

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Friday 26 February 2016 at City Hall, Bradford**

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Commenced 1110

Concluded 1250

### **PRESENT – Councillors**

<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	<b>LABOUR</b>
Eaton	K Hussain
	A Thornton

Apologies: Councillor L Smith

Observer: Councillor Sykes

### **Councillor Thornton in the Chair**

#### **56. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### **57. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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



## 58. CHILDREN'S SERVICES GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT

Previous Reference: Minute 58 (2014/15)

Members were reminded that this Committee at its meeting held on 23 January 2015 considered a report on the Annual Governance Statement, Members resolved amongst other things:

**“That in relation to the governance challenge on Management of Ofsted Outcomes (detailed in Appendix 1 to Document “AD”) the Committee requests a comprehensive report outlining the governance structures supporting Children’s Services to better understand the governance framework and how different groups and elements relate to each other”.**

In accordance with the above the Strategic Director Children’s Services submitted **Document “AM”** which informed the Committee about the Children’s Services performance framework, its governance and external inspection framework.

The Interim Assistant Director, Access and Inclusion reported on the network of partnerships, organisations, boards and Committee’s responsible for Children’s Services in the district and how they related to each other which included that:

- The Local Authority had robust performance frameworks and associated improvement action plans in place which were monitored on a regular basis through key strategic partnerships.
- The Local Authority was also involved in a regional Director of Children’s Services group where a full self evaluation of Local Authority key performance indicators (KPI’s) occurred annually.
- The Local Authority had regional as well as internal scrutiny processes.
- Externally the Local Authority’s performance was also scrutinised by a variety of inspection regimes such as:
  - Children’s Services were inspected across key areas of their work which included social care, safeguarding, school improvement, Youth Justice and new this year children with disabilities and special educational needs.
  - Children’s Social Care was subject to an Ofsted Single Inspection Framework for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers – Bradford’s Inspection took place in February and March 2014 (attached as Appendix 1 Document “AL”).
  - A new type of inspection was planned for January 2016 - Joint Targeted Area Inspections – Bradford was expected to be inspected imminently – the inspection would include multi-agency arrangements for:
    - The response to all forms of child abuse, neglect and exploitation at the point of identification.
    - The quality and impact of assessment, planning and decision making in response to notifications and referrals.
    - Protecting children and young people at risk of a specific type of harm, or the support and care of children looked after and/or care leavers (Further details were included in Section 3 of the report).



- School improvement – framework for inspection focuses on the local authority arrangements for supporting improvement in schools and in the education of children and young people – Bradford’s inspection took place in June 2015 (Appendix 3 to the report).
  - Youth Offending Inspection was undertaken by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation – Bradford’s most recent inspection was held in January 2016.
  - Performance Framework – the LA was measured against KPI’s (Appendix 6 to the report) each of the KPI’s are linked to key functions of the Department – Social Care and Education.
- The Children’s Trust Board – brought together partner organisations with a shared commitment to improve outcome for children and young people by working together more effectively.
- The Bradford Safeguarding Children’s Board (BSCB) – looked at the key statutory mechanisms for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, with the purpose of holding each other to account and ensuring that safeguarding children remained high on the agenda across the partnership area.
- Corporate Parenting Panel had a specific role which was outlined in Section 5.3.2.
- The role of other Strategic Partnerships were included in Appendix 7.
- The role of the Schools Forum who comprised of representatives from schools and academies was detailed in section 5.5.2. of the report.
- The role of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to monitor and scrutinise the performance of Children’s services (detailed in paragraph 5.6 of the report).

Members commented on a number of issues which included:

- What was being undertaken to pick up early signs of CSE (child sexual exploitation); How did the Authority identify early intervention and prevention? There should have been initiatives put in place years ago to tackle this very serious issue.
- The Safeguarding Board needed to have policies in place for early intervention and identifying children at risk and their root causes.
- The London Challenge was not like for like.
- What extra provision was in place for children who had a low level of English?
- How did the Authority track accountability with the school landscape changing – schools were responsible for school led improvement but if they failed who was accountable if the school was not a maintained school?
- There seemed to be lots of meetings to discuss strategies but would like to know more on delivery; educational attainment causes; why was there failure?
- Needed to look at the underlying causes of child sexual abuse and the failure of the district’s school system.
- Needed to look at causes of mental health in children such as breakdown of families.
- Why was the new Behaviour Strategy Partnership started?
- What was the provision and support for adopted children?
- The Youth Offending Team partnership was held as a good example it would be useful to see more information on that.



In response to Members' questions it was reported that:

- There was an Early Help Board whose focus was to identify issues early on and support young people and families.
- A new structure for early help services was being looked at - services needed to be joined up and needed to be able to identify risks in local areas; the Safeguarding Board had undertaken a lot of work in placing support in schools.
- The Families First project aimed to make services working more closely together in local areas to help families at an earlier stage and would be piloted in Keighley from April – early help pilots were emerging in Keighley and in the Better Start areas.
- Professor Wood undertook a review of the education system and provided a report which included recommendations for improvements – following on from the review an Ofsted Action Plan was drawn up.
- The Authority understood what the issues were with failing schools and the challenges they continued to face such as the recruitment of the best staff.
- A team of achievement officers had been appointed and were holding schools to account; schools were the key partners in the changes required.
- There were schools that were under achieving but there were excellent schools who provided support to under achieving schools.
- The School Improvement Plan pulled all issues together and put responsibility on schools, the Local Authority and the School Improvement Partnership.
- The landscape of schools was changing; there were now a number of academies, Multi-Academy Trusts, Maintained Schools etc; the Government wanted schools to drive their own improvement and use good schools to help support failing schools; the Local Authority role was diminishing; academy chains were not as successful as the government expected.
- It was the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to decide which schools could be academies; the authority had good working relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner; the role of the RSC had grown; accountability for the Regional Schools Commissioner would be defined in due course.
- The School Improvement Board oversaw the school improvement function.

The Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended the meeting and stressed the need for his Committee to be guided on how best to scrutinise schools now that the landscape of schools was changing to academies, Trusts, free schools etc and who was responsible for failure in such schools.

In response to the Chair's question it was reported that the Schools Forum reported to the Education Funding Agency and Secretary of State, a mix of schools were represented at the Forum and the Forum was supported by various sub groups.

#### **Resolved -**

- (1) That Document "AM" be referred to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.**
- (2) That a further report be presented to the Committee on the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner and their relationship with the Local Authority.**



- (3) That due to the changing landscape of schools in the district an action plan is developed for the effective scrutiny of external bodies and partnerships responsible for school improvement.

**ACTION: Strategic Director, Children's Services**

## 59. DISTRICT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Assistant Director, Policy, Programmes and Change submitted **Document "AK"** which provided a summary of the approach taken in the development of the District Plan and sought member input at the drafting stage. The District Plan identified how partner organisations across the district would contribute to the delivery of the shared outcomes.

Members felt the District Plan should not contain jargon and should be easy to read and understand; the successes of the district should be included as well as the need to be more positive; the plan should include reference and Involvement of Members; terms such as vulnerability needed to be clarified.

In response to Members' queries it was reported that the issues raised would be considered as part of the consultation process and that the plan was being developed with commitment from partners across the district.

**Resolved -**

**That the views expressed by this Committee be considered as part of the District Plan development consultation process including:**

- **Avoiding jargon in the report**
- **Capturing the successes of the District**
- **Involvement and reference to Members**
- **Clarifying terms such as vulnerability**

**ACTION: Interim Assistant Director - Policy, Programmes and Change**

## 60. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPLAINTS 2014/15

The Interim Assistant Director of Policy, Programmes and Change submitted **Document "AL"** which reported on the Annual Review Letter from the Local Government Ombudsman, it summarised the number of complaints and investigations undertaken by the Ombudsman for the year ended 31 March 2015 and compared Bradford's performance against that of other local authorities.



In response to Members' questions any lessons learned from complaints were submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committees and were fed back to the department concerned; complaints were also reported to the Department Management Team and Corporate Parenting Panel on complaints relating to Looked After Children; any lessons learnt would be addressed on an action plan.

**Resolved -**

**That the Governance and Audit Committee takes assurance from the result of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2014/15, that the Authorities complaints process is overall satisfactory.**

**ACTION: Interim Assistant Director – Policy, Programmes and Change**

Chair

