

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 22ND JANUARY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, N Dawson, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, C Howley, A Hussain,
J Illingworth, W Kidger, J Lennox,
A Marshall-Katung, K Renshaw, K Ritchie
and R. Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs K Blacker – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Mrs H Bellamy – Teacher Representative
Ms E Holmes – Young Lives Leeds
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children / Care Leavers Representative

60 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

61 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

62 Late Items

There were no late items.

63 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

64 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors C Gruen and P Drinkwater. Councillors N Dawson and K Ritchie were in attendance as substitutes.

The Board also formally acknowledged that due to personal circumstances, Anne Kearsley had resigned from the Board as the co-opted Early Years representative. The Chair thanked Anne for her support in her role as Early Years Representative, as well as her support to Children and Families Services in previous roles.

65 Minutes - 27th November 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held 27 November 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

66 The Post-16 Meadows Park Partnership and wider strategic review of Post-16 education in Leeds.

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that provided an update on the Scrutiny Board's consideration of the Post-16 Meadows Park Partnership linked to the wider strategic review of Post-16 education in Leeds.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite, Head of Learning Inclusion

In introducing this item, the Chair highlighted that in September 2019, the Board expressed a wish to undertake further scrutiny to better understand the rationale associated with the decision made by the NW SILC (Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre) and Benton Park School to dissolve the Post-16 element of the Meadows Park partnership arrangement. The Chair further explained that, in view of any broader implications, the Board had agreed to consider this matter within the context of reviewing the city's Post-16 education offer for individuals with SEND. Linked to this, the Board would be feeding into and closely monitoring the forthcoming strategic review of Post-16 education in Leeds, which will include a focus on vulnerable learners and young people with SEND.

The Chair highlighted that a working group meeting of the Scrutiny Board had been held on 14th January 2020 with representatives from the Meadows Park Partnership and also the Children and Families Directorate. At this point, the Chair acknowledged that some of the families affected by the decision to dissolve the Post-16 element of the Meadows Park partnership were pursuing

their own complaint and therefore made the clear distinction regarding the role of the Scrutiny Board, which is to determine whether there are any broader issues surrounding this decision that warrant attention as part of the strategic review into Post-16 education provision.

The Chair then invited those Board Members present at the working group meeting to provide feedback to the full Scrutiny Board, along with the Head of Learning Inclusion who was also present at the working group meeting.

The following key issues were raised during the Board's discussion:

- The Board discussed the distinction between partnership provision and resource provision. It was noted that there are no legal contracts underlining any partnership arrangements as the desired outcomes were based around the development of positive relationships between schools.
- It was highlighted all of the SILCs have developed informal partnership arrangements within both primary and secondary mainstream schools.
- With regard to those SILCs wishing to convert into academies, it was noted that the Council would be working with them to encourage any existing positive partnerships to continue as part of any changeover specification.
- It was highlighted that the Council is unable to direct schools. As such, its main role is to influence and facilitate cooperation. However, the Board was pleased to learn that the Council was exploring how future partnership arrangements could be formalised to provide greater security and also a clear role for the Council while still enabling schools to continue developing positive relationships and outcomes.
- The Board stressed the importance of having effective communication and meaning engagement with students and their parents/carers, with the acknowledgement that such communications could have been better in relation to the Post-16 Meadows Park Partnership.
- Moving forward, the Board recognised the importance of ensuring that Leeds has the best possible provision and a range of provision with a range of pathways for Post-16 learners and particularly vulnerable learners.
- The Chair referenced forthcoming Outcome Based Accountability events linked to the strategic review of Post-16 education in Leeds and also advised Board Members that future sessions on this matter will be scheduled into the Board's work programme accordingly.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report be noted;

- b) That future discussions linked to the strategic review of Post-16 education be scheduled within the work programme.

67 Performance update for April 2019 to September 2019

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided a summary of performance information relating to outcomes for Leeds children and young people. This included an update on the 2018-23 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and a position statement on the new 3As Strategy.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Phil Mellen, Deputy Director for Learning
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Chris Hudson, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader

The Executive Member for Children and Families introduced the report, noting key messages from the performance data within the context of an increasing child population in the most deprived areas of Leeds.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Children Looked After.* In response to a query around the increase in children looked after, Members were advised that there is continued targeted early support and intervention, particularly in the most deprived areas in line with the priority neighbourhoods approach as well as universal services across the city.
- *Healthy lifestyles and physical activity.* In response to a query, Members were advised that meaningful performance data in relation to the number of young people physically active is difficult to capture. Members felt that further effort should be taken to understand the level of activity amongst children across the city. Members also noted the reduced rate of childhood obesity and were informed that the whole system approach to healthy families had had significant impact.
- *Refugee children and young people.* Members commented on the limited data set in relation to refugee children and young people across the city. Members were informed that although a detailed data set is collected for unaccompanied refugee children as they are monitored as children looked after, children with parents and guardians are not always known to authorities and therefore the same level of monitoring of their outcomes does not take place.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

Councillor K Renshaw left the meeting at 11:55 a.m. during discussion of this item.

68 Financial Health Monitoring 2019/20 - Month 7 (October)

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that introduced information regarding the projected 2019/20 financial health position of those service areas that fall within the Board's remit at Month 7 (October 2019).

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources and Strategy
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance, Resources and Housing

The Head of Finance introduced the report and summary position, noting the reduction from the previous cycle in overspend to £475k and the continued challenge in relation to external residential placements.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

69 Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/2021

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that introduced the Executive Board's initial budget proposals for 2020/21 for consideration, review and comment on matters and proposals that fall within the Scrutiny Board's remit.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Resources
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources and Strategy
- Simon Criddle, Head of Finance, Resources and Housing

The Head of Finance introduced the report and initial budget proposals for the 2020/21 financial year, highlighting key areas receiving supplementary funding through grants that was expected to offset additional areas of spending. Members were advised that the initial budget proposals did not include any cuts to staffing or frontline services. The Chair noted the improved position to previous years.

In reviewing the report, the Board particularly noted the savings proposals linked to the ongoing review work surrounding passenger transport provision and received assurance that the innovative approach being adopted to provide bespoke family needs based transport for children and young people with SEND would continue.

The Board was also pleased to acknowledge the key role and influence of the Children and Young People's Plan in shaping the development of the Budget proposals for the Directorate.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the 2020/21 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.

70 Best Council Plan Refresh 2020/21 to 2024/25

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that introduced proposals to refresh the Best Council Plan for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25 and provided an opportunity for the Scrutiny Board to consider and comment on any specific aspects that fall within the Board's remit.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor James Lewis, Executive Member for Resources
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer for Partnerships and Health
- Tim Rollett, Intelligence and Policy Manager, Resources and Housing

The Executive Member for Resources gave a brief introduction to the report and Best Council Plan refresh.

Members noted their support for the inclusion of the climate emergency and embedding sustainability at the centre of the plan, and queried the areas of focus for Children and Families.

In response, Members were advised that the matter was of great interest to children and young people across the city, and were informed that there are a number of ongoing projects with the Youth Council as well as schools and youth groups, including the upcoming climate focused Youth Summits.

The Board continued to emphasise the importance of active lifestyles, particularly for young people and their family groups and the benefits this can bring in terms of general health and wellbeing, mental health and improving outcomes for young people. With its strong links to the Climate Emergency,

the Board recognised that the existing “My Health My School” survey could provide a good opportunity to gather the direct views of young people on such matters as well as being another way to promote greater awareness.

In discussing the city wide impact of the Climate Emergency, the Board also recognised the opportunity for the Best Council Plan to reflect on the broader desire of Leeds citizens to become involved in action to address the Climate Emergency.

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.

71 Referral to Scrutiny Board

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented a referral from the Executive Board in relation to the inspection of Youth Justice Services in Leeds.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Steve Walker, Director of Children and Families

The Executive Member for Children and Families introduced the report, providing some of the background to the referral made by Executive Board and the suggested value of input from scrutiny in terms of a local review of services as well as the upcoming national review of Youth Justice Services.

Members were supportive of the referral, but noted the need for multi-agency professionals to be invited to attend any future discussions to ensure that the Board had a holistic understanding of services, and if possible, to include evidence from the inspectorate.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- b) That further consideration of this matter be added to the work programme in discussion with the Chair.

72 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board’s Work Schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

There were two requests for additions to the work schedule from Members:

- 1) *Unexplained exits from mainstream education and unregistered education provision* - Members sought clarification surrounding registered and unregistered education provision. Linked to this, the Director explained that the data the local authority is able to obtain is limited to cases monitored by Area Inclusion Partnerships, and that the data set for placements directly arranged by individual schools / academies or families is unavailable. It was agreed that further detail surrounding the number of pupils being placed in alternative provision via the Area Inclusion Partnerships would be shared with the Board as part of its first inquiry session into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling.
- 2) *Climate change and schools*. A Member requested that the Board consider the climate emergency in the context of schools, teachers and young people. Members were advised that the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) had scheduled an additional meeting for Monday 27 April 2020 to consider engagement with schools and young people. It was suggested that to avoid duplication of work, it would be more appropriate for Members to join discussions at the CEAC meeting.

RESOLVED – That the draft work schedule be updated to reflect the Board’s discussions during today’s meeting.

73 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 5th February 2020 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 am)

At the end of the meeting, Steve Walker, the Director of Children and Families informed the Board that it would be his last meeting as he was stepping down as Director of Children and Families. The Board was advised that Sal Tariq, current Deputy Director, would be taking on the role of Director from February. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the Director for his years of hard work and his commitment to the work of scrutiny.