
CHILDRENS SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

05 JULY 2006

Councillor Mrs. Brierley (Chair), Ainscough, Connell, Dennis, Greenhalgh, Idrees, Mrs. Fairclough (deputy for Councillor Rushton), Mrs. Rothwell and Mrs. Swarbrick

Councillor Mrs. Thomas - Executive Member for Children's Services

Councillor Kay - Executive Member for School's

Mr. B. Shaw - Deputy Director, Children's Services

Mrs. L. Jones - Assistant Director, Children's Services

Mrs. C. Davies - Head of Finance, Children's Services

Mr. A. Donaldson - Head of Policy and Development, Chief Executive Department

Mr. John Addison - Members Services Manager, Legal and Democratic Services

Mr. M. Williamson - Democratic Services Officer, Legal and Democratic Services

Mr. B. Essex - Secondary School's Governors Partnership

Mrs. F. Hill - Unison

Councillor Councillor Mrs. Brierley in the Chair

1 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th March, 2006 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

2 PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE

An extract of the meeting of the Executive held on 12th June, 2006, was submitted.

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings be noted.

3 PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SCHOOL'S

The minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Executive Member for Children's Services and School's

held on 20th June, 2006, were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings be noted.

4 PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE SCHOOL PLACE REVIEW POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the School Place Review Policy Development Group held on 4th April, 2006, and 6th June, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings be noted.

5 POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which informed members of the powers and duties of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the terms of reference for this Committee together with the portfolios for the Executive Members for Children's Services and Schools were appended to the report. These were the areas that would be scrutinised by this Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Powers and Duties of the Scrutiny Committee](#)

6 WORK PROGRAMME OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which put forward a list of suggested issues which the Committee may wish to receive reports on or investigate further during the current municipal year.

Members views and comments were sought in relation to any further items and issues that they wanted including on the Committee's work programme. The following items were requested to be included on the work programme:-

(1) a report on what happened to Looked After Children when they left the Authority's care;

(2) a report on the safety and security, relating to fire prevention, in new Council buildings; and

(3) a review of how successful the integration of services had been, including process and outcome indicators.

Furthermore, members were advised that the Committee could establish a maximum of two Scrutiny Panels to investigate certain issues in further detail.

Resolved – That the list of issues identified for consideration, as now detailed be approved, and the items raised by members be included into the Scrutiny Committee's work programme for the next municipal year.

Attached Reports:

[Work Programme of the Scrutiny Committee](#)

[Work Programme of the Scrutiny Committee](#)

7 CORPORATE PARENTING SCRUTINY PANEL - FINAL REPORT

A Report of the Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Panel was submitted which outlined the findings of the panel and made various recommendations for consideration by the Executive Member for Children's Services.

By way of background information, the report reminded members that the Committee, at its meeting on 3rd February, 2004, had agreed to establish a Scrutiny Panel to examine the issue of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities. Although the panel was originally established in February, 2004, its work did not commence until November, 2005.

The Panel had been established following an increase in the number of children and young people in the looked After System within the Borough.

The report went on to identify the terms of reference of the Panel and the process that was followed to examine the evidence. The various sources of information, including documentation and people who had assisted the Panel in its investigations were outlined in the report.

The report went on to advise that the Panel had focused on the following issues:-

- Departmental understandings of being a Corporate Parent; and
- Member's understandings of being a Corporate Parent.

The report provided details of the Panel's investigations in each of the areas.

Following its investigation, the Panel made several recommendations, detailed as follows, for consideration by the Executive Member for Children's Services:-

- (i) That a presentation on the role of the Council as a Corporate Parent be made to the next Chief Officer's meeting;
- (ii) That every Department appoint a Corporate Parenting Champion at a suitable level (e.g. Assistant Director) to promote Corporate Parenting and act as a point of contact;
- (iii) That a Corporate Parenting workshop be arranged for all members and, contingent upon the approval of the three group leaders, a raising awareness presentation be staged at each group meeting; and
- (iv) That Corporate Parenting be a regular agenda item for all appropriate Policy Development Groups and for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, and be recommended as a regular item on school governor's reports.

The reasons for the recommendations were outlined in the report.

Resolved – That the Scrutiny Committee approved the findings of the Scrutiny Panel, and requested the Executive Member for Children's Services to provide a response back to the Committee within six months.

Attached Reports:

[Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Panel - Final Report](#)

8 RUNAWAY CHILDREN REPORT

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which informed members of the responsibility Bolton

Council had in addressing the issue of runaway children, and the current situation in Bolton.

Members were informed that running away from home was a problem that affected approximately one in nine young people before the age of 16 years old. Approximately 20,000 children who ran away each year were under the age of eleven.

By way of background information, the report indicated that the need for a response to young runaways was identified eight years ago through the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC). At this time there were specific concerns raised by the Police, particularly about repeat runaways and young women from minority ethnic backgrounds. A successful bid was submitted to the Children's Fund to develop a project to work preventatively through schools and to work with all children and young people who ran away, and their carers, to prevent engagement in risky activities. Funding for the project expired in 2004. Despite attempts to find alternative sources, the scheme was currently not funded.

Members were advised that currently, 760 reports of missing children had been taken by the Police in 2005. This had been a reduction of 130 on the previous year. Greater Manchester Police had estimated that it cost approximately £1000 each time a young person was reported as missing. For Bolton that equated to £760,000 per year in Police time. In addition to this, any child who ran away more than once became more vulnerable. As they became harder to find, the Police would have to spend more time looking for them, therefore the cost would increase.

The report went on to state that early intervention and prevention were key factors in reducing the risk for children who were likely to run away from home. It was highlighted that raising awareness of the risks of the activity with children and young people, through schools and publicity campaigns, should be an important aspect of the strategy to keep children safe. The Council currently relied upon a very small scale, unfunded response from colleagues in the voluntary sector who were experienced and committed to providing early intervention and preventative approaches.

Furthermore, members were advised that the Council had gained a lot of knowledge and expertise in addressing the

issue of young runaways over the last six years.
However, it lacked a clear and resourced strategy to meet
the need in addressing this issue.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

Attached Reports:

[Runaway Children Report](#)

[Runaway Children Report](#)