

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 9TH JULY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, G Driver, B Gettings,
B Lancaster, K Renshaw and B Selby

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)

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

14 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the July meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

15 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda the draft terms of reference for the Board's inquiry into the implications of population growth for children's services in Leeds. The draft terms of reference were unavailable at the time of agenda despatch and needed to be considered as part of agenda item 11 (Minute No. 22 refers).

16 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Request for Scrutiny – City of Leeds High School, due to being a governor at South Leeds High School (Minute No. 19 refers).

Mrs Knights declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Request for Scrutiny – City of Leeds High School, due to being a governor at one of the feeder primary schools to City of Leeds High School (Minute No. 19 refers).

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute Nos. 19, 21 and 23 refer).

17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Dowson, R D Feldman, Kirkland and Taylor; and Co-opted Members: Mrs Hutchinson, Ms Kayani and Mr Wanyonyi.

18 Minutes - 11th June 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

19 Request for Scrutiny - City of Leeds High School

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented a request for scrutiny received from Councillors Ewens and Pryke relating to consultation on the proposal to close City of Leeds High School and replace it with an academy.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Pat Toner, Strategic Manager, Education Leeds and Councillor Ewens, who had been invited to present the request to the Board.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points in submitting the request were:

- Concerns that the methodology was undemocratic.
- Concerns about the lack of consultation other than with governors and staff at City of Leeds High School.
- Concerns about the limited timescale available to respond to the consultation.
- The lack of accountability and transparency in the process.

In response, the Strategic Manager, Education Leeds made the following points:

- Confirmation that 10 organisations wished to be considered as sponsors for Academies in Leeds.
- A number of meetings had taken place, which provided governors with an opportunity to express their views and engage with sponsors.
- Formal consultation was due to commence in September 2009, prior to conclusions being presented to the Executive Board.
- Consultation was taking place citywide and not just limited to the local community.
- The Secretary of State was responsible for determining the sponsor.

Questions and comments were invited and the key issues discussed were:

- Concerns about the lack of consultation prior to the March 2009 Executive Board.
- Concerns that the process was being forced through in order to meet government targets.
- Concerns about the consultation process across all schools in Leeds.
- Concerns that the uncertain future surrounding City Leeds High School, was having a negative effect on school in-take.

RESOLVED – That the Board establish a working group relating to the consultation process for school organisation proposals.

(Councillor Selby declared a personal interest in this item due to Parklands Girls' High School being in his ward).

20 Scrutiny Inquiry - 14-19 Education Review

Further to Minute No. 127 of the meeting held on 7th May 2009, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which updated Members on progress with the 14-19 education review.

A copy of the terms of the reference was appended to the report for the Board's information.

Pat Toner, Strategic Manager, Education Leeds, attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Developing proposals for area committees to influence priorities relating to children's services and learning provision.
- Developing the role of corporate carers and themed champions.
- Acknowledging the needs of young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the report and information appended to the report be noted.

21 Leeds Strategic Plan Performance Report for Quarter 4 2008/09

Further to Minute No. 111 of the meeting held on 1st April 2008, the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report which presented the quarter four performance results for Children's Services.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Children's Services Action Tracker Summary (Quarter 4 2008/09);
- Action Tracker Guidance and Children's Services Action Trackers (Quarter 4 2008-09); and
- Children's Services Performance Indicator Report (Quarter 4 2008-09).

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services) and Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning).

In addition, the following representatives attended the meeting:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Peter Storrie, Head of Performance and Information, Education Leeds;
- Nicola Engel, Head of Policy and Performance, Learning and Leisure; and
- Joedy Greenhough, Principal Policy and Performance Officer, Children's Services.

Key performance issues were highlighted and in brief summary the main areas of discussion were:-

- Acknowledgement of work being undertaken to reduce teenage conception.
- Concern about the figures for narrowing the gap (PI ref: NI92 and NI93) and the need to spread good practice across all extended services clusters.
- Ongoing concern about the NEET group. It was suggested that the Board hear from the new provider at some point in the future.
- Concern about primary school obesity and the need to ensure that appropriate safeguarding was in place.
- Concern about the percentage of half days missed in primary and secondary schools (Ref: BV-45 & BV-46). The Board was particularly concerned about persistent absenteeism and the need for a more sophisticated breakdown of statistics.
- Concern about schools that had stayed open in last year's bad weather being penalised in attendance statistics.
- Concern about the threshold for reviewing cases of school absence and the need for greater consistency in ensuring that the most serious cases were dealt with first.
- Confirmation that measurement of GCSE attainment by pupils with special educational needs was not at the expense of meeting the appropriate curriculum needs of this group of pupils (Ref: NI 105).

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

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in this item due to being LEA Governor (Vice-Chair) at Carr Manor High School).

(Mrs Knights declared a personal interest in this item due to being a Foster Carer and Member of the Leeds Admissions Forum).

22 Youth Service user and non-user surveys 2009

Further to Minute No. 125 of the meeting held on 7th May 2009, the Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented the results of the Youth Service user and non-user surveys 2009.

The following representatives from Children's Services attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- John Bradshaw, Curriculum Development Manager; and
- Jean Davey, Principal Youth Officer.

Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning) was also in attendance.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Concern about how the surveys were presented and the type of questions raised.
- The need for greater engagement with non-users of youth service provision, particularly through developing work with schools to promote services.
- Issues relating to confidence levels in surveys, and the appropriate number of responses required.
- The need to improve transport provision for young people with special educational needs to access youth provision.
- The role of area committees in shaping local provision.

RESOLVED – That the report and consultation findings be noted.

(Ms Morris-Boam left the meeting at 12.16 pm, Councillor Lancaster at 12.23 pm and Councillor Selby at 12.29 pm, during the consideration of this item).

23 Draft Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Inquiry - Population Growth

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited the Board to agree terms of reference for the Board's inquiry into the implications of population growth for children's services in Leeds. The draft terms of reference had been submitted for Members' consideration.

The Board was advised that the Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules Guidance Notes required that before embarking on an inquiry, the Board considered the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member. This inquiry had been requested by the Executive Member and Director of Children's Services. No further comments on the draft terms of reference were reported.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- The impact of the rise in population and the need to identify areas of concern.
- The impact on school places in some parts of the city.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
- (b) That the terms of reference for the inquiry be approved.

(Mr Falkingham declared a personal interest in this item due to being a Member of the Leeds Admissions Forum).

24 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which put forward proposals for 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 July to 31st October 2009, which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 17th June 2009.

In addition to work already agreed in June, the following areas of work were agreed:

- 21st Century Schools and Rose review (combined into a single inquiry with a primary focus)
- City of Leeds Request (The Principal Scrutiny Adviser agreed to e-mail the Board to establish Members interested in serving on this working group).

The Chair informed Members that there might be an opportunity to programme other potential areas for scrutiny later in the year.

RESOLVED – That the Board's Principal Scrutiny Advisor be requested to update and timetable the Board's work programme with a view to incorporating the above inquiries and areas of work.

25 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 17th September 2009 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 1.05 pm).