

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 11TH DECEMBER, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, G Driver, R D Feldman,
B Lancaster, V Morgan, K Renshaw and E Taylor

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

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

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative

52 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the December meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). In particular, the Chair welcomed Ms C Johnson to her first meeting of the Board.

53 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 of the Inclusion Consultation Working Group, which was to be considered as part of agenda item 9. The working group had not yet met at the time of agenda despatch and the report needed to be considered by the Board to determine whether further action was required (Minute No. 59 refers).

54 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8, Scrutiny Inquiry – Education Standards – Entering the Education System, due to being Chair of the Children's Centre at Windmill Primary School (Minute No. 58 refers).

Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8, Scrutiny Inquiry – Education Standards – Entering the Education System, due to being a Member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance (Minute No. 58 refers).

Councillor Renshaw declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8, Scrutiny Inquiry – Education Standards – Entering the Education System, due to being a Governor at Rodillian High School (Minute No. 58 refers).

Mrs S Hutchinson declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8, Scrutiny Inquiry – Education Standards – Entering the Education System, due to being a provider of Early Years and Governor at Allerton Primary School (Minute No. 58 refers).

A further declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting (Minute No 58 refers).

55 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Elliott, J McKenna, Townsley, Mr Falkingham and Ms Kayani.

56 Minutes - 13th November 2008

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

57 Breeze Youth Promise

Further to Minute No. 40 of the meeting held on 16th October 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the Breeze Youth Promise. Appended for Members' information was a report in response to the Board's recommendations and a copy of the Breeze Youth Promise.

The Chair welcomed the following officers to the meeting:-

- Deborah Howe, Children's Involvement Advocate; and
- Dave Ashwell, Youth and Voluntary Sector Engagement Manager.

The Board was informed that consultation had been undertaken with young people on the Breeze Youth Promise. Feedback from the consultation indicated more local services were needed and further detail was required about the range of services on offer. The Children's Involvement Advocate reported that the final version was being finalised by ROAR and the Youth Council. The Board was informed that the Youth Council had established a Task Group to meet with Breeze, which involved discussing ways to develop the Promise and hold service providers to account.

Members' queries and comments were then invited and the main areas of discussion were:-

- Publicising the Promise.
- Engaging with young people and improving participation.
- Ensuring that young people had a safe place to go.
- Improving affordable access to services, particularly for those in deprived areas.
- Involving Elected Members and raising awareness of local services on offer.

The Board agreed that the appropriate way to continue to monitor delivery of the Promise would be for the working group on involving young people in scrutiny to meet with the young people's Breeze Youth Promise group.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance at the meeting.

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

(Councillor Cleasby joined the meeting at 10.30 am, during the consideration of this item).

58 Scrutiny Inquiry - Education Standards - Entering the Education System

Further to Minute No. 16 of the meeting held on 17th July 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the first formal session of the Board's inquiry into Education Standards – Entering the Education System.

Appended to the report was a copy of the draft terms of reference together with a background report for the Board's consideration.

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

- Andrea Richardson, Quality and Standards Manager (Early Years);
- Liz Bradley, Early Years Foundation Stage Improvement Manager;
- and
- Christine Halsall, Head of Primary School Involvement.

The evidence which had been submitted was introduced and presented to the Board by relevant officers. A question and answer session then ensued and the main areas of discussion were as follows:-

- The new statutory framework for assessment.
- The need to ensure continuity between settings, particularly early years into school.
- Engaging with cross sector agencies and providers.
- The need to maintain standards at all stages of transition.

- The process for assessing children with additional needs, particularly those with complex needs.
- Concern that some of the figures provided in the report were unclear.
- The need to improve standards for children at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) from a very early age.
- The need to improve services for families.
- Concern that there had been a poor response to the transitional reports issued to schools by some Early Years providers.
- The need for governance arrangements of Children's Centres to be representative of a broad range of services in all cases.
- The need for a greater focus in the report on the main practicalities, locality working and evidence of joined up working.
- The differences between a traditionally more holistic approach within early years settings, and schools' focus on the standards agenda.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance. Members were advised that the next session of the Board's Inquiry was March 2009.

RESOLVED – That the issues raised at the first session of the Inquiry, be noted.

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in this item due to being Chair of Leeds Citywide Family Forum).

59 Recommendation Tracking – Inclusion consultation

Further to Minute No. 40 of the meeting held on 17th July, 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which updated Members on progress against the recommendation on inclusion consultation.

Appended for Members' information was a report of the Inclusion Consultation Working Group.

The Board was advised that the Working Group recommended convening another meeting in January 2009 to consider further progress against the recommendation.

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

60 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 current 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 1st December 2008 to 31st March 2009, which related

to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 5th November, 2008.

The Board was informed that an item on safeguarding had been added to the work programme for January 2009. Due to the increased workload, Members agreed where possible to receive the quarterly updates in January 2009 for noting purposes only. Members also agreed to schedule an additional meeting of the Board on 7th May 2009.

RESOLVED – That subject to the comments raised at the meeting, the work programme be approved.

61 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 8th January 2009 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 11.28 am).