

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 12 January 2016 at City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 16.35
Concluded 19.00

PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENTS
Sykes (Ch)	Engel	J Sunderland	F Khan
M Pollard (DCh)	Peart		
	Shaheen		
	Tait		
	Thirkill		

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Church representatives: Joyce Simpson (CE)

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Health Representative: Tina Wildy

Teachers Secondary School Representative: Tom Bright

Apologies: Mr Sidiq Ali, Parent Governor Representative, Kerr Kennedy, Voluntary Sector Representative

Also present: Councillors Hinchcliffe, Education, Skills and Culture Portfolio Holder and Nusrat Mohammed Executive Assistant to the Education, Skills and Culture Portfolio Holder

Councillor Sykes in the Chair

85 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- (1) Councillor Engel disclosed an interest in the item relating to development of the post Ofsted Action Plan (Minute 88) as her children attended primary and secondary schools in the district.
- (2) All those who were school governors disclosed an interest.



86 MINUTES

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2015 be signed as a correct record.

87 INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

88 UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POST-OFSTED ACTION PLAN

Bradford Council's Local Authority's arrangements for school improvement were inspected by Ofsted between 15 and 19 June 2015. Following the publication of the report, in the form of a letter, on 21 August an action plan was developed to address the issues raised in the report. The plan was submitted to Ofsted on 28 September and a response was received on 26 October.

The report of the Assistant Director, Education and School Improvement (**Document "AQ"**) provided an update on the work to develop a structured action plan and implement it, the response of Ofsted following their evaluation of the action plan, the further steps that had been taken to address the issues raised, and the next steps to publish the action plan on the Council website.

The Chair welcomed Nick Hudson, Ofsted Regional Director and referred to the in depth scrutiny undertaken by the Committee in October 2013 and the recommendations from Professor Woods regarding educational attainment in the district. He regarded the meeting as an opportunity to imbed Overview & Scrutiny into the post Ofsted action plan.

The Strategic Director Children's Services referred to the role of the Committee and how overview & scrutiny added value to the debate.

The Ofsted Regional Director acknowledged the significant issues that Bradford faced, which was why the district had been highlighted in the Ofsted annual report. He added that challenges in Bradford schools went back over many years and there had been lots of different attempts to improve the performance of Bradford schools. He pointed out that Bradford had a mixed economy including free schools and academies and it was difficult to say that this had an impact on performance. He added that there had been little impact despite historic attempts to improve educational attainment and that was still the case. He referred to the fact that the percentage of pupils attending good or better schools was unsatisfactory in both the primary and secondary sector which made Bradford different from other authorities in the north of England. He concluded that of late a change had been recognised which was discernable and which Ofsted had heard from officers,



Councillors and school leaders in different schools. He hoped that some change would be evident in outcomes. Ofsted would utilise the resources they had which may be useful to officers, members and schools in implementing the improvement plan.

The Education, Skills and Culture Portfolio Holder welcomed the constructive involvement of Ofsted. She noted that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was not the only body holding education to account and referred to the Education Scrutiny Board. She confirmed that the post Ofsted action plan was flexible and could be amended if things did not work as well as expected.

The Ofsted regional Director responded to member questions as follows:

- With reference to the robustness of member scrutiny, he suggested that members should be sceptical about what was presented to them and call people before them to answer questions. He stressed that it was essential that academy chairs be held to account and that if they were not willing to come before the Committee to answer questions then this should be made public. He noted that the Committee was good at holding officers to account but highlighted that there were other people that should be held to account.
- He confirmed that Ofsted assessed schools in the round, to find out whether young people were getting what would be expected for every single child to allow them to play their part as citizens.
- With reference to impartiality he stressed that Ofsted treasured its independence to inspect without fear or favour.
- He acknowledged the stress experienced by school staff during Ofsted inspections and explained that the notice period for inspections had been reduced and that Ofsted was in constant dialogue with head teachers and schools senior leadership teams to lessen the stress of Ofsted inspections. He accepted the impact that a poor Ofsted report could have but stressed that if children were getting a poor deal then it was their job to highlight that.
- There was a different relationship between the local authority and academies and the local authority and maintained schools. As more schools became academies the Committee would have to develop a relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner and hold them responsible if an academy trust was not performing.
- Building capacity in chains of academies the north of England required a lot of work by the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Committee.
- Ofsted would continue to inspect academy chains. The authority would use this information when choosing academy chains to work with.
- Ofsted could identify local authorities that were more effective at holding schools to account. However they were small authorities so direct comparisons with an authority the size and complexity of Bradford may not be possible.



- There was a need to develop of a relationship between Overview & Scrutiny and the Education Improvement Strategic Board. All schools monitored performance indicators on a regular basis and this information needed to be collated early in the year before it was too late to take action.
- He recognised the need to manage how under performing schools were matched with successful schools to ensure the wellbeing of both parties.
- In response to a concern that PSHCE was not compulsory in schools and was not inspected by Ofsted, he acknowledged that parts of the district had high levels of poverty but that schools in deprived areas of the district were doing well for young people and that there was a need to have ambition for all young people.

The Education, Skills and Culture Portfolio Holder stated that as over half of Bradford schools were now academies the local authority had to build a relationship with them to support and challenge, they no longer had the authority to impose. She concurred with the suggestion to invite the Regional Schools Commissioner to the Committee. She added that there was a need to focus on rapid change and nothing should distract from that.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services stressed the need for clarity about the role of Overview & Scrutiny. He expressed concern that comments by the Chief Inspector of Schools had been damaging to the perception of the district and the work that had been undertaken to encourage teachers to come to Bradford. He concurred that the role of Overview & Scrutiny should be to challenge all key parties such as academy sponsors two years on from the in depth scrutiny.

The Assistant Director Education and School Improvement reported that in the primary sector since September 2015, good and outstanding schools were working with schools facing challenges and that area based head teachers had been put in place. She added that schools were looked at on a year by year basis and not just when they were inspected by Ofsted. She advised the Committee that in producing the action plan each section of the Ofsted report had been examined and that the RAG rating would only turn to green when the actions had an impact. The action plan was monitored regularly and updates reported on a regular basis to the Education Improvement Strategic Board. She stressed that all young people in Bradford schools were still the responsibility of the local authority and it was fundamental that they should be able to achieve their potential. Academies would be challenged through the academy leadership and if it was still felt that there were issues then they would be reported to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Resolved-

- (1) That Nick Hudson, Ofsted Regional Director, be thanked for his attendance and his comments be welcomed.**
- (2) That educational attainment becomes a standing item on the Committee work programme, reporting approximately four times a year, with attendance from school partnerships, headteachers, Trade Unions, Ofsted, Academy Chains and the Regional Schools Commissioner to be scheduled.**



(3) That the Strategic Director Children's Services be requested to develop a means of reporting on categorisation of schools.

ACTION: Assistant Director, Education and School Improvement

89 SCHOOLS FORUM UPDATE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked for a regular update on the work of the Schools Forum. The Schools Forum had met twice since the last report, on 9 December 2015 and again on the 6 January 2016. The decisions list from the 9 December Schools Forum meeting was attached at Appendix 1 to **Document "AR"**.

At the 6 January meeting, the Forum was asked to make its final recommendations on the allocation of the 2016/17 financial year Schools Budget. The decisions list from this meeting was circulated to members of the Committee and a presentation was given verbally to the Committee on the key recommendations the Schools Forum had made.

A paper outlining the Schools Forum's recommendations would be presented to the Executive on 23 February 2016 as part of the Authority's budget setting process.

The School Funding Business Advisor advised the Committee that a consultation was awaited on the National Funding Formula, expected to be introduced in April 2017.

Concerns were expressed regarding the possibility of maintained schools running up large deficits, which would then transfer to the local authority on conversion to academy status. The Business Manager (Schools) assured members that his team worked closely with schools to limit this happening and could act to formally intervene by issuing notices of concern or ultimately suspending financial delegation if there were sufficient concerns. He added that the vast majority of schools were currently working hard to balance their budgets.

The significant reduction in the Education Support Grant was noted. It was also noted that an additional £1.09m government funding had been allocated to the high needs block 2016/17.

Resolved -

That the information provided in the update contained in Document "AR" be noted.

ACTION: Director of Children's Services



90 **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16**

The report of the Chair of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "AS"**) presents the Committee's Work Programme 2015-16.

Resolved -

That the Work Programme 2015-16 continues to be reviewed during the year.

ACTION: Overview & Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.

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THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER

