

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND SPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEETING 4 DECEMBER 2007

Present – Councillors Ashcroft (Chair), A. Wilkinson (Vice-Chair), Barrow, Connell, Hornby, Murray, Rock, Mrs Rothwell, Rushton, Scowcroft, Mrs Swarbrick, R. Wilkinson, and Williamson.

#### Lay Members

Ms. J. Martin - Foster Carer

#### Also in attendance:

Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Member for Children's Services
Councillor J. Byrne	-	Executive Member for Young People and Sport
Mrs M. Asquith	-	Director of Children's Services
Mrs J. Thompson	-	Assistant Director (Positive Contribution), Children's Services
Mrs C. Greer	-	Head of Early Start, Children's Services
Mrs C. Davies	-	Head of Finance, Children's Services
Ms D. Luczka	-	Head of Connexions, Children's Services
Mr T. Higson	-	Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services
Mrs A. Gorton	-	Extended Schools Remodelling Advisor, Children's Services
Mr I. Mulholland	-	Scrutiny Team Leader
Mr J. Dearling	-	Senior Scrutiny Officer

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Dennis.

Councillor Ashcroft in the Chair.  
Page 1 of 10

## **28. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 11 October 2007 were submitted.

Resolved - That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

## **29. MONITORING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY PANEL DECISIONS**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report that informed members of the progress of decisions taken and issues raised by the Committee.

The Committee was informed that the next meeting of the Educational Attainment of Looked After Children Scrutiny Panel had been scheduled for 17 December 2007.

With reference to the Committee's request for further details on the take up of free swimming, members suggested that the police had reported a correlation between reduced street crime and the operating times of the free swimming scheme. The Executive Member for Young People and Sport indicated that the take up of free swimming had been high.

Resolved - (i) That information concerning the uptake of free swimming be provided to the Committee at the earliest possible date.

(ii) That the action and progress outlined in the report be noted.

## **30. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES FOR SCRUTINY / ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided members with suitable criteria to aid in the selection of topics for scrutiny and outlined the Committee's work programme.

Members' views and comments were sought in relation to any further items and issues that they wanted including on the Committee's work programme, but members indicated their satisfaction with the current timetabled work schedule.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

**31. EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

Extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 29 October and 26 November 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive be noted.

**32. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Children's Services held on 23 October and 26 November 2007 were submitted.

With reference to minute 36, Review of Enforcement Activity under the Children and Young Persons Act 1981 and Trading Standards Alcohol Survey of Young People, 23 October 2007, Committee members questioned the number of test purchases of cigarettes from shops carried out in 2006/07. Members asked whether the funding of such tobacco enforcement action could be increased. The Committee was advised that such detailed information was best presented for scrutiny at the Adults' Services Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved - (i) That the Adults Social Care and Health Policy Development Group be requested to investigate the funding of tobacco enforcement action within the Borough.

(ii) That the decisions of the Executive Member for Children's Services be noted.

**33. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND SPORT**

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Member for Young People and Sport held on 23 October and 26 November 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive Member for Young People and Sport be noted.

**34. MINUTES OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND SPORT  
POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

The minutes of the Children's Services Policy Development Group held on 14 November 2007 were submitted.

Those Committee members who had been present at the meeting of the Young People and Sport PDG on 14 November 2007 praised the quality of the discussion at the inaugural meeting.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

**35. ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION – PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation on road safety education. The Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, provided child road casualty statistics for Bolton, including projected figures. He indicated to the Committee that the council was on target to meet its 2010 reduction target for the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. He informed the Committee that the bulk of child casualties were pedestrians, rather than cyclists or vehicle passengers.

The Committee was informed that limited road safety resources were targeted to identified problem areas and routes. The presentation offered evidence of the road safety team working in partnership with Bolton at Home and using concepts such as Home Zones. The Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, provided examples to the Committee of measures to improve road safety; namely, the use of footway markings, road safety publicity, cyclist and pedestrian training, and the Crucial Crew scheme. He informed the meeting that detailed recommendations for the delivery of road safety, training, and publicity, were contained within a report submitted to, and approved by, the Executive Member for Environmental Services on 19 November 2007.

In reply to questioning from members, the Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, indicated that it was difficult to determine the influence of weather conditions on accident rates.

In response to questions from members, the Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, confirmed that killed and seriously injured casualties on motorways were not included in the council's Local Public Service Agreement target figure as motorways were the responsibility of the Highways Agency. He indicated that all road users could be targeted with road safety advice particular to the roads they used and that this could include specific warnings to child pedestrians to stay away from motorways.

Members asked about school travel plans and were informed that progress had been achieved and that it was an aspiration for every school to have such a plan.

Responding to requests from members, the Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, indicated that ward-based information packs had been developed for councillors and could be issued to members elected since the original distribution.

Resolved - That the Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services, be thanked for his informative presentation.

### **36. CONNEXIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the rates of post-16 participation in education, training, or employment.

The report indicated that the council had a target to reduce the percentage of 16-18 year old young people who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) to 7.3 per cent by 2010. The report outlined the three key indicators by which progress toward this target could be measured: the September Guarantee to Year 11 school leavers; the Activity Survey of Year 11 school leavers; and the overall 16-18 NEET situation.

Responding to questions from members, the Committee was advised that under the September Guarantee in Bolton the involvement of the Learning Agreement Team was ongoing.

In response to questions about Bolton's progress compared with that of other Greater Manchester councils, the Committee was advised that Bolton's NEET figures were third highest.

In reply to questions about looked after children and young people, the Committee was advised that a relatively high percentage of such 16-18 year olds were currently NEET but that the number involved was not large. The Committee requested and received clarification concerning the recording of learning disability needs children in the NEET figures for Bolton. Similarly, the Committee was advised that children with complex health needs would be recorded in NEET statistics as not available to the jobs market.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

### **37. 14-19 STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report informing the Committee of the 14-19 Agenda in Bolton. The report identified the key elements of the strategy, key actions, and interim outcomes.

The report advised the Committee that the Children's Services Lifelong Learning Unit has been expanded to deliver the 14-19 Strategy. The report detailed recent and upcoming appointees to the Unit and indicated that from April 2008 the three existing geographical cluster co-ordinators would be added. The report informed the Committee of the six aims of the strategy: to provide effective leadership and management for the implementation of the 14-19 Strategy through a strong and collaborative partnership approach; to develop further the Learner Entitlement to ensure it meets the needs of Bolton's learners; to improve 14-19 Achievement in Bolton; to improve 14-19 Access to and Participation in Education and Training in Bolton; to improve 14-19 Advice and Guidance in Bolton; and further develop skills and improve the range and quality of the vocational offer to those aged 14-19. The report advised of the key actions taken and interim outcomes achieved against each of the six strategic aims.

In answer to questions from members, the Committee was informed that Bolton's 14-19 Strategy applied only to children under 16 years of age resident in Bolton but included those young people aged 16 and over who travelled into Bolton.

In response to questioning, the Head of Connexions, Children's Services, indicated that within both a regional and a national

context there was scope for Bolton's GCSE results to improve.

In reply to questions from members, the Head of Connexions, Children's Services, indicated that providing Bolton's schools continued to remain engaged she was confident of the success of the 14-19 Strategy.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

### **38. DURHAM UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND COMPARISONS WITH BOLTON**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report outlining the effectiveness of Sure Start and Children's Centres in Bolton compared to the national average, and the criteria on which such figures were measured. The report included a summary of research published by Durham University into the development and skills of children starting compulsory education in England between the years of 2001 and 2006 inclusive. The report suggested that due to different baseline assessments an actual comparison of the university research on a like for like basis with Bolton was not possible.

The report advised the Committee of the development of Early Years Provision in Bolton, including the take-up of free nursery education, Bolton's Early Excellence Centres, and the provision of childcare places between 2001 and 2006. The report indicated that Sure Start local programmes had been operating in areas of highest deprivation in Bolton from 2001 onwards. The report stated that six Children's Centres had been established in Bolton and a further nine centres would be designated by April 2008.

While the report concluded that direct comparisons with the Durham University research were not possible, it suggested that in relation to the development of young children Bolton was maintaining a position just above the national average.

In response to questions, the Head of Early Start, Children's Services, agreed to provide the total spent on the development of Early Years provision in Bolton over the past ten years. In addition, the Head of Early Start, Children's Services, indicated that details of the Foundation Stage Profile for neighbouring authorities could be provided to the Committee.

Members discussed the difficulty of evaluating Early Years services and suggested the outcomes might only be accurately ascertained once the children involved were adult.

Resolved - (i) That the Committee be provided with details of the amount of money expended on Early Years provision in Bolton over the past ten years;

(ii) That the Committee be provided with comparative Foundation Stage Profile information for Greater Manchester authorities; and

(iii) That twelve months hence the Committee be provided with a report detailing Early Years services and developments.

### **39. EXTENDED SERVICES UPDATE**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report updating the Committee on progress achieved with the extended schools and extended services agenda. The report outlined measures enacted to support the development of the extended services core offer. These measures included the establishment of twenty-one geographical groupings within the Borough to facilitate multi-agency partnerships to review, plan and deliver core offer services and the formation of a facilitation team of ESRCs (Extended Services Remodelling Consultants).

The report indicated that following an evaluation of the extended services programme a number of key issues were identified. Appendix Two of the report summarised these issues and suggested solutions. The report stated that the ESRC team had been disestablished following the evaluation of the programme and three development officer posts created with a remit that included extending, building, and co-ordinating the development of extended schools and locality services in Bolton. The Committee was informed that appointments to these three posts had recently been made.

The report stated that the programme's revenue budget for 2007/08 was £776,000 with an additional £412,000 of capital funding. The report indicated that changes to the distribution of funds for the extended services programme had been recommended and also that the Executive Member for Children's Services was considering bids for capital funding to support the provision of access to extended services.



Members discussed the process under which schools and other partners were invited to bid for capital funding to support the access to extended services. The Committee was advised that the timescale for submitting applications for capital funding had been tight, but bids had far exceeded the funds available. The Director of Children's Services indicated that in future the allocation of such capital funding would remain limited to the bidding process. Members were informed that details of successful bids could be provided to the Committee.

In reply to questions, the Committee was informed that it was envisaged borough wide access to the extended services core offer would be provided by 2010.

Resolved - (i) That the Committee be provided with details of the successful bids for capital funding to support the provision of access to extended services.

(ii) That the report be noted.

#### **40. EXCESSIVE SURPLUS SCHOOL BALANCES**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report informing members of the outcome of the recent consultation on a proposed levy on surplus school balances. The report provided details of the current local position regarding surplus school balances. The Committee was informed that the number of schools with surplus balances had reduced from 43 in March 2006 to 27 by March 2007.

The report indicated that following the consultation on schools' revenue balances, the Minister of State for Schools and Learners had announced the decision not to introduce the proposed levy at the current time. The report indicated that the government would continue to monitor the overall level of surplus balances and would intervene if levels did not show a significant reduction.

Members questioned the high level of surplus balance at the Valley Primary School. In reply the Committee was informed that the council had required evidence of the intended use of the balances of those schools with the highest surpluses.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 6.03pm)