

## SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 20TH JANUARY, 2011

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors M Coulson, G Driver, B Gettings, W Hyde, A Lamb, B Lancaster, P Latty, J Lewis, K Maqsood and B Selby

### CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms N Cox	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)

### CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative

### 71 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

### 72 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda an updated version of the Leeds' Child Poverty Needs Assessment, to be considered as part of agenda item 7, Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations inquiry. (Minute No. 76 refers)

### 73 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest at this point, but a declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting. (Minute No. 76 refers)

### 74 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Morgan and Co-opted Member, Mr J Granger.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting to be held on Thursday, 17th February, 2011

## **75 Minutes - 16th December 2010**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **76 Scrutiny Inquiry - Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the first formal session of the Board's Inquiry into Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations.

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

- A copy of the agreed terms of reference for the inquiry
- background information in relation to combating child poverty and raising aspirations
- briefing paper on the key implications of the Child Poverty Act
- pyramid of factors that impact upon child poverty
- detailed summary of the findings of the review entitled 'The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults'
- common risk factors for children, young people and families at risk of poor outcomes
- draft Leeds' child poverty needs assessment.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the following Executive Members and officers to present the report and respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Councillor Dowson, Executive Member (Learning)
- Sally Threlfall, Chief Officer – Early Years and Integrated Youth Support Services, Children's Services
- Jane Hopkins, Service Manager – Jobs and Skills Service, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Diana Towler, External Relations Manager, Jobcentre Plus
- Liz Bailey, Health and Wellbeing Improvement Manager, Adult Social Care
- Rob McCartney, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Dave Roberts, Senior Policy and Information Officer, City Development.

The Scrutiny Board was provided with a PowerPoint presentation which provided background and contextual information around child poverty, including the significant responsibilities placed on local authorities.

The remainder of the presentation focused on four specific building blocks, as follows:

## **Education, Health and Family**

- Current level of teenage pregnancies in Leeds approximately 800 per year.
- 12% increase in 0-1 age group linked to growth in manufacturing sector and migration from across the EU.
- Issues relating to adult dependency on drugs and alcohol and impact on children and families.
- Issues around widening of attainment gap and emphasis on early interventions and narrowing the gap – further data and information to be provided.
- Development of integrated approach across key agencies.
- Support for vulnerable families and development of the think family approach.
- The effect of changes in the family on child stability, e.g. housing, introduction of a new partner, etc.
- The role of academies in supporting young people from deprived backgrounds.

## **Employment and Adult Skills**

- Levels of worklessness in Leeds – 60,000 people not working in Leeds with 20,000 children living in homes where no-one works.
- Concern about changes to employment support allowance and disability living allowance. It was reported that work capability assessments were being undertaken from March / April 2011 – it was expected that 3,000 people in Leeds would be considered fit for work.
- Greater support needed for those that were unemployed to attend job centres, interviews, etc.

## **Housing and Neighbourhoods**

- Concern about the lack of Council housing provision and support for individuals who had lived in a Council property for many years.
- Increasing numbers of people in housing need.
- The need for more robust monitoring of Council house sales.
- The role of the Housing Options Service and ALMO's in providing stable housing.

## **Financial Support for Families**

- Potential for reduced availability of support services / advice to local communities.
- Concern about the poor take up of free school meals.
- Rising fuel costs and the impact of fuel poverty on children and families.

The Scrutiny Board discussed next steps, particularly in terms of developing work in localities, support for families and the role of Area Committees.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and contribution to the Board's inquiry.

**RESOLVED** – That the issues raised at the first session of the Inquiry, be noted.

(Councillor W Hyde declared a personal interest in this item as Governor at West Leeds Academy.)

(Councillor James Lewis left the meeting at 11.50 am, Councillor Gettings at 11.55 am, Councillors Coulson and Lamb at 12.12 pm and Ms Cox at 12.25 pm, during the consideration of this item.)

## **77 Recommendation Tracking**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the recommendation status from the youth services user surveys inquiry.

Appended to the report was the recommendation tracking flowchart and draft recommendation status.

The recommendation status was agreed as follows:

- Youth Service User Surveys – recommendation 2 – continue monitoring – next report in 6 months to coincide with the other outstanding recommendation from this inquiry, and to allow sufficient time for progress to be achieved.

**RESOLVED** –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the recommendation status as set out above.

## **78 Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Report - Outdoor Education Centres**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's work on outdoor education centres.

**RESOLVED** –

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

## 79 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 was the current version of the Board's work programme, the minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2011, and an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 30 April 2011.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- It was reported that the Scrutiny Board (Health) had agreed in principle to a joint working group on reducing teenage conception, although they had not named specific Members. It had been suggested that the first meeting was arranged for March, as a scoping exercise.

**RESOLVED** – That subject to the comments raised at the meeting, the work programme be approved.

## 80 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was reported that the scheduled meeting in February was being used for the site visits as part of the Board's inquiry into Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations

The next Board meeting was scheduled for Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.)