

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors M Coulson, G Driver, B Gettings, W Hyde,
B Lancaster, P Latty, K Maqsood, V Morgan 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
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership

81 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

82 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at this point, however a declaration was made at a later point in the meeting. (Minute No. 86 refers)

83 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Lamb and James Lewis and Co-opted Members, Mr Granger and Ms Morris Boam.

84 Minutes - 20th January 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

85 Ofsted Annual Unannounced Inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment Arrangements in Children's Services

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the findings of the Ofsted unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements that took place in January 2011.

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 21st April, 2011

Appended to the report was a copy of the inspection findings reported to the Executive Board on 9th March 2011.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Bill McCarthy, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board, and the following Executive Member and officer:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- The Scrutiny Board paid tribute to all staff that had contributed to the significant improvements that had been made since the unannounced inspection in July 2009. Members particularly highlighted Jackie Wilson and her team's work in ensuring the right systems were in place.
- Progress made in relation to case management and quality assurance.
- There was now greater staff awareness and confidence in services delivered.
- The impact of changes to management structures. The Director of Children's Services briefly discussed changes to the budget, protection of frontline social care workers and reducing the dependency on agency staff.
- Some concerns around development of the replacement electronic social care system. Members were reminded that the Scrutiny Board had established a working group, which maintained an overview of this area of work. The Director of Children's Services reported that the existing system was no longer fit for purpose. The development of a new system would assist social care workers manage their cases more effectively.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board acknowledges the significant positive impact made overall since the unannounced inspection in July 2009 and recognises the significant efforts of all those who have contributed towards this.

86 Children's Services Update

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented a number of update reports on Children's Services as follows:

- a) Children's Services Improvement Update – report presented to Executive Board, 9th March 2011
- b) Children's Services Improvement Plan – monitoring report – Current Developments and Next Steps
- c) Children's Services Scrutiny Board Performance Report Quarter 3 2010/11.

The following Executive Member, officers and representatives attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Simon Flowers, Strategic Leader for Education Integration, Education Leeds
- Peter Storrie, Team Leader, Education Leeds
- Bill McCarthy, Independent Chair of the Improvement Board.

The Improvement Board was maintaining an overview of 4 key areas as follows:

- improving consistency of practice across the city
- boosting the confidence of the service supported by workforce development programmes
- partnership working and development of co-ordinated approach
- narrowing the gap and supporting those who were at risk of being left behind, e.g. children in care, children in poverty, minority groups, etc.

The Chair then invited questions and comments from the Scrutiny Board and the key areas of discussion were:

- The importance of partnership working and the Children's Trust Board.
- The role of Elected Members, particularly in terms of building on local intelligence, etc.
- Challenge of greater resources needed in responding to the increased number of referrals.
- Refreshing the work of corporate carers and children's champions.
- The use of an outcomes based accountability approach.
- Concerns around NEET linked to poor attendance – it was agreed to circulate a report recently submitted to Executive Board highlighting key challenges around attendance.
- Greater focus needed on chronic absenteeism.
- Issues around child adolescent mental health and development of joint working practices.
- Concerns about the need for greater engagement with young people and the need to encourage their participation in key areas, e.g. budget setting process, establishing priorities, etc.
- Acknowledgement of family values linked to a range of strategies and interventions in place.
- Support for young people not already engaged in youth services.
- The new relationship with schools and their role in locality working and concerns around the fragmentation of schools.
- Concerns of young people and associated funding implications, e.g. ensuring young people had somewhere safe to go and access to transport.

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

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in this item as LEA Governor at Carr Manor High School.)

87 New Strategic Plans 2011-15

The Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services submitted a joint report which presented proposals for the new set of strategic planning documents for advice and consideration prior to Executive Board and Council for approval.

The following information was appended to the report:

- The new city planning framework
- Draft plans and priorities as relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)
- How recent consultations were reflected in the new Plans.

The following officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Heather Pinches, Performance Manager, Planning, Policy and Improvement
- Martin Dean, Head of Leeds Initiative and International Partnerships.

The Scrutiny Board discussed the consultation process, particularly involving young people. It was reported that work had been undertaken with primary schools to assist them in developing their own ideas on the vision and priorities.

Members will use the action plans that will provide further detail to monitor progress against the strategic plans.

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

88 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of recommendations from previous scrutiny inquiries.

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

The draft status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Safeguarding Interim Report – recommendation 1 – continue monitoring as transformation is implemented
- Meadowfield Primary School – recommendation 1 – legal advice to be sought in relation to pursuing an appropriate third stage review process
- Attendance Strategy – recommendation 2 – continue to monitor until new extended leave policy in place.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
 (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above and that a further report on the Meadowfield recommendation be brought to the next meeting of the board.

(Councillor Driver left the meeting at 11.50 am during the consideration of this item.)

89 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, the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 11th February 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st March to 30th June 2011.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- Members were informed that the first meeting of the reducing teenage conception working group was taking place on Wednesday 20th April 2011. It was agreed that Councillor Coulson be added to membership of this group.
- The Scrutiny Board agreed to set a provisional date of Thursday 19th May 2011, for a further Board meeting to sign off inquiry reports.

RESOLVED – That the work programme, as amended, be approved.

90 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 21st April 2011 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12 noon.)