

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors R D Feldman, R Harington, A Lamb,
B Lancaster, J Langdale, D Morton, T Murray and
K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Falkingham	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mr T Hales	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative

103 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Members and officers to the March meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). The Chair also welcomed Councillor D Morton to his first meeting of the Board.

104 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda, the following information to be considered under agenda item 10 – Education Standards Inquiry:-

- September Guarantee briefing
- NEET and Not Knowns in Leeds – Strategy Paper to Children Leeds Learning Partnership – Connexions, West Yorkshire.

The information was unavailable at the time of agenda despatch (Minute No. 111 refers).

105 Declaration of Interests

Councillor B Lancaster declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10, entitled, Education Standards Inquiry, due to being a LEA Governor (Vice-Chair) of Carr Manor High School (Minute No. 111 refers).

Councillor D Morton declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10, entitled, Education Standards Inquiry, due to being a LEA Governor of Horsforth Science School and St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School, Horsforth (Minute No. 111 refers).

Councillor K Renshaw declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10, entitled, Education Standards Inquiry, due to being a LEA Governor of Rodillian High School (Minute No. 111 refers).

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute No's. 109 and 111 refer).

106 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Ms J Morris-Boam, Ms T Kayani and Mrs S Knights and by Councillors C Campbell, J Elliott and S Hamilton.

107 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February, 2008 be approved as a correct record.

108 Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5th February, 2008 be noted.

109 Leeds Strategic Plan

Further to Minute No. 87 of the meeting held on 17th January, 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which referred Members to the revised draft Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-2011, together with a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy, Planning and Improvement), which set out the current position and timetable for developing the Plan.

Mariana Pexton, Deputy Director of Children's Services, and Dylan Griffiths, Project Manager (Policy), attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

In brief summary, the main issues highlighted were:

- The Board was advised that the text of the revised draft Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11 had been approved at the Executive Board meeting on 12th March, 2008. It was noted that the Plan did not include targets to be set against each improvement priority, although it was anticipated that all targets would be presented for approval at the Executive Board meeting on 14th May, 2008.
- It was reported that the text within the Plan could be amended further to strengthen the reference to the every child matters agenda.

- Members discussed the importance of partnership working in delivering the objectives of the plan, using examples relating to any practical help available for young people applying for jobs, particularly disadvantaged young people.
- Members emphasised the importance of working effectively with partner organisations. The Board was advised that partner organisations would be held to account for their part in delivering the Local Area Agreement.

The Chair thanked Dylan Griffiths, Project Manager (Policy), for his attendance.

(Councillor T Murray joined the meeting at 10.00 am during the consideration of this item)

(Councillor T Murray declared a personal and prejudicial interest on the basis of being Director of igen and withdrew from the meeting during the consideration of this item)

RESOLVED – That the current position with regard to the development of the Leeds Strategic Plan be noted.

110 Review of the Children and Young People's Plan 2007-2008

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report, which provided the Board with an overview of the 2008 Review of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Mariana Pexton, Deputy Director of Children's Services, attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

The main points discussed were:

- The Board was advised that the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) provided a strategy for improving outcomes for children and young people. It was reported that the first Leeds CYPP runs from 2006 to 2009 and work was ongoing to produce a CYPP for 2009-2012.
- The Board was informed that feedback in relation to the priorities for the CYPP review had been positive, although it had been suggested that improving persistent absenteeism at secondary schools should be included as a priority in the Plan for next year.
- The Board stressed the importance of continuing work on existing priorities, especially those relating to teenage conception and NEET figures.
- Members noted the data released in February, which showed that Leeds had not performed well in terms of reducing teenage conceptions. It was reported that the Scrutiny Board (Health and Adult Social Care) had been discussing some of the issues in greater detail.

The Board was also advised that tailoring action to more local levels of need was a priority for Locality Enablers.

- Members discussed persistent absenteeism and improving attendance in secondary schools. One Member reported that it was not just about ensuring that children returned to school, as there could be some children that lacked specific skills. The Deputy Director, Children's Services advised that improving attendance had been discussed at a recent Partnership meeting.
- The Board indicated that it was likely that bullying and persistent absenteeism would be included in the work programme for the next municipal year.

The Deputy Director, Children's Services was thanked for her attendance.

RESOLVED – That the Board's views on the review of the Plan be noted.

111 Education Standards Inquiry

Further to Minute No. 86 of the meeting held on 17th January, 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report in relation to sessions two and three of the Board's Inquiry into Education Standards.

Appended to the report was the agreed terms of reference. The Chair also admitted to the agenda the following information:

- September Guarantee briefing
- NEET and Not Knowns in Leeds – Strategy Paper to Children Leeds Learning Partnership – Connexions, West Yorkshire.

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

- Gary Milner – 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator
- Pat Heron – Partnership Director for Leeds Connexions
- Mary Brittle – NEET Co-ordinator

In brief summary, the main points discussed were:

- The Partnership Director for Leeds Connexions referred to the September Guarantee, which it was reported provided a guarantee of training for school leavers. The Board was advised this had been extended to include 17 year olds from September 2008.
- The Board was also advised that Local Authorities would be responsible for development and implementation of the Guarantee.
- Members expressed concern that the Guarantee was only an offer of learning, and the emphasis should be the level of take-up and the effect on the NEET and Not Known figures. The Partnership Director stated that tracking and monitoring was important.

- The Board noted that nationally, Leeds had the second worst figure for Not Known returns (November 2007). The Partnership Director stated that this was largely due to passive management of the NEET data, which it was reported had been contracted out. It was advised that it had not been possible to undertake an assessment, as a full copy of the database had not been provided. It was suggested that the Chief Executive and the Chief Legal Officer could be contacted by the Chair to pursue the matter.
- The Board discussed preventative measures for reducing NEET and Not Knowns. The NEET Co-ordinator advised that individual meetings with schools had taken place and future meetings would involve discussing available resources.
- The 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator advised that schools would be establishing Individual Learning Plans and training would be provided to assist with this.
- Members discussed the issues arising from the visits that had taken place so far as part of the inquiry.
- The Principal Scrutiny Advisor reported that Alun Rees, Headteacher of Extended Schools for Looked After Children would be attending the next Scrutiny Board meeting to discuss the looked after children cohort.

(Councillor K Renshaw and Ms C Foote both left the meeting at 11.30 am during the consideration of this item)

(Councillor T Murray declared a personal and prejudicial interest on the basis of being a LEA Governor of Thomas Danby College and Director of igen and withdrew from the meeting during the consideration of this item)

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

112 Young People's Scrutiny Forum - Scope of Inquiry

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which updated Members on progress with the Young People's Scrutiny Forum Inquiry.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor reported that 11 young people from the Youth Council and ROAR met on 23 February, 2008 to scope the Young People's Scrutiny Forum's next Inquiry on the environment. The Board was informed that the Forum would be focusing on waste management, sustainable building and education during its inquiry.

RESOLVED – That the scope for the Young People's Scrutiny Forum environment Inquiry be noted.

113 Work Programme

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

Appended to the report was the current version of the Board's work programme, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st March, 2008 to 30th June, 2008, which related to the Board's remit together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 8th February, 2008.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor advised that it might be necessary to arrange a further Scrutiny Board meeting and this was likely to take place on 24th April, 2008.

In relation to the Catching the Bus Working Group, it was reported that a further meeting had been organised to take place for a young person to attend Metro's meeting with the bus companies on 13th May, 2008.

The Chair thanked all Members for their attendance at Working Group meetings.

RESOLVED – That the attached work programme, as amended, be approved.

114 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 10th April, 2008 at 9.45 am in the Civic Hall, Leeds

Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 11.40 am)