

## Minutes of a meeting of the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 8 March 2016 at City Hall, Bradford

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Commenced 16.40  
Concluded 19.00

### PRESENT – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	Bradford Independents
Sykes (Ch)	Akhtar	N Pollard	Collector
M Pollard (DCh)	Engel		
	Peart		
	Shaheen		
	Thirkill		

### VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Church representatives: Claire Parr (RC), Joyce Simpson (CE)

### NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Health Representative: Tina Wildy

Also present: Councillor Hinchcliffe Education, Skills and Culture Portfolio Holder and Mr G Hussain Parent Governor Representative elect.

### Councillor Sykes in the Chair

#### 106 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- (a) All those members who were school governors disclosed an interest.
- (b) Councillor Engel disclosed an interest in the item relating to Update on Educational Standards 2015 and School to School Partnership Arrangements (Minute 111) as her children attended catholic schools.
- (c) Councillor Akhtar disclosed an interest in the item relating to Workloads of Children’s Social Care Services (Minute 110) as she was studying for a social work degree.
- (d) Councillor M Pollard disclosed an interest in the item relating to Update on Educational Standards 2015 and School to School Partnership Arrangements (Minute 111) and Bradford Education and Schools Improvement Commissioning Board (BEICB) (Minute 112) as he was the Vice Chair of Governors of Titus Salt.



## 107 INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

## 108 REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Resolved –**

**That recommendation (1) below from the Governance & Audit Committee 26 February 2016 be included on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee’s work programme.**

## CHILDREN’S SERVICES GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT

**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: Scrutiny Lead***

## 109. APPOINTMENT OF VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER

The Committee was asked to consider the appointment of the following voting co-opted member for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year:

Mr Gull Hussain – Parent Governor Representative.

**Resolved –**

**That it be recommended to Council that Mr Gull Hussain be appointed to the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a Parent Governor Representative.**

***ACTION: Interim City Solicitor for reference to Council***



## 110. **UPDATED INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS ON THE WORKLOADS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

The report of the Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) (**Document "BB"**) presented the most recent information on the workload of Children's Social Work Teams and updated Members on key pressures on the service. The workload analysis was based on activity up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

There had been no significant changes to the overall workloads of social workers, or pressures upon the service since the last report was presented. The report demonstrated that Social Work Services for Children & Young People in the District remained strong, robust and well managed.

The following questions were asked and answers given:

- It was noted that sickness absence was going up and it was asked whether this was manageable. Officers closely monitored the reasons for absence and there were a variety of reasons including some which related to stress. Sickness levels would continue to be monitored.
- When was the next Ofsted inspection due to take place? The new multi agency Joint Targeted Ofsted inspection framework was introduced in February 2016. It was likely that Bradford will be inspected this year. Work was being undertaken and weekly meetings were being held in preparation for the new inspection.
- Of the 251 children and young people identified as being at risk of CSE as at 31 December 2015 it was confirmed that 34 were at high risk, 117 were at medium risk and 99 were at low risk which was an increase on the previous year.
- Are there enough staff working on CSE and do they feel supported? Officers are reviewing the multi agency hub and had recommended that there was a need for more social workers in the hub. The need to keep monitoring the resources in the hub had been recognised.
- If a social worker was off sick, what cover was provided for looked after children? Communication between social workers was good. If a social worker is off sick the child was visited and made aware of this. Managers were aware of which social workers have been allocated which cases and ensure that there was appropriate communication.
- How does the authority ensure continuity of staff in respect of referrals to a duty social worker? All information on individual cases in the child Protection Team was recorded on the Integrated Children's System such as case notes, phone calls and meetings so that social workers and managers could pick up information. Monthly meetings were held with the manager so that they are up to date with individual cases.
- How often did staff have continuous professional development? Professional development was good, the first year was an assessed year with an appraisal at the end of it, appraisals then took place every 6 months to a year.
- It was noted that the average social worker left after 2 ½ years, that there were fewer level 3 social workers than last year and that fewer public law cases were allocated to level 3 social workers. It was questioned whether the figures on agency workers be included in those figures presented in the report. In response it was explained that the agency workers were not included in the figures as this information was more complex to collect. It was also recognised that it took social



- workers a while to get to level 3 and that they may want to move on. It was stressed that more experienced staff supported those with less experience.
- Is the authority employing agency staff because of a lack of applications for vacancies? In response it was confirmed that there was a rolling programme of recruitment with a good level of response but that those responding tended to be less experienced. To ensure that the authority had experienced staff, agency workers had to be employed.
  - What succession planning was in place? Officers were working with workforce development on staff recruitment and retention.
  - The high level of sickness recorded for the Safeguarding Children's Board was questioned. In response it was reported that this was a very small team and that it was due to a long term serious illness and was not related to stress.
  - With reference to Special Guardianship Orders, how were family members supported? It was recognised that there had been difficulties in this area and the looked after children team was looking at how to offer a package of support for families that needed and wanted it.
  - Are agency staff allocated the same caseload as permanent staff? In response it was confirmed that they were.
  - A member asked about staff turnover and retention and was advised that Bradford had lower levels of turnover than other areas, however it was acknowledged that movement was a national issue and officers were keeping this under review.
  - A member asked about the membership of the "challenge panels" in relation to child protection. In response it was confirmed that they were multi agency with membership that was appropriate to provide the necessary challenge.
  - A member asked about the diversity of the social work team. In response it was accepted that there were not many social workers from new communities but that there was a good cross section from other communities in the district and that this was constantly reviewed as communities changed.
  - It was agreed that the next report to the Committee would include information on (a) the percentage of children and young people that were identified as being at risk of CSE who had learning disabilities and (b) the proportion of looked after children that received respite care.
  - It was noted that the current number of child protection case conferences held on time had risen from 72.9% in 2015 to 98%.

A number of social workers attended the meeting and shared their experiences with the Committee as follows:

- Communication between social workers was good. If a social worker was sick managers are aware of which social workers were allocated to which children and ensured that there was sufficient communication.
- The Integrated Children's System was used to record all information including case notes, phone calls and meetings. Social workers and managers could pick up information. Social workers had monthly meetings with managers to keep them up to date with cases.
- Professional development was good. The first year was an assessed year with an appraisal at the end of it. Appraisals took place between every six months to a year.
- The level of professional and emotional support received from management, colleagues and the duty team made the work possible and helped to alleviate the



burden on individual social workers. This distinguished Bradford from other authorities.

- Less experienced social workers were never left on their own on complex cases, they were always co-worked and a lot of peer and management support was provided.

#### **Resolved -**

- (1) **That Document “BB” be welcomed and the social workers be thanked for attending and for their contribution to the meeting.**
- (2) **That the Committee continue to receive further reports in the new municipal year to ensure the continuation of safe workloads and practice.**

**ACTION:** *Assistant Director (Children’s Specialist Services)*

#### **111. UPDATE ON EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS 2015 AND SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS**

A report was provided to the Children’s Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 September 2015 outlining the provisional examination and test outcomes for Bradford’s children and young people, from summer 2015.

Following an extensive checking process, final results had been published by the Department for Education (DfE). In the first part of the report of the Strategic Director of Children’s Services (**Document “BC”**) information was given on those results that had changed since the publication of the provisional figures and a summary of the detailed analysis of these updated results was also provided.

In the second part of the report, information was provided on the activities that were being undertaken by Bradford’s formal school-to-school partnerships and how they were contributing to the improvements to the standards achieved in the District’s schools.

NOTE: A combined discussion took place on this item and the following item (Minute 112) as follows:

A representative of the Early Years summarised that Bradford was 121<sup>st</sup> out of a national ranking of 151 for reception children. It was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of 112 with its statistical neighbours. In respect of Yorkshire and Humberside, Bradford was marginally above average with Yorkshire and Humber at 62.15 and Bradford at 62.2%. Bradford was below the national average in year 1 phonics. The gap was closing with the national in key stage 1 and had been improving over the last 3 years but this trend needed to improve. At key stage 2 Bradford was 4% below national. Reference was made to the new assessment procedure and the fact that the Department for Education had been unable to give a benchmark to work to, so that all schools were working with uncertainty.



The Deputy Director of Education Employment and Skills added that the changes that had taken place this year to improve standards had been significant.

A representative of the Bradford Secondary Partnership noted that there had been a modest improvement on the figures since they were last reported however she stressed that standards were too low and not enough children had achieved the desired grades. She added that Bradford was the 48<sup>th</sup> most improved authority in 2015 despite turbulence in the system. She added that there were still concerns regarding the difference between girls and boys, the disadvantaged and those with special educational needs. She added that no secondary school was complacent and the Schools Partnership was keeping a close watch on all children in all cohorts. She added that in the autumn review, every

school had been visited with a focus on developing leadership capacity. There had been a focus on the 10 largest schools in which 50% of the children in the district attended. Partnerships had been formed with outstanding schools. Two external academy partners which were new to Bradford had brought additional capacity to the district to support leadership and improve the quality of teaching. The external support and dialogue with the Regional Schools Commissioner was welcomed.

The Deputy Director of Education Employment and skills advised that a workshop could be provided to support members on the new assessment measures. She undertook to reassure teachers that the authority recognised the challenge faced by teachers due to the uncertainty regarding SAT assessments this year.

The following comments and questions were raised:

- Concern was raised about the attainment levels of boys and white children in particular. It was noted that in early years, work was being undertaken with the National Literacy Trust Hub on programmes to engage boys, fathers and male carers to improve reading standards among white boys. The school library service also provided literature that appealed to boys. In key stage 2, work was being undertaken with teaching schools targeting year 5 pupils and working with white working class boys on site.
- Are we playing catch up due to the low attainment levels of children coming into schools? It was acknowledged that this was the case, but the authority had to have the highest expectations of all early years provision, including child minders, and that had to be good or excellent to make up for the deficit very quickly. It was stressed that the aspiration and expectation of leaders had to be high.
- What focus had there been on the transition of children that may have fallen through the net such as white working class boys? Many were being targeted by the literacy hubs.
- A member asked about the Bradford Partnership target to ensure that all schools were assessed as good by 2018. It was noted that this was a real challenge but stressed that the Partnership had to set its sights high and that it was still possible at the moment. However some schools have deep seated barriers to progress. It was recognised that the target may have to be reviewed in light of the changing Ofsted school inspection timetable. It was however emphasised that with additional capacity coming from academies the target was still achievable.
- The Education, Skills and Culture portfolio holder referred to the increased number of schools in the district converting to academy status and the fact that they could



not be inspected for a number of years which may become a challenge and would have to be looked at.

- The national issue of teacher recruitment and retention was raised. Reference was made to the Department for Education web site to facilitate more flexible working practices for teachers and flexible ways of returning to teaching. It was noted that the Teaching School Alliance would look at ensuring that leaders in education were making best use of this resource.
- Concern was raised about the robustness of local authority monitoring of schools through this Committee once all schools became academies. It was stressed that the Committee should start to build relationships with academy trusts to encourage them to speak to the Committee on their plans.

### **Resolved -**

**That the contents of Document “BC” be noted with some concern, but the fact that measures are in place to accelerate rates of improvement be welcomed.**

***ACTION: Strategic Director Children’s Services***

## **112. THE BRADFORD EDUCATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COMMISSIONING BOARD (BEICB)**

The report of the Director of Children’s Services (**Document “BD”**) explained that the Bradford Education and School Improvement Commissioning Board (BEICB) was established in September 2015 to provide a forum to ensure effective collaboration and joint accountability between the Local Authority, formal School Partnerships, the School Forum and Teaching School Alliances within a self-improving school led system. The board reflected the changing roles of schools and local authorities, providing a vehicle for the commissioning and accountability of effective support. It played a key role in ensuring that the following principles were achieved:

- Bradford is a school-led system
- All schools need to be good or better
- All schools need to belong to a formal partnership

The aims of the BEICB were:

- to ensure resources are effectively deployed and have an impact on the raising of standards in all key stages across the district
- to identify, discuss and address issues of common concern to ensure value for money and efficiency
- To implement the Bradford commissioning framework in order that schools and settings can access targeted intervention

The Deputy Director of Education Employment agreed that the impact of commissioned work would be reported to this Committee as well as the Education Improvement Strategic Board and the School Forum.



**Resolved -**

**That Document “BD” be welcomed and that the impact of the commissioned work referred to in paragraph 3.4 be reported to this Committee.**

***ACTION: Strategic Director Children’s Services***

**113. 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 “BE”**) presented the Committee’s Work Programme 2015-16

**Resolved -**

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

***ACTION: 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

