

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 1ST FEBRUARY, 2007

Present – Councillors Mrs Brierley (Chair), A. Wilkinson (Vice – Chair), Bashir-Ismail, Burrows, Connell, Cox, Dennis, Greenhalgh, Idrees, Price, Mrs Rothwell, Rushton and Williamson.

Also in attendance:

Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Member for Children's Services
Councillor Kay	-	Executive Member for Schools
Mrs. M. Asquith	-	Director of Children's Services
Mr. B. Shaw	-	Deputy Director of Children's Services
Mr. S. Fazal	-	Assistant Director (Access and Inclusion)
Mr. A. Donaldson	-	Head of Policy and Improvement
Mrs C. Davies	-	Head of Finance (Children's Services)
Ms. L. Mooney	-	Advisor for Secondary Strategy, (Children's Services)
Ms. F. Hill	-	UNISON
Mr. C. Swift	-	Assistant Director (Policy and Resources)
Mr A. Jennings	-	Democratic Services Manager

Miss K. Treadwell - Democratic Services Officer

An apology for absence was reported on behalf of Mrs. Swarbrick.

Councillor Mrs Brierley in the Chair.

32. MRS M. ASQUITH – DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES

The Chair welcomed Mrs M. Asquith, Director of Children’s Services, to her first meeting of the Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee.

33. MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd November, 2006.

With regard to the attendance, it was requested that the minutes be amended to read that Councillor Hornby acted as deputy for Councillor Burrows.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved, as now amended, as a correct record.

34. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES AND SCHOOLS

The minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Executive Members for Children’s Services and Schools held on the 15th December, 2006 and 23rd January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the decisions of the Executive Members be noted.

35. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SCHOOLS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services and Schools Policy Development Group held on the 18th December, 2006 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

36. PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL PLACE REVIEW POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the School Place Review Policy Development Group held on the 17th January, 2007 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

37. THE COMMITTEE'S FORWARD PLAN

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted the Forward Plan for the submission of items to this Committee.

The document contained details of the key decisions contained within the Executive's and the relevant Executive Member's Forward Plan that fell within the remit of this Committee.

Members were informed that the Work Programme described the items that had been identified by members to be considered at the Committee at future meetings.

Members were informed that the issue of Schools Receiving Support would be considered at the Committee's meeting in March, 2007.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

38. GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

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The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which informed the Committee of how gifted and talented support was delivered for children in Bolton and further developments for the Borough.

By way of background information, the report informed members that able, gifted and talented pupils were those individuals who might have an exceptional ability in a particular area; be skilled across a range of subjects or had a recognised talent for art, performance or sport.

The report advised that Bolton's priorities for 2006/07 for these pupils had included supporting schools to identify their own gifted and talented pupils and from thereon set school level gifted and talented targets. Further priorities included the development and aggregation of the target for Bolton as well as encouraging a greater range of in class activity to challenge and inspire gifted children.

The report went on to state that the introduction of a dedicated teacher of gifted and talented children into every secondary school and each primary cluster for 2007-08 alongside training and resources from the national strategies would ensure provision for gifted and talented pupils became a high priority for schools over the next twelve months.

The report went on to state that gifted and talented strategies were not just optional extras which only occurred out of school but were a basic foundation for effective teaching and learning. Bolton was pursuing strategies that encouraged the embedding of these ideas in classrooms so that every child should benefit.

Member requested information on the percentage of gifted and talented children in Bolton schools. They were informed that approximately 10% of children in schools could be classed as gifted and talented. However, the exact number of children could not, at this point in time, be given.

Members also discussed the possible benefits of flexibility regarding students who were gifted in certain areas being able

to access facilities and resources in other schools which might be of benefit to them.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Executive Members for Children's Services and Schools be requested to stress the importance to all Bolton Schools of having a dedicated teacher for gifted and talented children.

(iii) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee regarding the number of gifted and talented children in schools and the continued progress being made in this area.

39. UPDATE ON CORPORATE PARENTING SCRUTINY PANEL - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Member of Children's Services submitted a report which provided a response given to the recommendations made by the Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Panel.

By way of background information, members were reminded that a Corporate Scrutiny Panel was established in February, 2004 which examined Bolton Council's response to looked after children. Members were also reminded that, in the wake of the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations and subsequent Workshop, a commitment was given by the Corporate Children's Officer to establish a Bolton wide Corporate Parenting Panel with senior officer representation.

The report advised that during October and December of 2006 there had been two meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel which established a membership which consisted of the following:

- the Executive Member for Children's Services (Chair);
- Corporate Children's Officer – support to the panel;

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- Senior Officer representatives from:
- Chief Executives Department;
- Legal and Democratic Services;
- Children's Services;
- Adult Services; and
- Bolton PCT.

A further representative had been identified from the Environment Department. The panel would also invite people from the voluntary sector in the future.

The report advised that initial meetings had discussed the importance of the Panel developing a full understanding of the needs of the care system and those who lived and worked within it.

The report stated that the next meeting of the panel later this month would hear from the Co-ordinator of Looked After Supported Employment (LASE) scheme to discuss how this successful scheme could be supported corporately and be fully embedded into Bolton's Services.

The report advised that the Panel, in line with future legislation, would be keen to encourage development of a mentoring scheme drawing on the Council workforce to act as independent advocates/mentors for Bolton's young people. In addition, the preparation of a policy which identified the commitment of Bolton Council to being a good corporate parent had commenced and would be presented at a range of forums prior to being submitted to the Children's Partnership Board.

The report advised that a key role for the Panel would be to hear directly from young people and those who worked within the care system to identify both areas of achievement and

concern.

The report went on to state that the involvement of elected members in the corporate parenting agenda was promoted within the government guidance and crucial to the success of the project. The Chair of the Panel would be discussing with members the most effective method to establish their involvement and leadership for the panel.

The report also advised that, in response to the Panel's recommendations relating to schools, a report, appended to this report, was sent to all schools and was put on the agenda of the governing body meetings administered by the Local Authority during last term. Schools who administered their own governing body meetings were asked to do the same.

Members discussed the importance of elected members' awareness regarding the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent.

Members referred to the importance of schemes such as LASE and requested the amount of children who were currently part of the LASE programme. Members were informed that twenty-four children were part of the scheme.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Executive Member for Children's Services be requested to invite all members of the Council to the Corporate Parenting Workshop and encourage a presentation to be given to each political group on the issue now detailed.

(iii) That the Executive Member for Children's Services be requested to encourage all members, particularly those involved with school governing bodies, to be aware of the importance of elected member involvement as part of the corporate parenting agenda.

(iv) That the Executive Member for Children's Services be requested to examine the possibility of having a support officer

for looked after children to support them into adulthood.

(v) That the Executive Member for Children's Services be requested to examine, within the Council, supported employment particularly with regard to contracted work.

40. RESPONSE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO THE CHILDHOOD OBESITY PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the response of the Department of Children's Services to the findings of the Health Scrutiny Panel on childhood obesity which had also been considered by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The report responded to the following recommendations given by the Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Panel:

Increase in the strategic support and advocacy given to the Healthy Schools Programme by the Local Education Authority.

The report stated that the department had been actively supporting the Healthy Schools Programme through the strong partnership developed between the PCT and other partners. At present, there were only one school not engaged in this scheme.

Influencing and enabling schools to make provision for children to have access to drinking water during lessons

The report responded by stating that Children's Services continued to highlight the importance of the Every Child Matters five outcomes, one of which included helping children stay healthy. The report went on to advise that all Bolton's primary, secondary and special schools had received money to spend supporting the provision of food throughout the day. Each school could decide how it used this funding, one

of the key options available to them was to spend it on providing drinking water to their pupils.

Exploration of the potential for the 'Building Schools for the Future' Programme to assist in improving dining facilities and eating environments in schools.

The report responded to the recommendation by stating that the provisional timescale for inclusion in the Building Schools for the Future programme was from 2011 onwards. At this point in time, the Department's focus was not upon the detail of the facilities to be provided at any one school, but rather the overall conditions and suitability issues.

However, there was already a good partnership working between Children's Services and the School Meals Service which had led to, for example, improved kitchen and dining facilities as part of the Local Authority's work on individual school improvement initiatives.

Continued evaluation and development of menus.

The report stated that Children's Services had recently completed trials on new menu options.

Maximisation of the beneficial health impact of food consumption in schools.

By way of response, the report stated that through the Healthy Schools Programme all schools had received best practice advice on the provision of healthy food throughout the school day, for example, all schools had received the national 'Food in Schools Toolkit'.

Maximisation of the achievements of the five a day scheme.

The report stated that this recommendation was welcomed and that the Department continued to support the 5-a-day team and the Healthy Schools team in getting all schools to benefit from the programme.

Universal participation of schools in the Healthy Schools Programme and the National School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

The report advised that at the last time of reporting 91% of Bolton schools had participated in the Healthy Schools Programme. The schools that had not participated had been targeted to ensure their future involvement.

Schools to be encouraged to explore ways of introducing basic cookery skills and addressing healthier eating in their lessons.

The report advised that strong links had been made between the Healthy Schools Team and the Children's Services Advanced Skills Teacher for Food Technology. Jointly there had been work regarding seeking opportunities to develop cooking and healthy eating in schools.

The report further advised that in view of the strong national focus, the idea of a 'kids that cook' scheme could occur with Children's Services working in partnership with Healthy Schools to ensure Bolton took advantage of this opportunity.

Development of joint working to address childhood obesity

The report responded to this recommendation by stating that joint working was being actively promoted and facilitated across agencies as part of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Members discussed the possibility of using tap water, provided that it was drinking water, instead of providing costly water coolers or water fountains.

Members also expressed concern regarding the lack of practical skills many adults had with regard to cooking. Members discussed the need for cookery lessons in which children practised cooking instead of theory work. Members felt that good practice, such as that which had been seen developed between Mytham Primary School and the Olive Press Restaurant in Bolton, should be encouraged Borough wide.

Resolved - (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Executive Members for Children's Services and Schools be requested to continue to encourage all schools to adopt the Healthy Schools Programme.

(iii) That the Executive Members for Children's Services and Schools be requested to work with schools to secure accreditation.

(iv) That the Executive Members for Children's Services and Schools be requested to assess the delivery of sufficient cookery skills to children in both Primary and Secondary Schools and encourage any current good practice in Bolton.

41. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved - That, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, it is likely that if members of the press and public were present during the following item of business there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12a to the Local Government Act 1972 and that, in pursuance of Section 100A(4) of such Act, members of the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

42. SCHOOLS RECEIVING SUPPORT – ORAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Director of Children's Services gave an oral report which updated members on the additional support currently being provided for Bolton Schools. In addition, a brief summary regarding the OfSTED report findings was given.

The Director, stated that, following a sequence of cross department meetings, a meeting was held on 8th December, 2006 at which 38 schools were discussed in the Borough. Three schools came under the 'core' category where progress had been made and schools were being signed off or in which emerging issues were attempted to be caught in their earliest stage. Two schools were receiving specific support e.g. preparing for the retirement of a head teacher and 26 were receiving focused support.

Members were advised that, in most of these cases, the issues being focused upon were teaching and achievement.

The Director, went on to state that there would be a number of head teacher changes in the Spring Term and that, consequently, these schools would move into a focused support for the first year of the new headship.

The Director, then briefly summarised the OfSTED report. Members were informed that of the 44 primary schools inspected, 95% of the judgements were standard or better with most being good or outstanding.

The Director advised that, in terms of secondary school inspections, a summary of the full OfSTED report would be brought to the next Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting. The reports received so far indicated that all schools were at least satisfactory with no schools receiving notices to improve or being placed in Special Measures.

Members noted that work was underway with Hayward School in regard to their building work necessitated by the loss of their

roof recently. However, co-operation with Bolton's Sixth Form College had enabled facilities to be maintained for all the children.

The Director, also updated the Committee that School Improvement Partners (SIPS) had been introduced into the secondary sector and would be introduced in April, 2007 for Primary Schools.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Committee consider the impact of the School Improvement Partners initiative (SIPS) at a future meeting.

(iii) That Bolton Sixth Form College be thanked for their collaboration with Hayward School to allow the continued education of children.

(The meeting started at 4.00pm and finished at 5.00pm)

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