

**CHILDREN'S AND CULTURE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 19TH AUGUST, 2015

Present – Councillors Dean (Chairman), Wild (Vice-Chairman), Graham, Hall, Harkin (as deputy for Councillor Gillies), Haworth, Hornby, Iqbal, Jones, Kirk-Robinson, Martin, Murray, Shaikh, Sherrington and Spencer.

Also in attendance

Mr. S. Dunne	-	Co-opted Member
Mr. J. Firth	-	Healthwatch
Councillor Mrs. Thomas	-	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader's Portfolio
Councillor J. Byrne	-	Cabinet Member for Culture, Youth and Sport
Councillor Cunliffe	-	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Safeguarding Children
Mr. J. Daly	-	Assistant Director of Children's and Adult Services
Mr. T. Birch	-	Assistant Director of Children's and Adult Services
Mrs. V. Fogg	-	Manager Pupil and Student Services
Ms. D. France	-	Early Years and Childcare Adviser
Mrs. V. Ridge	-	Deputy Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Gillies, McKeon and Watters.

Councillor Dean in the Chair.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee held on 17th June, 2015 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be received and signed as a correct record.

6. MONITORING OF DECISIONS

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which detailed the progress of decisions taken at previous meetings of this Committee

Resolved - That the position be noted and that members be kept informed of any future developments with regard to the Egyptology Project at the Bolton Museum.

7. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which set out details of the proposed work programme for the Committee for the current Municipal Year, which had been formulated following the workshop session at the first meeting.

Resolved – That the work programme be approved.

8. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE – PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Ms. V. Fogg, Manager Pupil and Student Services gave a presentation which outlined the role and responsibility of the Local Authority in the allocation of school places for all school age children in the Bolton and highlighted in particular:

- the Schools Admissions Code and the Coordination of Admission Arrangements;

- the numbers of admissions received for primary and secondary schools and statistics in relation to number of first, second and third and no preference offers for 2015;
- in year admissions;
- school appeals held to date and their success/failure statistics;
- future place planning for the expected high number of primary admissions in September 2016 following a high birth rate in 2012;
- secondary school place planning - the current estimate was that by September, 2017, Bolton would require at least 150 additional year 7 places; and
- Managing demand and planning future places at Special Schools.

Following the presentation, members made the following observations/comments:

- The number of application forms which were sent out to parents compared to the number received;
- Issues associated with the expansion of schools;
- The future planning arrangements for additional school places due to increased housing developments; and
- The future plans to accommodate the increase in secondary school places.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

9. IMPACT OF NEW AND EXISTING FREE CHILDCARE PROVISION

Ms. D. France, Early Years and Childcare Adviser, gave a presentation which outlined the current provision of free education for 2 year olds in Bolton.

The presentation outlined the criteria used for 2 year old funding and advised that economic factors led to entitlement for most children and in Bolton, a slightly higher proportion than the GM average. Bolton's 2 year old cohort had a smaller proportion of SEND children but a higher proportion of Looked after Children.

The presentation went on to highlight the following:

- Take-up of funded 2 year old places – at January, 2015, half of two year olds eligible for a funded early education place were benefitting from one – a smaller proportion than comparators;
- Bolton had a higher proportion of funded 2 year olds in nursery and primary schools than the national average;
- The % of 2 year olds in all settings by banded numbers revealed that children in Bolton were receiving more hours per week than elsewhere; and
- A much higher proportion of 2 year olds in PVI settings in Bolton were being directly supported by professionally qualified staff – 65% in Bolton compared to 45% in GM and England.

In relation to three and four year olds, the presentation highlighted that:

- a slightly higher proportion of eligible 3 and 4 year olds combined in Bolton were benefitting from the free entitlement than elsewhere;
- the % of 4 year olds in all settings by banded numbers of hours were similar to the GM average;
- a much higher proportion of 3 and 4 year olds in PVI settings in Bolton were being directly supported by professionally qualified staff – 69% in Bolton compared to 52% in GM and 49% in England; and
- Bolton had a higher % of outstanding settings and was in line with GM with 86% of PVI settings judged good or better.

The presentation went on to outline the impact of provision for 2, 3 and 4 year olds and summarised that most disadvantaged children were now accessing high quality early education from an earlier age. In addition, the good level of development for Bolton had been improved in 2015 by 7% to 61% which was now closer than the national average.

With regard to the future, the new Ofsted Framework would encourage improved collaboration between early years settings and schools and children's centres and would provide improved clarity of leadership and accountability for early years outcomes.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:

- A breakdown to be provided which compared Bolton to other Greater Manchester Authorities;
- The provision of early years for 2, 3 and 4 years old was having a positive impact on children ; and
- The work which was undertaken with parents as well as the child.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

10. ADOPTION IN BOLTON

Mr. J. Daly, Assistant Director Children's and Adult Services gave a presentation which outlined the current situation with regard to adoption in Bolton and highlighted in particular:

- The national context;
- The regional position;
- Bolton's current position;
- The number of children who had been placed in adoption during 2013-2014 and 2014-2015;
- Statistical information in relation to the percentage of children leaving care who were adopted;
- The types of children who had been adopted;
- The types of adopters;
- Adoption scorecard timescales; and
- The challenges to be faced.

In terms of the challenges ahead these were identified as follows:-

- The Government expectations versus court behaviour;
- The establishment of Regional Adoption Agencies;

- The rising numbers of Looked After Children;
- The reduction in the numbers of Adoption Placement Orders; and
- The challenges in recruiting adopters who would adopt harder to place children.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:

- Concerns were expressed regarding the view of the judiciary in terms of adoption orders;
- The appeals process for local authorities;
- The types of children who were defined as hard to adopt; and
- Reasons why the number of looked after children was increasing.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

11. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the extracts of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- The Executive Cabinet Deputy Leader's Portfolio held on 8th July, 2015
- The Culture and Youth PDG held on 22nd June, 2015.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.25pm)