

## SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2006

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Bale in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, B Cleasby, R D Feldman,  
V Kendall, L Mulherin, T Murray, K Renshaw and B Selby

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:  
(VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mr R Greaves	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:  
(NON-VOTING)**

Mr T Hales	- Teacher Representative
Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mr P Gathercole	- NCH Representative

### 37 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the October meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

### 38 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development entitled, 'Ofsted Inspection Framework' in addition to the draft terms of reference for the Young People's Scrutiny Forum inquiry into Transport in Leeds. Both the report and the draft terms of reference had been unavailable at the time of the agenda despatch. (Minute Nos 49 and 51 refer respectively).

### 39 Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared personal interests particularly in relation to agenda item 10, due to their respective positions as either school or college governors. (Minute No 48 refers):-

Councillors Bale, Chapman, Cleasby, R D Feldman, Kendall, Mulherin, Murray, Renshaw, Selby, Mr E A Britten, Mr R Greaves and Mrs S Knights.

Councillor Murray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 10, due to being the Chief Executive of a Charity which worked with schools as detailed within the report. (Minute No 48 refers).

Mr P Gathercole declared a personal interest in relation to agenda items 8 and 9 due to being a representative of NCH which provided services to looked after children. (Minute Nos 44 and 45 refer).

Mr E A Britten declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10, due to being a member of the School Appeal Panel. (Minute No 43 refers).

Prof PHJH Gosden and Councillor Cleasby both declared personal interests in relation to agenda item 10, due to being members of the School Organisation Committee. (Minute No 43 refers).

A further declaration of personal interest was made at a later point in the meeting in relation to agenda item 8. (Minute No 44 refers).

**40 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor Harrison, Mr C Macpherson and Ms T Kayani.

**41 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Children’s Services) meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006 be approved as a correct record.

**42 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2006 be noted.

**43 Monitoring Reports - The Work of Leeds Admissions Forum**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds which advised the Board of the work undertaken by the Leeds Admissions Forum during the 2005/06 academic year.

In attendance at the meeting to answer Members’ queries and questions were Councillor Gruen, Chair of the Admissions Forum, Ros Vahey, Deputy Chief Executive and Viv Buckland, Team Leader, Admissions and Transport, both of Education Leeds.

The Chair of the Leeds Admissions Forum paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Admissions Team and outlined the issues currently faced by the Forum.

A question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The ways in which the work of the Forum was reported and how such reporting could be revised to ensure that the Forum operated in an open and transparent manner;
- The problems relating to school admissions which had been experienced in particular areas of the city, and the actions being taken to resolve such problems, including a review of the robustness of the demographic projections by Education Leeds;

- The ways in which the appeals procedure in Leeds was comparable to the procedures followed by other local authorities and the actions being taken to address concerns which related to the presentations made at School Appeal Panel hearings;
- The extent to which the introduction of an online applications system would increase accessibility to the admissions process;
- The ways in which legislative changes would impact upon the admissions procedure in Leeds.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That the Scrutiny Board support the Admissions Forum's request that Education Leeds re-examine their demographic projection processes in light of the recent pressures in East and South Leeds and inward migration issues;
- (c). That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to consider the possibility of the minutes from Admissions Forum meetings being submitted to either Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) or Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in a bid to improve the reporting of the Forum's work;
- (d). That the Board record its thanks to School Appeal Panel members for their work on a voluntary basis.

#### **44 Members' Questions**

As prior notice of questions had been received from Members, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which afforded Scrutiny Board Members the opportunity to put questions to the relevant service Directors.

Councillor Richard Brett, Lead Executive Member for Children's Services, Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services and Ros Vahey, Deputy Chief Executive, Education Leeds were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

- (a). What policy was in place to detect (and test for) dyslexia within schools and/or educational establishments?

In response, the Board was advised that the identification of special educational needs was primarily the responsibility of schools, however it was stated that schools were comprehensively assisted by Education Leeds' Support Service and that a wide ranging training programme had been established to help staff identify and address such issues.

A question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- Confirmation that the term 'dyslexia' was recognised in Leeds;
- The range of tests which could be undertaken if a child was suspected of having special educational needs, and the extent to which staff in schools in Leeds were currently in a position to administer such tests and interpret their findings;
- The extent and ease to which schools could receive assistance from Education Leeds' Support Service due to waiting lists;

- The methods used to publicise training in this field and the effectiveness of such publicity.

**RESOLVED** – That the information provided be noted.

(b). How frequently, and by whom, are health and safety checks carried out within schools and who acts on reports received, following the checks?

In response, Members were advised that individual schools were required to ensure the safety of all those using their facilities. The Board noted that schools conducted their own checks and that Education Leeds had a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team which visited schools every 3 years, although more frequent visits were often organised in response to specific requests or risks. Members were advised that from such visits, safety reports were compiled and submitted to the school's Head Teacher and Chair of Governors for inspection.

It was confirmed that there was also a role for the Health and Safety Executive in line with all workplaces. Members raised concerns about the conditions which arose in certain schools following the recent wet weather. In response, Members were invited to relay any specific concerns to Education Leeds.

**RESOLVED** – That the information provided be noted.

(c). The Director of Children's Services then fielded a range of questions which related to the number of looked after children who had been placed outside of Leeds, the reasons for their placements, the weekly cost of such placements, the number of children from outside of Leeds who were now looked after in Leeds and whether the Council was reimbursed from other authorities in such circumstances.

In summary, the response submitted to the Board addressed the following issues:-

- 31 looked after children from Leeds were currently placed outside of Leeds;
- The cost of children from Leeds being looked after outside of Leeds was currently £69,000 per week, however the Board was advised that this figure constantly changed;
- Members noted the variety of reasons why children from Leeds had been placed in care outside of Leeds;
- The authority had been notified by other local authorities of about 185 looked after children from outside of Leeds who had been placed within the city. Members were reassured that there was no cost to the authority associated with such placements.

A question and answer session then followed the response. The main areas of debate were:-

- The significant weekly cost of looking after children placed outside Leeds;

- The incidence of guardians influencing court recommendations for a placement outside Leeds despite Social Services own judgements about the availability of appropriate services in Leeds. The Director of Children's Services undertook to confirm any recent instances of this occurring;
- The possibility of having secure care facilities for girls in Yorkshire, if there was a need for such facilities, and an indication that this issue was being considered as part of the review of children's residential care.

**RESOLVED** – That the information provided be noted.

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in this item, due to being a foster parent of a child from another local authority)

(Councillor Murray left the meeting during the consideration of this item)

#### **45 Implementing the Children Act - Update**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which updated Members on the implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Leeds, with particular reference being made to the developments in frontline service provision.

Councillor Brett, Lead Executive Member for Children's Services and Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Appended to the report for Members' information was an updated version of the Action Plan relating to the implementation of the Children Act in Leeds in addition to a copy of the report from the Director of Children's Services entitled, 'Proposed Children's Trust Arrangements for Leeds' which had been submitted to Executive Board on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Following a brief summary of the issues raised in the report, a discussion then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The problems which could be experienced during the transition from primary to secondary education, the actions being taken to address such problems, and whether the issues associated with the transition period were experienced nationally;
- The possibility of school holidays being used to better prepare pupils for the transition between primary and secondary education;
- Issues relating to the West Leeds Project and the Budget Holding Lead Professional initiative;
- The review of residential children's homes in Leeds;
- The need to ensure ward councillors were well briefed on the proposed development of specialist accommodation for young people with learning disabilities in Leeds;
- Further information was requested on the Year 9 Project and the Signpost Programme;
- Issues relating to the potential commissioning opportunities for local voluntary and community organisations and the opportunities for them to be involved in pilot and innovatory projects.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That further information relating to the Year 9 Project and the Signpost Programme be forwarded to Members for information.

**46 Monitoring Reports - Safeguarding Children**

A report was submitted by the Director of Children's Services which updated Members on the key issues currently faced in relation to Safeguarding Children. The report also included a formal response to relevant recommendations from the Scrutiny Board's inquiry on Secondary Achievement.

Edwina Harrison, Chief Officer, Children and Families, Social Services and Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, Education Leeds were in attendance to respond to Members' queries and questions.

**RESOLVED –** That the contents of the report be noted.

**47 Monitoring Reports - Transition from Primary to Secondary**

The Board received a report from the Chief Executive of Education Leeds which advised Members of the progress made in response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) following its inquiry into Secondary Achievement.

Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services in addition to Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, Dorothy Smith, Strategic Manager, School Improvement and Planning, Brian Ward and Sarah Balfour, Transfer Consultants, all of Education Leeds were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

A question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The extent to which Year 7 was viewed as a year of regression or consolidation, whether this was a national phenomenon and how this issue could be addressed in order to assist in improving levels of secondary achievement;
- The cultural issues which contributed towards the phenomenon;
- Following Members' concerns which related to the time it was taking to establish a system of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for all learners in Leeds, the Board requested a copy of the guidance associated with the introduction of ILPs and proposed that a position statement on the strategy for achieving ILP targets was provided to the Board;
- The distinction between Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which were a statutory requirement for children with special educational needs, and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) which were discretionary. It was noted that the original focus nationally for ILPs was the 14-19 age group;
- Concerns were raised in relation to the fact that not all children could access their local High School and emphasised the impact that such a

situation could have on a child where transfer work was focused on Families of Schools;

- The skill levels being achieved by children at Primary School, and how such levels had affected their transition to High School;
- Collaboration between primary and high schools focused on the curriculum as well as the organisational and cultural aspects;
- The particular needs of the most vulnerable pupils and the importance of staff having time to support their transition;
- The extent to which the issue of transition was taken into consideration when designing new school buildings;
- The work of the ILP Steering Group;
- The procedures established to prevent any problems relating to transition occurring in Year 8, if the majority of initiatives were aimed at Year 7 pupils;
- Issues relating to the procedures in place to allocate mentors or coaches to learners in Leeds and how the initiative had been implemented by other local authorities, including opportunities for children and young people to select their own coach;
- The ways in which the introduction of ILPs would impact upon teachers and pupils once the system had been fully established.

The Director of Children's Services stressed the need to build on the No Child Left Behind approach to obtaining sign up from schools, and confirmed that she would take a clear message from this meeting of the importance the Scrutiny Board attached to the ILP programme.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That a copy of the guidance associated with the introduction of ILPs be forwarded to Members for their consideration;
- (c). That a position statement on the strategy for meeting the ILP target be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 12.05 p.m. during the consideration of this item)

#### **48 Monitoring Reports - Update on Extended Schools**

A report was received by the Board from the Director of Children's Services which updated Members on the progress made in relation to the Extended Schools initiative in Leeds.

Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services and Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, Dorothy Smith, Strategic Manager, School and Improvement Planning and Ken Morton, Director of the Learning Communities Team all of Education Leeds were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Following a brief overview of the report, a debate ensued. The main areas of discussion were as follows:-

- The total number of clusters which were required in Leeds and the funding which was available to support them;

- Further information was requested on certain clusters, as the details of clustering arrangements for several areas of Leeds had not been included within the report;
- The possibility of alternative funding being available for those clusters in Super Output Areas;
- The basis and criteria used to fund the Extended Schools initiative and concerns about ensuring sustainability. This was strongly linked to the development of the Children's Services commissioning strategy;
- The problems experienced with PFI schools in relation to Extended Schools activities and the availability of such buildings to the wider community. Members were invited to raise specific examples directly with Ken Morton.
- Addressing those areas where schools were not participating in clusters, or where this was more difficult, for example in outlying villages;
- The importance of access to core services within each cluster's local area, whether or not such services were physically located on school sites.

Members requested that progress in securing appropriate variations in the early PFI contracts was reported back to the Board.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That progress in securing appropriate variations in the early PFI contracts be reported back to members of the Scrutiny Board.

#### **49 Ofsted Inspection Framework**

Further to Minute No 31, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which afforded Members the opportunity to discuss in more detail the effect that the new Ofsted School Inspection Framework has had on both schools in Leeds and the LEA.

Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive and Dorothy Smith, Strategic Manager, School and Improvement Planning, both of Education Leeds, were in attendance.

Following an overview of the issues raised in the report, in addition to a brief summary of the results from the recent Ofsted inspections which had taken place in Leeds, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- The procedures in place to enable an individual school to make representations about the way in which an Ofsted inspection has been conducted;
- Concerns were raised about the impact that several aspects of the new framework, such as the reduced period of notice and more frequent classroom observations were having on staff;
- The effect that the reduced number of grades within the new framework was having on schools and staff, and the actions being taken to notify parents about such procedural changes;
- The implication that satisfactory performance was no longer considered to be good enough.



Members then proposed that further consideration could be given to the effects that the new framework was having, and it was suggested that the regular report from Education Leeds to Executive Board which outlined any recent Ofsted inspection results could also be submitted to the Scrutiny Board for information.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the information detailed within the report be noted;
- (b). That further consideration be given by the Scrutiny Board to the effects that the new Ofsted Inspection Framework was having on both schools and staff in Leeds;
- (c). That the regular reports from Education Leeds to Executive Board which detail any recent Ofsted Inspection results be submitted to the Scrutiny Board for information.

**50 The Development of Corporate Consultation and Engagement**

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer, Executive Support which advised Members of the development of a more co-ordinated and corporate approach towards consultation by the council, and made particular reference to engagement with children and young people.

Louise Tonkinson, Communications and Marketing Manager was in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a copy of the Corporate Engagement Policy in addition to an extract from the Community Engagement Toolkit which specifically related to consultation with children and young people.

**RESOLVED –** That the contents of the report be welcomed.

**51 Young People's Scrutiny Forum - Draft Terms of Reference**

Members received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought the Board's approval of draft terms of reference for the Young People's Scrutiny Forum inquiry into Transport in Leeds.

Members proposed that the Scrutiny Forum's final inquiry report could also be submitted to Scrutiny Board (Development) and the Leeds Initiative Transport partnership for information.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That subject to the above amendments, the draft terms of reference for the Young People's Scrutiny Forum inquiry into Transport in Leeds be approved.

## **52 Work Programme**

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's Work Programme, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Having been invited to reflect on the success of the Scrutiny Board's monitoring meeting, it was proposed that the issue could be discussed further at the conclusion of the additional Board meeting scheduled for 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006.

It was agreed that the further review of the pilot charging policy for overdue children's library loans, requested at the last Board meeting, was scheduled for the January 2007 meeting of the Board.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report and the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report be noted, subject to the above additions.

## **53 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2006 at 10.00 a.m.  
(No pre-meeting scheduled)

(Meeting concluded at 12.50 p.m.)