

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, G Driver, R D Feldman,
B Lancaster, J McKenna, V Morgan, K Renshaw and
C Townsley

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)
Mr B Wanyonyi	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership

92 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the March meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). In particular, the Chair welcomed to the meeting, Mr B Wanyonyi, the new parent governor representative (secondary), to his first meeting of the Board.

93 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 notes of the working group visits, which were to be considered as part of agenda item 9. The working group visits had only recently been completed and the notes were not available at the time of agenda despatch (Minute No. 100 refers).

The Chair also admitted to the agenda a report of the Meadowfield Primary School working group, which was to be considered as part of agenda item 10. The working group had only recently 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. 101 refers).

94 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations made at this point, however declarations were made at later points in the meeting (Minute No. 100 refers).

95 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Elliott, Councillor E Taylor, Mr Falkingham and Mrs Hutchinson.

96 Minutes - 5th February 2009

Subject to an amendment to Minute No. 82 to read 'Ms Foote declared an interest in relation to agenda item 7, Draft Report – MAST Inquiry, due to her involvement with the MAST team as an officer of NASUWT ...' it was

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

97 Matters arising from the minutes

One Member expressed concern that there had not been an opportunity at the February Council meeting for Members to comment on the minutes of the Scrutiny Board meeting held on 5th February 2009. The Chair reported that the Scrutiny Board approved the minutes, although they were also received by Council, where Members' opportunity to comment on them was subject to the Council Procedure Rules.

(Councillor Lancaster left the meeting at 9.52 am, during the consideration of this item).

98 Building Brighter Futures in Leeds – The Draft Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2014

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided the Board with an opportunity to respond to the draft Children and Young People's Plan as part of the plan's final consultation period.

Appended for the Board's consideration was the draft Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2014.

A presentation on the CYPP: Context, Need and Priorities was provided to Members, which focussed on the following key areas;

- Progress to date;
- Emerging themes;
- Agreed new priorities and themes; and
- Next steps for consultation and approval.

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

- Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services; and
- John Maynard, Strategic Leader, Children's Services.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- The role of youth workers and the need for greater funding in this area of work, especially in terms of 'places to go and things to do'.
- Looked after children, particularly the importance of early intervention and parental responsibility.
- Workforce reform and the need for adequate consultation with staff and unions on the implications of changes. It was reported that consultation during the development of the draft Plan had been undertaken through open forums, local partnership and cluster meetings.
- Concern about efficiency savings, especially since there was a need for greater resources to meet priorities, and a growing demand for services.
- Concern that the term 'places to go things to do' was shapeless and needed further explanation. It was reported that the term referred to the youth agenda, particularly issues around play, transport and accessibility.
- Challenges in terms of finding suitable places to go for young people.
- The need to provide greater support for workless families, especially in terms of links with NEET and teenage conception.
- Developing a holistic approach, particularly in relation to work undertaken with area committees, for example in brokering local solutions to concerns about the location of facilities for young people.
- Clarification that young people had been consulted through the Youth Council, youth groups, ROAR and Breeze, and plans for reporting back to young people on what had been achieved.
- The need to increase the number of apprenticeships and opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. It was reported that there was a programme for the development of apprenticeships, although the current economic climate was proving a challenge. In addition, reference was made to the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (ISCB), which had recently received a report on the commissioning of 14-19 pathways for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Confirmation that targets to be included in the Plan were still to be finalised.
- Future arrangements for the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress against the Plan.
- Concern that the Plan did not mean much to the person on the ground. It was reported that the Plan would be summarised as a 4-page document.
- It was agreed that if Members still had specific concerns then these should be forwarded to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted;

- (b) That if Members had any specific concerns then these be forwarded to the Principal Scrutiny Adviser; and
- (c) That the draft Plan be brought back to the Board's meeting in May, to report back on changes following the consultation period.

99 Sustainable Communities Act

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which provided the Board with background information on the Sustainable Communities Act and its implications for Leeds.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Dylan Griffiths, Project Manager (Policy), to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments.

The Board was invited to suggest proposals to be submitted under the Act and in brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- Increased powers for local authorities over traffic regulations around schools.
- Increased powers for local authorities to resist transfer of assets to academies or trusts.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) That the suggested proposals be explored further as part of the council's response to the Sustainable Communities Act.

100 Scrutiny Inquiry - Education Standards - Entering the Education System

Further to Minute No. 58 of the meeting held on 11th December 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the second formal session of the Board's inquiry into Education Standards – Entering the Education System.

Appended to the report was a copy of the agreed terms of reference and submission of evidence from Education Leeds, together with additional information requested arising from the first formal session held in December. In addition, the Board received the notes of the working group visits that had recently taken place.

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

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

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 importance of greater integration between schools and Children's Centres.
- Concern about access to services for children with special educational needs (SEN).
- National developments in Children's Centres, especially in relation to meeting the needs of the community and the self-evaluation process.
- The need to engage more effectively with local and voluntary sector providers.
- Involving Area Management to develop local solutions.
- The process for assessing private sector providers through quality improvement programmes.
- Proposed changes to SEN funding. It was reported that the Inclusion Sub-Group had undertaken a review and a new strategy was now in place.
- Governance procedures and the role of area management.
- The need to provide figures as numbers as well as percentages.
- Teaching requirements in nursery provision.
- Concern about poor outcomes for the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller Irish Heritage groups.
- Concern about consistency of the figures provided and how different ethnic groups were identified.
- Additional support programmes, particularly the raising achievement agenda.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b) That the issues discussed be incorporated in the draft report of the Board's Inquiry.

(Councillor Cleasby declared a personal interest in this item due to being a Governor at Westbrook Lane School).

(Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in this item due to being Chair of Windmill Children's Centre and a governor at Windmill Primary School and Middleton Primary School).

(Councillor Renshaw declared a personal interest in this item due to being a Governor at Rodillian High School, Seven Hills Primary School and East Ardsley Primary School).

101 Request for Scrutiny – Meadowfield Primary School

Further to Minute No. 66 of the meeting held on 8th January 2009, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report, which requested Members to consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Board's working group, which had been set-up to consider a range of issues arising from the building of the new school and children's centre.

The report of the Meadowfield Primary School working group was circulated at the meeting for the Board's consideration.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Mr Shaw, Chair of Governors at Meadowfield Primary School.

RESOLVED – That the Scrutiny Board commission a further meeting of the working group to look in more detail at the issues identified in the report.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.54 am, at the conclusion of this item).

102 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 March to 30th June 2009, which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 13th February 2009.

It was reported that Ms Morris-Boam was a Member of the Safeguarding Working Group – Preventative Duty not Safeguarding Working Group – Resources.

Members agreed to consider development of the CYPP at the May Scrutiny Board meeting.

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

103 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 1st April 2009 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 11.57 am.)