

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, K Bruce, D Cohen,
J Illingworth, W Kidger, J Lennox,
J McKenna, K Renshaw and R Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Mrs K Blacker – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Ms H Bellamy – Teacher Representative
Ms C Hopkins – Young Lives Leeds
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

56 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

57 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

58 Late Items

There were no late items.

59 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

60 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Drinkwater and Councillor Gruen, with Councillor McKenna as substitute. Apologies were also received from co-opted Members Jackie Ward, Anne Kearsley, Andrew Graham and Viv Bryden.

The Board also noted that, due to family circumstances, co-opted Member Viv Bryden has decided not to continue as the Board's Parent Governor (SEN) representative. Arrangements will therefore be made to fill this vacancy, and confirmed at a future meeting of the Board.

61 Minutes - 24th October 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October be agreed as a correct record.

62 The Impact of Child Poverty on Achievement, Attainment and Attendance - Tracking of Scrutiny Recommendations

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support and Director of Children and Families submitted a report that presented an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny inquiry into the impact of Child Poverty on Achievement, Attainment and Attendance.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Deputy Director, Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy
- Dave Roberts, Financial Inclusion Manager

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 2 – Achieved.
- Recommendation 3 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 4 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 5 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 6 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 7 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 8 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

- Recommendation 9 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 10 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 11 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 12 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 13 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 14 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)
- Recommendation 15 – Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

The following key points were also raised during consideration of this item:

- *Research with the University of Leeds.* Members queried the progress of research undertaken alongside the University of Leeds into the impact of child poverty, and were informed that the research report was expected to be completed by Easter 2019.
- *Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) event.* The Board requested circulation of the feedback from the OBA event held in October 2018 with council officers, elected members and partners from across the city to inform a new child poverty strategy. Members were assured that a report summarising the findings would be submitted to the Child Poverty Impact Board (CPIB), and following this would be provided to the Board for consideration.
- *Points of contact for families.* Members were keen to understand how families were identified as requiring additional support from early help teams and were informed that the Children’s Centres work closely with the NHS Health Visitors, which together enable wider access to families across the city.
- *Free School Meals (FSM).* Members were provided with an update regarding new guidance for Universal Credit and FSM. Members also noted that there is some confusion between universal FSM up to year two, and eligibility beyond that point, and the impact this is likely to have on take-up for some families. Members felt that guidance could be explained more to parents, to ensure opt-in from all families who are eligible.
- *Holiday hunger.* Members were informed that a funding bid had recently been submitted to fund additional schemes for school holiday activities that provide a meal, following the success of schemes throughout the summer holidays and Christmas in 2018. There was a suggestion from the Director of Children and Families for the status of the recommendation to be changed to ‘achieved’, however Members felt that monitoring was necessary whilst the funding bid process was ongoing. Members were keen that schemes captured children who may be experiencing poverty, but did not qualify for FSM, and were

assured that activities were available to all families during the school holidays.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- b) That the above status of recommendations be approved.

63 OfSTED Inspection Report

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report that introduced the findings of the recent OfSTED inspection of Children's Services as presented to the Executive Board at its meeting on 19th December 2018.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Deputy Director, Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy

The Executive Member for Children and Families introduced the report, noting the many years of hard work and paid testament to the social work teams working with families in Leeds. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, congratulated the Executive Members and Senior Officers present, along with all of the staff within the children and families directorate. Many Members joined the Chair in offering thanks and comments of support for the progress made to reach the 'outstanding' judgement.

Members commented that the only domain which achieved a 'good' rather than 'outstanding' rating in the OfSTED report was in relation to children looked-after and care leavers. Members requested more information around projects undertaken to improve this aspect, and were informed that the 'good' rating was largely due to the use of external residential placements which was being addressed. Members sought clarity as to whether the directorate work in partnership with Adult Social Care for care leavers for the transitional period leading up to and beyond the 25th birthday of a care leaver, and were assured that partnership work was ongoing.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

64 Performance update for March 2018 to September 2018

The Director of Children and Families presented a summary of performance information relating to outcomes for Leeds children and young people.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Deputy Director, Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy

The Director of Children and Families introduced the report, informing the Board of the intention to share the recently updated service plan with the Board following agreement at Executive Board in March 2019.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Special Guardianship Orders*. Members sought more clarity on the Leeds approach to Special Guardianship Orders, and were informed that there is a large cost associated with the legal process, compared to kinship caring arrangements. However, Members were assured that both areas benefit from continued investment and are considered based on the needs of the child.
- *Number of parents who have had more than one child enter the care system*. Members noted that this indicator had only referenced mothers and that future reports should be reflective of both parents.
- *Young people who are NEET or 'not known'*. Members requested more information around the patterns for those who are NEET or 'not known', and were informed that some of the figures are expected to be impacted by the summer period between pupils being offered places at college or sixth form, and whether or not they enrol in September.
- *Persistent absence*. Members expressed concerns about the number of children in need who were persistently absent, and were assured that a range of initiatives were in place to address the issue, such as the Families First programme to encourage school attendance and support for education, and individual visits to pupils in secondary schools who are regularly absent.
- *Care Leavers*. Members enquired as to whether the affordable transport initiative set out in the report would be available to Care Leavers, and were informed that support is provided dependant on the needs of the individual, which will often but not always include affordable transport provision.
- *Exclusions*. There was some concern about the number of fixed term exclusions, which members heard was likely to, in part, be due to the reduction in permanent exclusions. Members felt that more support is necessary for schools, to ensure that they adhere to recently released national guidance for exclusions. Members heard that one school accounted for a large proportion of exclusions in the reporting period, but that this school had now changed academy provider and the figures had significantly reduced.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

Councillors Stephenson and Renshaw left the meeting at 11:50 am during the discussion of this item.

65 Financial Health Monitoring

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report that introduced the Financial Health Monitoring 2018/19 (Month 7) report presented to the Executive Board at its meeting on 19 December 2018.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Deputy Director, Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance, Children and Families

The Chair requested that Items 10 and 11 be discussed together to allow for discussions around the financial health monitoring to feed into comments on the initial budget proposals.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

66 Initial 2019/20 Budget Proposals

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report that introduced details of the initial 2019/20 budget proposals presented to the Executive Board at its meeting on 19 December 2018.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Deputy Director, Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance, Children and Families

The Chief Officer for Resources and Strategy introduced the initial budget proposals and the Board noted the context of the projected overspend within

the 2018/19 C&F budget and the continuing challenges for 2019/20 which were planned for – inflation, particularly pay inflation; and demand and demography challenges associated with children looked after and transport.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Funding provision for SEND.* Members expressed concerns around the level of funding available to support children with special educational needs and disabilities. Members heard that following recognition from the government that the High Needs Block was significantly underfunded, some additional funding was received in December 2018. However, Members heard that the funding was only confirmed for 2018/19 and 2019/20, with £1.76m allocated to each year. Whilst noting that the Department of Education was complimentary in terms of how the High Needs Block had been managed in Leeds, no further funding commitment had been forthcoming.
- *External Legal Dispersement costs.* There was some discussion around the use and cost of external legal dispersement costs. It was noted that the use of the West Yorkshire Legal Framework in future would aim to achieve a reduction in external legal costs – which were dependent on the complexity of the cases dealt with by external legal service suppliers.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the 2019/20 budget proposals as presented be noted.
- (b) That the Board's comments are reflected as part of the Scrutiny submission to Executive Board for its consideration.

67 Best Council Plan Refresh 2019/20 - 2020/21

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report that introduced the Executive Board report from 19th December 2018, presenting proposals to refresh the Best Council Plan for the period 2019/20 – 2020/21.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Resources and Sustainability
- Tim Rollett, Intelligence and Policy Manager

The Executive Member for Resources and Sustainability introduced the item, informing the Board that the priorities for 2019/20 – 2020/21 had largely remained the same, with the addition of the recently developed Inclusive Growth Strategy.

The Chair made particular reference to the recommendation put forward by Scrutiny last year in terms of making 'supporting healthy, active lifestyles' a Best Council Plan priority or city-wide obsession in accordance with existing efforts to develop a sustainable whole systems approach towards physical activity for Leeds. Other Members also supported the suggestion that 'active

lifestyles' should be a future relentless focus which therefore warrants more prominence as part of the Best Council Plan.

Discussion identified the challenges which prevented the take up of activities – such as cost, access and availability – and the disparity of leisure centre/activity provision across the city, particularly in areas of high housing density.

Members also noted the importance of good air quality in the more deprived areas of the city when 'free' forms of exercise, such as walking and running outside, are encouraged. The Executive Member for Resources and Sustainability noted the introduction of the Clean Air Zone, to address the environmental issues with outdoor activity, along with the Council's commitment to investing in leisure centres, and suggested that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy could be more prominent in the plan. The Board also identified the need for a review to better communicate the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and to seek to identify and address the barriers to activity.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Best Council Plan Refresh initial proposals be noted.
- (b) That the Board's comments are reflected as part of the Scrutiny submission to Executive Board for its consideration.

Councillors Cohen and Kidger left the meeting at 12:20pm during discussion of this item.

68 Work Schedule

The Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's Work Schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year. In doing so, Members agreed to hold an additional meeting of the Board and for this to be scheduled for 24th April 2019 at 10 am. At that stage, the Chair advised that the need to also hold a meeting in May was still yet to be determined.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the outline work schedule, as presented, be agreed.
- (b) That an additional meeting of the Board is scheduled for Wednesday 24th April 2019 at 10.00 am.

69 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 6th March 2019 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 am).

(The meeting concluded at 12:45 pm).