

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors B Gettings, A Hussain, P Latty,
C Macniven, M Rafique, K Renshaw,
A Sobel and B Urry

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 Raftery – Teacher Representative
Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative

50 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance, particularly Co-opted Member, Ms C Raftery, to her first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

November meeting date

Members were advised that due to the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections that were taking place, the Scrutiny Board meeting originally scheduled to take place on Thursday, 15th November 2012, was now taking place on Thursday, 8th November 2012.

Professor Gosden

The Chair reported that Professor Gosden (former co-opted Member) had recently passed away. The Scrutiny Board conveyed their condolences to his family.

51 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following late item, which was not available at the time of agenda despatch:

- Scrutiny Inquiry – Draft Terms of Reference – Supporting Children to Achieve in Maths and English (Minute No. 58 refers)

The document was not available at the time of the agenda despatch, but subsequently made available to the public on the Council's website prior to the meeting.

52 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

53 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors C Gruen and A Lamb and Co-opted Members, Ms C Foote, Mrs S Hutchinson and Ms J Morris-Boam. Notification had been received that Councillor C Macniven was substituting for Councillor C Gruen.

54 Minutes - 23rd August 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd August 2012 be approved as a correct record.

55 Scrutiny Inquiry (Session 1) - Foundation Years - providing the best start in life for Children to succeed

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided an overview of the key issues in relation to children and their families in the foundation years.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Anne Kearsley, Children's Services Lead (Early Years)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Early Help Services.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Acknowledgement of recent improvements across Children's Centres in Leeds, particularly in relation to information sharing.
- Concerns about the following key areas identified in the report:
 - the attainment gap at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, between the lowest 20% of achievers and the median level.
 - the level of take up of free early education in parts of Leeds. The Scrutiny Board agreed to explore the reasons behind this.
 - the significant increase in the number of under 4's becoming looked after in the last 6 months. Officers agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information about this.
- Concern about families on low incomes not being able to afford childcare provision and the important role of children's centres in supporting families.
- Concern that there was no central system for the allocation of children's centres places.
- The role of the Infant Mental Health Team.
- Potential Scrutiny Board visit focussing on the Early Start programme.

RESOLVED – That the relevant issues be incorporated in the draft report of the Scrutiny Board’s inquiry.

(Councillor A Sobel joined the meeting at 10.00am and Councillor B Gettings at 10.05am, during the consideration of this item.)

56 Request for Scrutiny by Executive Board (March 2012) – Basic Need 2012: Carr Manor and Roundhay: All Through Schools Revised Costs

The Director of Children’s Services submitted a report which provided the reasons for the significant variance in capital requirements between the original DCR approvals in October 2011 and the current scheme costs, in respect of the All-Through Schools Developments at Carr Manor High School and Roundhay School Technology and Language College.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Executive Board report dated 7th March 2012 – Basic Need 2012: Carr Manor and Roundhay: All Through Schools Revised Costs
- Minute No. 224 of Executive Board dated 7th March 2012 – Basic Need 2012: Carr Manor and Roundhay: All-Through Schools Revised Costs.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children and Families)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children’s Services
- Sarah Sinclair, Chief Officer (Strategy, Commissioning and Performance)
- James Saunders, Built Environment Programme Manager.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Concern that the project management team was not sufficiently experienced in whole new modular buildings. Officers in Children’s Services advised the Scrutiny Board that clear strategies were now in place, including development of a clear asset management strategy and greater links with Ward Members.
- Concern that various highways issues raised at Plans Panel had not been addressed, particularly in relation to the shortage of parent parking spaces.
- Lessons learned collectively across directorates, particularly in relation to ongoing developments.

RESOLVED – That the following information be noted:

(a) The rationale behind the timing of the two original DCRs to Executive Board in October 2011, which had an inaccurate cost estimation relating to limited site specific survey information available at that time

- (b) The reasons for the additional capital funding in respect of the All-Through School projects at Carr Manor and Roundhay, totalling £3.43m
- (c) The lessons learned from the Carr Manor and Roundhay projects and a revised approach being adopted being by Children's Services in the management of major capital projects
- (d) That the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) provides a report to the Executive Board of their findings and any recommendations deemed appropriate.

(Councillors A Hussain and K Renshaw withdrew from the meeting at 11.57am, during the consideration of this item.)

57 2012/13 Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Assistant Chief Executive (Customer Access and Performance) / Director of Children's Services submitted a joint report which presented a summary of the 2012-13 quarter 1 performance data relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families).

The following information was appended to the report:

- Performance Reports for the 3 City Priority Plan Priorities (these are the same as the "obsessions" from the Children and Young People's Plan)
- Children's Services Directorate Priorities and Indicators
- Children and Young People's Plan dashboard for July 2012.

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

- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Becky Hill, Performance Programme Manager
- Phil Coneron, Assistant Safeguarding Children Board Manager.

The main areas of discussion were:

- Concern that the percentage of children's homes rated good or better by Ofsted had declined from 55% (amber) to 36% (red). Members were advised that there was currently one outstanding children's home and no inadequate children's homes in Leeds. These improvements would be reflected in the quarter two performance results.
- Concern about the percentage of initial assessments and in-depth assessments carried out in timescale, which had gone from green to red. The Scrutiny Board was informed that this was due to changes to locality based assessments.
- Concern about the percentage of complaints received that had been resolved in 20 days, which had gone from amber to red. Members were advised that this was due to a recent change in Children's Social Care arrangements.

- Leeds Safeguarding Children Board (LCSB) – New areas of audit. It was highlighted that Children’s Social Services provided a good level of support to children. Other positive information presented regarding family and parent engagement, consistency and the timescales of conferences. Audit identified some issues that not all required actions were being progressed, better processes needed to be in place for recording the views of children and there were some problems getting access to paperwork for audit purposes. Once the audit report had been signed off by LSCB it would be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

(Councillors C Macniven withdrew from the meeting at 11.57am, Ms N Cox at 12.16pm and Ms T Kayani at 12.20pm, during the consideration of this item.)

58 Terms of Reference - Scrutiny Inquiry - Supporting Children to Achieve in Maths and English

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to agree terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board’s inquiry into Supporting Children to Achieve in Maths and English.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor, Sandra Newbould, presented the report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board’s inquiry into Supporting Children to Achieve in Maths and English, be approved
- (b) That the terms of reference be subject to amendment where necessary, including incorporation of additional information should the Scrutiny Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witnesses or evidence.

59 Work Schedule

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

Appended to the report for Members’ information was the current version of the Board’s work programme, minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 5th September 2012, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October 2012 to 31 January 2013, together with the notes of the Young Carers Working Group held on 5th September 2012 and draft recommendations.

Members agreed to receive the Leeds Safeguarding Board, Annual Report at the November Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the work schedule be approved
- (b) That the notes and recommendations of the Young Carers Working Group meeting held on 5th September 2012 be approved.

60 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 11th October 2012 at 9.45am with a Pre Meeting for Board Members at 9.15am

(The meeting concluded at 12.23pm.)