other local authorities to transform the early years offer with a focus on language and speech. This work will include working with libraries and early years providers, including Little Owls, to upskill the workforce across the city. This multi-disciplinary approach will prioritise the local geographic footprint.
- Reading attainment was noted as being a key part of achieving the Best City Ambition.

Clusters and Partnerships

- The Cluster programme of developing partnership working within specific localities was noted as having a positive impact on children's lives. This work will cut across the Social Progress Index agenda to further develop local partnerships by utilising data.
- Engagement continues to be developed for the Clusters, such as a planned Cluster celebration event.
- The Board requested that in future reports it would be helpful if the cluster partnerships were easier to identify in terms of where they are located geographically in the city. This was accepted and will be acted upon in future reports.
- The Board also noted the potential for a future update on clusters later in 2023 following interest and work carried out by the Board in the past.

The Director assured the Board that both numbers of looked after children and attainment are priorities for the Directorate.

The Board also discussed phonics data and improved performance in this area having previously been below average in some of the age groups.

RESOLVED:

- The Board noted the progress and performance presented in this report, and the wider context of other papers on the agenda in terms of budgets and priorities for the year.
- The Board noted the inclusion of two children's measures in the Best City Ambition dashboard. A tailored version will be included in future reports; the full set of measures have been provided to all Scrutiny Boards in the current reporting cycle.
- The Board reviewed the attainment data, which is included for the first time since the 2018/19 academic year.

(At the conclusion of this Agenda Item Councillor Lamb left the meeting and Councillor Flynn assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting).

56 Financial Health Monitoring 2022/23 - October (Month 7)

The Committee received the Financial Health Monitoring 2022/23 report from the Head of Democratic Services.

In December 2022 the Executive Board received an update from the Chief Officer Financial Services about the financial health of the Authority in respect of the General Fund revenue budget and the Housing Revenue Account at month 7 of the financial year.

The Board discussed the following:

- Councillor Venner informed the Board that many care leavers within Leeds are supported by GIPSIL housing association, meaning they can move into their own tenancies, which thus rereleases their space on the Our Way Leeds (OWL) programme for another vulnerable young person. This has produced a council saving of around £1million.
- In addition to the above, Councillor Venner outlined the cost of privately run children and young people's accommodation for local authorities across the country, and the Board noted that Leeds City Council is limited in its ability to tackle this issue without a government steer on policy. In the meantime, a focus on council run facilities is the most financially healthy approach.
- The Board noted the memorandum of understanding between Directors of Children's Services on a regional level, through the Regional Care Co-Operative, to try to limit the cost of care in this area by preventing Local Authorities from outbidding one another for agency staff.
- The Director of Children and Families advised the Board that the decision has been taken to amalgamate some of the Little Owls nurseries due to declining numbers of children in the city impacting their financial sustainability.
- The Board discussed the financial impact of rising fuel costs and a decrease in private hire taxi provision has impacted the cost of providing transportation for SEND children.
- The Board enquired about the increased legal costs and were advised that they have risen due to the increasingly complex nature of court cases.

RESOLVED:

That the relevant information as detailed within the submitted Executive Board report, be noted together with the comments provided in relation to those service areas that fall within the Board's remit.

57 Initial Budget Proposals for 2023/24

The Board received the report of the Head of Democratic Services which provided the context for formal consultation on the initial budget proposals that fall within the remit of the Board.

In attendance for item were;

- 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
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources & Strategy
- Lucie McAulay, Head of Finance (Children and Families)

The Board noted that the Council has experienced significant financial challenges, which are projected to continue into the next financial year.

The Board noted the following proposals to minimise costs within the Children and Families Directorate to improve the financial health of the overall Council. These included;

- Proposed work with adolescents who are on the edge of the care system to prevent them being taken into care.
- An additional £1.6m to meet demand and demography pressures and £2m to manage budget pressures within transport services. This additional funding will be used to meet existing pressure and also address inflationary pressure.
- £11.5m of savings proposals for 2023/24 through Business As Usual practice and Service Reviews. The latter require additional consultation before they are implemented. In total the Children and Families budget represents 25% of the Council's net managed budget.
- Partnership learning with Adults Social Care, where there is expertise in capacity and commissioning, and with negotiation. This produces more competitive pricing, which due to the high costs involve will be cost efficient work.
- The Transformation Team agenda was discussed as an important council-wide initiative to drive savings. This has improved collaborative working with colleagues from transport, residential care and housing which has produced transformational system improvement of the council. This has a quality-of-life impact for children in semi-independent living and for supporting them into their own tenancies.
- The work involved in developing partnerships, cross-directorate workstreams, data analysis was noted as requiring capacity with an approach of secondment being proposed.
- The cost of the pay award to the Directorate along with inflation will cost around £8.3million.
- The Board noted the financial impact that the cost of living and pandemic have had on children and families and this will be noted in the composite statement that will go to Executive Board on 8 February.

- The Board commented on the transformation agenda within Children's Services, mental health services for young people and the impact Covid has had on the mental health of young people, care leavers also unfortunately having children who require care, continuing development of preventative approaches and assurances around services to prevent teenage conception.

RESOLVED:

The Chair noted that the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on Children and Families, and that this shall be noted in the Board's recommendations.

That having noted and considered the relevant information provided within the submitted report on the proposed budget for 2023/24 and provisional budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26, the comments made by the Board be taken into consideration as part of the Scrutiny Boards' submission to Executive Board as it prepares its final proposals for consideration by full Council on 22nd February 2023.

58 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor noted that the 1st February 2023 meeting of the Board may be cancelled or rescheduled based on feedback on board member availability for the date.

RESOLVED: That the work schedule, as presented, be noted, together with the current position regarding the currently scheduled additional meeting of 1st February 2023.

59 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 8th March 2023 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.45 am).