

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens, B Gettings,
A Khan, A Lamb, P Latty, K Maqsood,
M Rafique and K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms A Craven – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Ms N Cox – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative

23 Late Items

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept supplementary information in respect of agenda item No. 8 External Placements, which was not available at the time of agenda despatch. (Minute No. 28 refers)

24 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

25 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Ms N Cox and Ms A Choudhry

26 Minutes - 21st July 2011

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2011 be accepted as a true and correct record

27 Appointment of Co-opted Members

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report seeking the formal confirmation of the appointment of a co-opted Member to the Board

RESOLVED – To confirm the appointment of Ms Amanda Craven as the parent governor representative (Primary) for a four year period from 8th September 2011

28 Scrutiny Inquiry - External Placements

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the timetable for a Scrutiny inquiry into external placements for looked after children in Leeds.

The following information was appended to the report:

- The Board's Terms of Reference for the inquiry into External Placement
- A report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an overview of the key issues relating to external placements for looked after children in Leeds

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, the following representatives to present the report and respond to Members questions and comments:

- Nigel Richardson – Director of Children's Services
- Sue May - Head of Service for Looked After Children
- Councillor T Hanley – Deputy Executive Member

In addressing the report the Director of Children's Services, together with the Head of Service for Looked After Children focused on the following key areas:

- The collective duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people
- The need to reduce the number of looked after children in external placements
- A disproportionately high number of children looked after by the Local Authority
- The improved outcomes if the child remained close to their family/ within the community
- The financial burden on the city if the child is placed outside the Leeds boundary
- Meeting the aspirations of the children's plan
- National and local factors impacting on the numbers of external placements
- In-house resources
- Improving the rate of safe return to parents
- Early intervention and support
- Increasing Special Guardianship
- Impact on budgets
- Local and regional work on the commissioning of placements
- Research through outside partnership (Professor David Thorpe)
- How decisions are made
- Recruitment and retention of Foster Carers
- Review of residential facilities
- Demographics and population change

In brief summary, the key areas of discussions were:

- Data request for more detailed localised data and ethnicity information
- The research currently being carried out with Professor David Thorpe on how decisions are made
- The recruitment of Foster Carers (Details about recruitment campaign)
- Breakdown of costs for residential care
- Family Group Conferences and Multi-Systemic Therapy Services as examples of effective early intervention
- Staff recruitment, turnover, caseloads and sickness levels
- How the Common Assessment Framework is used
- Number of placements in Leeds from other authorities
- The sufficiency action plans
- Contact Centres
- Adoption

RESOLVED –

- (i) That Councillor Hanley, the Director of Children's Services and Head of Service for Looked After Children be thanked for their attendance and contributions
- (ii) That the further information required be provided as part of the Board's inquiry.

29 Draft Terms of Reference

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report seeking Members approval of a draft Terms of Reference for an inquiry into School Attendance.

RESOLVED – To approve the Terms of Reference for the inquiry into School Attendance

30 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

Appended to the report, for Members information, was the current version of the Board's work programme, the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 27th July 2011, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st August to 30th November 2011, together with a note of the meeting of the Children's Social Care System Review Working Group which took place on 10th August 2011.

RESOLVED –

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 6th October, 2011

- (i) That the work Programme be approved
- (ii) To approve the establishment of a Working Group to consider the Future Direction of the Youth Service with the following membership: Councillors: Chapman, Driver, Gettings, Khan, Lamb, Latty and Renshaw and Mr Britten, Ms Craven, Ms Kayani and Ms Ward

31 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 6th October 2011 at 9.45am with a Pre Meeting for Board Members at 9.15am

(The meeting concluded at 11.55am)