

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

WEDNESDAY, 1ST APRIL, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, J Elliott, R D Feldman,
B Lancaster, V Morgan, K Renshaw, E Taylor and
C Townsley

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr I Falkingham	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
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
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104 Exempt Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information, on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as detailed below:-

- (i) Agenda Item 13 (Minute No 115 refers) – Update on OfSTED Inspections and Schools Causing Concern – Primary – Annex 2 of the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds – Paragraphs 10.4 (1) and 10.4 (2) of the Council's Access to information Procedure Rules – information relating to any individual or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual;
- (ii) Agenda Item 14 (Minute No 116 refers) – Update on OfSTED Inspections and Schools Causing Concern – Secondary - Annex 2 of the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds – Paragraphs 10.4 (1) and 10.4 (2) of the Council's Access to information Procedure Rules – information relating to any individual or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

105 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda as late items of urgent business the following information, which had not been available at the time of agenda despatch, but which was crucial to the discussion of those particular agenda items:-

- (i) Agenda Item 10 (Minute No 112 refers) – Recommendation Tracking – Update on progress in implementing some of the Board’s previous recommendations;
- (ii) Agenda Item 11 (Minute No 113 refers) – Safeguarding – Report on the proceedings of the two Working Groups – Resources and Preventative Duty – established by the Board in January. These meetings had taken place on 17th and 19th March respectively.

106 Declaration of Interests

Mr I Falkingham declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 13 (Minute No 115 refers) – Update on OfSTED Inspections and Schools Causing Concern – Primary – in his capacity as a parent of a child attending Quarry Mount Primary School and a Parent Governor at North West SILC (including acting as an advisor to the Manager of the SILC Children’s Centre).

See also later Minute Nos 110 and 116.

107 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Cleasby, Ms C Johnson, Ms J Morris –Boam and Ms T Kayani.

108 Minutes - 5th March 2009

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

109 Young People’s Scrutiny Forum – ‘Protecting our Environment’

The Board considered the final report of the Young People’s Scrutiny Forum on its chosen topic this municipal year, ‘Protecting Our Environment’.

Present at the meeting, and responding to Members’ queries and comments, were Gaby Paradis of The Project, Connor Prior, Leeds Youth Council representative on the Forum, and Laura Nield, of the Council’s Scrutiny Support Unit, who co-ordinated the Forum’s activities.

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

- The Board congratulated the Young People's Forum on the excellent work it had done in producing the report, and on the report content. The Board took the Forum's work extremely seriously, and would be ensuring that the next necessary steps would be taken to follow-up the Forum's report. The Chair requested that this message be conveyed back to the Forum;
- It was agreed that the report should be referred to the Council's Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) for its consideration, that the response of Council officers to the report's recommendations be referred back to the Leeds Youth Council Scrutiny Forum for its comments, after which there would be a further report back to the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) on the outcome;
- The lack of a reference in the report to the Forum's views on incineration of waste, and whether or not this was an option which the City Council should pursue. It was suggested that perhaps this was an issue which could be further explored when the report was considered by the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods);
- A view was expressed that the Council's current recycling targets up to 2020 were not challenging enough;
- A suggestion was made that schools could get much more involved in recycling, not only in respect of their own waste, but perhaps also in terms of neighbourhood recycling centres being sited at schools. This would also present an opportunity for pupils to become actively engaged in 'managing' the site, thus enhancing skills and raising awareness even further.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be noted, and the Board's congratulations be conveyed to the Young People's Forum;
- (b) That the Forum's report be referred to the Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods);
- (c) That the formal response of Council officers to the report's recommendations be referred back to the Leeds Youth Council Scrutiny Forum for its comments, after which there would be a further report back to the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) on the outcome;

110 Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan - Priorities Update

As part of its process of receiving regular progress reports on the Council's Children and Young People's Plan, the Board considered a report submitted by the Director of Children's Services which included updates on two particular aspects of the Plan, the anti-bullying strategy and services for children and young people with mental and emotional health needs.

In attendance at the meeting were Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Hilary Farmery of Education Leeds and Ashley Wyatt, from CAHMS, who responded to Members' queries and comments. In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:-

- The next steps for the Children's Trust arrangements (Paras. 2.7 and 2.8 of report refer);
- The current consultation exercise in respect of the updated Children and Young People's Plan 2009-2014 (Para. 4.5 refers);
- Current anti-bullying strategy and initiatives (Para. 5.2 onwards);
- Current services and proposed improvements to services aimed at children and young people with mental and emotional health difficulties (Para. 5.15 onwards);
- Due to the increased measures put in place to tackle bullying, and the growing confidence of young people to report bullying, it was anticipated that initially there would be an increase in the number of instances being reported, but this should show a reduction as policies and strategies came into play and issues were addressed. A fairer assessment of how effectively the strategy was working would be gained in 18 months time, when detailed information would be available to the Board;
- Whilst acknowledging bullying as a very real problem and welcoming initiatives to tackle it, concern was raised regarding the effect this would, and was, having on school-based staff, in terms of increased workload in tackling bullying, and often shortened break times in an attempt to reduce the opportunities for bullying;
- Comment was made that the initiatives also concentrated on in-school bullying, rather than out of school bullying, or on so-called cyber-bullying. Was any work done with the families of children who were either being bullied, or were doing the bullying?
- The problems of special needs pupils was discussed, both in terms of being bullied and whether they were sufficiently equipped to take advantage of the reporting avenues, but also cases of bullying carried out by special needs pupils, particularly at primary school, and whether these were appropriately addressed.
- Concern was expressed regarding the use of valuable Educational Psychologist time in assessing the anti-bullying pilot project within Ralph Thoresby High School, and whether this was having a detrimental effect on the Education Authority's ability to complete timely SEN statements.

The officers responded to the issues raised. In terms of the possible effect on school-based staff of the anti-bullying strategy, an assurance was given that this issue would be picked up as part of the JCC process. Out of school bullying was more difficult to directly address, but there were currently 20 Safer Schools Partnerships across Leeds, with a police presence on site at least 3 days a week, and plans to roll-out this initiative across Leeds. Work was done with families of bullied pupils and families where bullying was identified as a problem. Self-esteem workshops, skilling youngsters to cope with bullying, as well as the peer mentors for children identified as vulnerable were other initiatives. All Children's Services staff were being issued with guidance relating to bullying, and this would include reference to special needs children. Only two psychologists were involved, for a limited time, in evaluating the pilot project at Ralph Thoresby High School.

Reference was also made to the national CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) review, and the fact that Leeds was taking part in a pilot on 'Targeted mental health in Schools', which would encompass not just the specialist staff in schools, but the more generic staff as well. This was in addition to all the other work identified in the report, and that recently reported to the Board at a previous meeting.

In conclusion, the Board felt it was important that the initiatives were co-ordinated, to provide a wrap-around service for young people both in school and out of school, as an integral part of the Safeguarding agenda. There also needed to be more work done on establishing improvement targets against which future progress could be measured.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the update report be received and noted.

(N.B. Councillor Townsley declared a personal interest in this item, in relation to his daughter, who is a teacher at Ralph Thoresby High School).

111 Performance Report Quarter 3 2008/09

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report outlining progress against a raft of both national and local performance indicators for the period October to December 2008, and highlighting initiatives being taken to tackle areas of under-performance.

In attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments, were Councillor Stewart Golton, Executive Member Children's Services, Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services and John Maynard, Children's Services.

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

- Recognition was given to the large areas of good performance contained within the report;
- The Board welcomed the inclusion of some numbers in the reports, rather than just percentage figures, which could by themselves be meaningless or misleading. However, Members asked for this to be extended further in future reports;
- NI 92 – Narrowing the Gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest. Members expressed concern at the widening of the gap by 1.5%, and that the improvements witnessed in 2007 had not been maintained;
- Reference was made to possible 'hot housing' of pupils, especially at Key Stage 2, by too much concentration on literacy and numeracy teaching in order to meet national targets, and the detrimental effect this could have at Key Stage 3, where the same levels of progress proved unsustainable. However, Members welcomed new local targets focused on closing the gap, which signified a more inclusive approach to the curriculum;

- Alleged lack of funding for Breakfast Clubs was referred to, and the detrimental effect this could have on children's academic performance if they were not getting a proper start to the day;
- The need to achieve a balance between academic and vocational studies, and the work being done in this area;
- NI 43 – Young People within the Youth Justice system receiving a conviction in Court who are sentenced to custody. This particular performance indicator had various contributory factors affecting performance, as outlined in the report. It was also interlinked with other indicators such as NI 44, 45, 46 and 111, also detailed in the report. The attitudes and actions of local Magistrates played a huge part in performance under this indicator, and discussions were taking place with the local Bench. Work was also ongoing with the Prison Reform Trust on this subject, and further details would be supplied to the Board;
- Local indicator LKI -IYSS3 – The percentage of young people aged 13-19 gaining a recorded outcome compared to the percentage of young people in the local authority area. Frustration was expressed, given the stated good level of contact between young people and the Youth Service, that an apparent problem with adequately recording outcomes was causing under-performance in this area;
- Local indicator BV - 46 – percentage of half-days missed due to total absence in primary schools maintained by the local education authority. The lack of real numbers, as opposed to percentages, was again commented upon. It was explained that a lot of the problems associated with this particular performance indicator were due to sickness absence or parents taking pupils on often extended breaks outside of official school holiday periods. A lot of work was being done to tackle this latter issue. Actual numbers would be supplied to the Board;
- Reference was also made to possible links between the number of Youth Workers and youth activities in some parts of the City and a possible link to youth crime. Limited resources meant that choices had to be made, and often that choice was to concentrate resources on perceived areas of greatest need, often in inner-City Wards.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments and requests for further information, the report be received and noted.

112 Recommendation Tracking

The Board received its regular update report on recommendation tracking from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, the system whereby Scrutiny Boards received quarterly reports on progress in implementing the recommendations of previous Inquiries.

The Board made the following decisions in respect of outstanding recommendations:-

- (i) Adoption – Recommendation 3 (Agenda Page 73) – Category 4 maintained – progress acceptable, continue to monitor;

- (ii) Youth Services – Recommendation 7 (Agenda Page 75) – Category 5 – progress not acceptable in respect of the survey – report back to next meeting;
- (iii) Catching the Bus – Recommendations 2 and 5 (Agenda Pages 76 and 77) – Category 4 maintained – progress acceptable, continue to monitor;
- (iv) Inclusion – Recommendations 1 and 2 (Agenda Pages 78-81 refer) – Category 2 – completed – no further action required;
- (v) Services for 8 – 13 year olds – Recommendations 1, 3 and 10 (Agenda Pages 82, 83 and 86 refer) – Category 2 – no further action required;
- (vi) Services for 8 – 13 year olds – Recommendations 5 and 9 (Agenda Pages 84 and 85 refer) – Category 4 – progress acceptable, continue to monitor.
- (vii) Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy – concern was expressed regarding delays in implementing the Strategy, including the lack of a scheduled report to the Council's Executive Board. Members requested confirmation of the revised timetable for implementation.

(N.B. Councillor Taylor left the meeting at 11.50 am, at the conclusion of this item).

113 Scrutiny Inquiries - Safeguarding

Further to Minute no 71, 8th January 2009, the Board received reports from the meetings of the Resources Working Group and the Preventative Duty Working Group held on 17th and 19th March 2009 respectively.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report of the Working Group meetings be received and noted;
- (b) That the Working Groups continue to meet, either separately or jointly, to discuss and consider the issues identified in the reports before the Board today, and report back to the Board in May.

114 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's work programme, updated to reflect decisions taken at previous meetings, together with a relevant extract of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st April – 31st July 2009 and the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 4th March 2009.

Further to Minute No 111, reference was made to the need for a further report back with information on Breakfast Clubs.

RESOLVED – That subject to any changes necessary as a result of today's meeting, the work programme be received and noted.

115 Update on OfSTED Inspections and Schools Causing Concern - Primary

The Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 13th February 2009, which provided an overview of the performance of primary schools in Leeds during 2007/08, based on national and local performance indicators, monitoring activities undertaken by school improvement advisers and the outcome of OfSTED inspections undertaken since September 2007. The report also outlined the actions being taken by Education Leeds to address particular issues.

Annex 2, relating to primary schools giving cause for concern, was regarded as containing exempt information i.e. information relating to particular individuals, or information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual. As such, it was regarded by the report author that the public interest in disclosing the information was outweighed by the need for it to remain exempt in order to secure improvement and increase confidence in those schools, which would be adversely affected by disclosure of the information. The Board had earlier accepted this argument (see Minute No 104) and had resolved to exclude the press and public during the consideration and discussion of Annex 2 to the report.

In attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments, were Dorothy Smith and Christine Halsall of Education Leeds.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were;-

- The Board re-iterated its previous request for the inclusion of more actual numbers in these type of reports, not merely percentages;
- Reference was made to the decline in standards in maths and literacy at Key Stage 1, and action being taken to address this. Key Stage 2 performance was broadly in line with previous years, and Members were referred to Paragraph 3.2 of the report;
- Further to Minute No 111, reference was again made to the effects of concentrating on national targets at KS1 and KS2, by 'hot housing' pupils purely to achieve the Government's required standard and the subsequent dip in performance at KS3, whereby the performance of the bottom 20% of pupils actually deteriorated. In this respect, work was taking place in conjunction with the Early Years Service, on early identification and intervention to support pupils and parents, and the Extended Schools initiatives and the new national curriculum would also assist to combat this problem;
- With regard to the table contained in Paragraph 3.2.1 of the report, the Board requested a more detailed breakdown of which Leeds primary schools fell into which particular OfSTED category over the full cycle of inspections since the introduction of the new framework, compared to the national picture;
- Reference was also made to the potential benefits of Federations of Schools, in supporting small primary schools, which often faced problems attracting and retaining ambitious Heads.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments and requests for additional information, the report be received and noted.

(NB Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 12.03 pm, during the consideration of this item).

116 Update on OfSTED Inspections and Schools Causing Concern - Secondary

The Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 13th February 2009, which provided an overview of the performance of secondary schools in Leeds during 2007/08, based on national and local performance indicators and the outcome of OfSTED inspections, and including progress reports on schools with extended partnerships, trends of improvement and key priorities for priority groups.

Annex 2, relating to primary schools giving cause for concern, was regarded as containing exempt information i.e. information relating to particular individuals, or information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual. As such, it was regarded by the report author that the public interest in disclosing the information was outweighed by the need for it to remain exempt in order to secure improvement and increase confidence in those schools, which would be adversely affected by disclosure of the information. The Board had earlier accepted this argument (see Minute No 104) and had resolved to exclude the press and public during the consideration and discussion of Annex 2 to the report.

In attendance at the meeting, and responding to Members' queries and comments, were Dorothy Smith and Brian Tuffin of Education Leeds.

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

- Paragraph 3.1 of the report was highlighted, and the fact that 2008 was the first year that outcomes in Leeds secondary schools had been in line with national performance figures. This represented a huge improvement since 2003/04;
- The strengths and achievements of secondary education in Leeds (Agenda Page 252) were also highlighted;
- Reference was made to measures being introduced at the new Allerton High School to address the issues highlighted by OfSTED;
- Reference was also made, and concern expressed, regarding the comments in Annex 2 relating to ongoing difficulties relating to Elmete Central BESD SILC, with some Members expressing concern about its operation over a split site.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

(N.B. Councillor R D Feldman declared a personal interest in this item, in his capacity as a Governor of Allerton High School).

117 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 7th May 2009 at 9.45 am (Pre-Meeting 9.15 am).