

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 28TH JANUARY, 2010

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, D Coupar, G Driver,
R D Feldman, B Gettings, G Kirkland, B Lancaster,
K Renshaw, B Selby and E Taylor

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)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

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

77 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

78 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated exempt 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 public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information so designated as follows:

The Leeds Residential Home Inspection Findings report and appendix referred to in Minute No. 89 under the terms of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4 (2) (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual), and on the grounds that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

79 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda as supplementary information, the draft interim scrutiny inquiry report - safeguarding, which was to be considered under agenda 10 (Minute No. 87 refers).

80 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Selby declared personal interests in relation to agenda item 8, Annual Standards Report – Primary, and agenda item 9, Annual Standards Report – Secondary, in his capacity as Governor at Grange Farm Primary, Cross Gates Primary and the Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee. He also declared a personal interest in his capacity as Member of the Parent Partnership Advisory Board. (Minute Nos. 86 and 87 refer)

Councillor Cleasby declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 12, Leeds Residential Home Investigation Findings, in his capacity as Deputy Executive Member. (Minute No. 89 refers)

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 12, Leeds Residential Home Investigation Findings, on the basis of having visited the Residential Home identified in the report. (Minute No. 89 refers)

81 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Co-opted Members, Ms N Cox (Parent Governor Representative (Special)) and Mrs S Hutchinson (Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership).

82 Minutes - 10th December 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

83 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 61 – Connexions Intensive Support Wedge Based Services

The Scrutiny Board was provided with a brief update in relation to the delegated decision to award the Connexions Intensive Support Wedge Based Services contract to igen. A copy of the Chief Executive's response to the Chair of the Scrutiny Board had been forwarded to Scrutiny Board Members for their information. In particular, the response notified Members of changes to the officer delegated decision process. The Scrutiny Board also noted that Councillor Hyde was attending Scrutiny Board (Central and Corporate Functions) on Monday 1st February, which was addressing the wider issue of procurement.

84 Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in Leeds: Outcomes and Wider Improvement Activity

The Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented the findings of the integrated Ofsted and Quality Care Commission announced inspection and provided a brief update on some of the activities that were supporting improvement in Children's Services.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services) and the following officers:

- Sandie Keene, Interim Director of Children's Services;
- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services; and
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:

- Work being undertaken by the Improvement Board with regard to the Improvement Plan due to be agreed by the Executive Board in March.
- Clarification that the reporting arrangements for the Improvement Board were to the DCSF and the council's executive. Members asked if it would be possible to receive minutes of the Improvement Board and agreed to invite the Chair of the Improvement Board to attend a future Scrutiny Board meeting.
- Concern about leadership and management arrangements. The Executive Member (Children's Services) advised that there had been no direct criticism in the inspection report in relation to Children's Services structures and referred to the structure review that was currently taking place.
- Update on Social Care Vacancies. The Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care reported that there were 30 frontline vacancies (14.1%), which was below the average for the region. The department had already appointed 8 advanced practitioners and the second wave of recruitment was underway.
- Acknowledgement that local authorities were experiencing difficulties recruiting social care workers. To assist with this, Leeds was investing further resources in administrative and support work.
- Improvements to decision-making through the quality assurance process.
- The review of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board.
- Clarification about the true cost of delivering an effective contact, referral and assessment service, which Ofsted reported had not yet been evaluated and remained unknown. Members were advised that this area of work was being addressed through a formal business process review.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted, and that the Improvement Plan come to the Scrutiny Board once it had been agreed and subsequently on a regular basis.

85 Draft Interim Scrutiny Inquiry Report - Safeguarding

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the draft interim report, specifically addressing the issue of children's assessment and care management social worker resources, prior to the finalisation of budget proposals for 2010/11.

Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services) and the following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Sandie Keene, Interim Director of Children's Services;
- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services; and
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- Acknowledgement that there was a need to revisit some of the themes outlined in the interim scrutiny inquiry report when the final report was produced.
- The need for improvements to social work training provision.
- Concern about sickness levels and leave and the impact of these on staff caseloads.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board's interim report and recommendation be approved; and
- (b) That a formal response to the recommendation is produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports.

86 Annual Standards Report - Primary

The Scrutiny Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 6th January 2010, which provided an overview of the performance of primary schools at the end of 2008-09, as demonstrated through statutory national testing and teacher assessment. The report also outlined some of the key challenges and priorities for primary schools.

Appended for Members' information was a report on Primary Standards and Achievement.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning) and the following officers:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Dorothy Smith, Director of School Improvement;

- Christine Halsall, Principal Advisor, Primary and Special; and
- Brian Tuffin, Principal Advisor, Secondary and Special.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Addressing socio-economic factors through one to one tuition in schools
- More closely aligning extended services and development of the parenting strategy with the school improvement strategy.
- Confirmation that the new Ofsted framework was introduced in September 2009. Under new framework schools rated satisfactory were subject to more regular monitoring visits.
- Concern about schools that were 'coasting' and what systems were in place to address this. The Scrutiny Board was advised that performance management work had been undertaken to identify schools with inconsistent results and to work with them.
- Concerns about the potential impact on staff workloads if the demands of the new framework were not managed well. Officers offered to explore this in more detail with the teacher representatives outside the meeting.
- The need for clear benchmarking in relation to assessments at pre-school level.

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

(Councillor E Taylor left the meeting at 12.02 pm and Councillor Renshaw and Mrs S Knights at 12.03 pm during the consideration of this item.)

87 Annual Standards Report - Secondary

The Scrutiny Board received and considered the report of the Chief Executive, Education Leeds, submitted to the Council's Executive Board on 6th January 2010, which summarised progress in relation to secondary school improvement in Leeds and outlined challenges for further improvement.

The following information was appended to the report for Members' information:

- Ofsted Inspection summaries; and
- Overview of 2008 performance at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning) and the following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Dorothy Smith, Director of School Improvement;
- Christine Halsall, Principal Advisor, Primary and Special; and
- Brian Tuffin, Principal Advisor, Secondary and Special.

In brief summary, the key points of discussion were:

- Reporting arrangements for academies. It was reported that academies were directly accountable to DCSF, although Leeds had established a protocol for academies to share their data.
- Acknowledgement of the positive work undertaken by Children's Centres and Extended Schools programme.
- The positive impact of the mentoring programme in Leeds.
- The role of Area Committees in improving localised delivery.
- Work being undertaken with schools to identify patterns of attendance. It was agreed that further information about persistent absenteeism be provided to the Scrutiny Board.
- The criteria for assessing safeguarding across the Ofsted framework. The Board was advised that a tool-kit had been devised for schools, which would be forwarded to members of the Scrutiny Board.
- Concerns about outcomes for young people from deprived communities and the range of activity taking place through extended services to address this.

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

(Ms C Johnson left the meeting at 12.35 pm during the consideration of this item.)

88 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 update on working group activity, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st February 2010 to 31st May 2010, which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meetings held on 9th December 2009 and 6th January 2010.

In brief summary, the main points of discussion were:

- Volunteers were sought to serve on a Youth Services Commissioning Working Group. It was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Adviser would e-mail all board members.
- Whether there was a need for single item agendas or special meetings to address specific issues in greater detail.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be approved subject to the addition of the Youth Services Commissioning working group.

89 Leeds Residential Home Investigation Findings

Further to Minute No. 31 of the Scrutiny Board meeting held on 17th September 2009, the Interim Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided key investigation findings in relation to a Residential Home in Leeds.

Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care, attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- The home had had a further inspection and was now judged to be adequate.
- Addressing wider issues around performance monitoring and independent visiting requirements under regulation 33.
- The role of the Corporate Carers' Group and improvements to governance arrangements.
- Confirmation of the support offered to the young people concerned.

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

(Ms C Foote left the meeting at 12.54 pm during the consideration of this item.)

90 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 25th February 2010 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.57 pm.)