

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

MEETING, 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2009

Present – Councillors Ashcroft, Ayub, Kay (as deputy for Councillor Adia), Murray, Mrs Rothwell, R. Silvester, Shaw (as deputy for Councillor Rushton), Sherrington (as deputy for Councillor Thomas) Mrs. Swarbrick and Wild.

### Also in Attendance

Ms. M. Asquith	-	Director of Children's Services
Mr. J. Daly	-	Assistant Director, Staying Safe
Mr. S. Fazal	-	Assistant Director, Access and Inclusion
Mr J. Livesey	-	Assistant Director, Performance Planning and Resources
Mr A. Begley	-	Business Process Improvement
Mr T. Birch	-	Assistant Director, School Effectiveness
Mr. D. Smith	-	Policy Accountant
Mr. A. Jennings	-	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rushton, Mrs. Brierley, Adia and Mrs Thomas.

Councillor Murray in the Chair.

## **6. MINUTES**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

## **7. CHILDREN'S SERVICES BIG ISSUES 2010 TO 2014**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which set out the identified big issues facing the service in order to inform the business planning process.

The report was the first stage in the business planning process and followed on from the report submitted to the Executive that identified the big issues facing the Council over the next few years.

The following issues were identified under each of the relevant priority themes:-

## Economic Prosperity

### (a) Numbers of Children

A rapid rise in the number of births was placing a huge demand on the need for primary school places and on other services.

The Borough was also facing a decrease in the number of secondary school pupils which impacted on school budget levels.

### (b) Impact of Economic Downturn

Impact on the services provided as the issues relating to unemployment increases.

## Narrowing The Gap

### (a) Attainment

One of the key areas was to raise the attainment of children and young people in Bolton as compared to nationally and to raise the attainment of the most vulnerable children and young people and the rest of the Borough.

### (b) Young People not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS)

The economic downturn was beginning to have an affect leading to young people finding it difficult to find work or training as employers faced financial pressures.

### (c) Teenage Conceptions

This remained high despite some success – improved data analysis/performance management, together with new resources to aid the identification of risk factors , would be used to to identify young people at risk at the earliest opportunity.

## Transforming Services

### (a) Integration of Services

The integration of services continued to be a priority for the Department.

### (b) Schools Capital Schemes

There would be extensive work associated with the BSF, Primary Capital and Academies Programmes.

(c) Children's Trust/Commissioning

Legislation would be introduced to place the Board of the Children's Trust on a statutory footing and to ensure partners co-operated with the Board.

The Board would also monitor and evaluate performance of the Children and Young People's Plan.

(d) Financial Context

The financial context would be extremely challenging.

Community Cohesion

(a) The shift in demographic profiles was creating the need for new resources, such as school buildings in specific areas of the Borough.

The report also set out the specific issues for the Department in 2010/14 as follows :-

(a) Response to the Lord Laming Report

The report related to safeguarding arrangements nationally and it was noted that improvements to the Department's computerised records system would be undertaken.

The potential introduction of Special Guardianship payments to family members would have a major financial impact on the departmental budgets if introduced.

(b) Transfer of LSC Responsibilities to Local Authority

It was noted that from April, 2010 responsibility for securing sufficient education and training provision for all young people would pass to local authorities.

This would require the local authority to develop the capacity to take on new roles and responsibilities and also to foster a consistent, objective and provider neutral relationship with all providers in the post 16 sector.

In discussing the report members raised the following issues –

- with respect to the transfer of responsibilities from the LSC members indicated that they would wish to be kept fully informed of progress – it was explained that the local authority had been shadowing the LSC in their commissioning work and that the local authority would second five members of staff at the end of August with the details being reported to the PDG .It was considered that parents needed to be informed of the issue before April next year;

- apprenticeship schemes and whether they were fit for purpose;
- which bodies had responsibility for tracking young people through the process and management of the funding;
- negotiations with local firms to improve work/training opportunities it was explained that employer engagement was undertaken and that a suitable strategy was being worked up;
- home to school transport policy and the need to review ,particularly with respect to free bus passes and young people's attendance at faith schools.

The PDG noted the report and agreed the following items for submission to the next meeting –

(a) Adoption and Fostering Panel presentation; and

(b) home to school transport policy.

(The meeting started at 4.00pm. and finished at 4.45pm)