

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 26 July 2016 at Ernest Saville Room - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 6.50 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
D Smith Carmody	Engel Mullaney Peart Shaheen Akhtar	Ward

Non voting Co-opted Members

Teacher Secondary School Representative: Tom Bright
Voluntary Sector Representative: Kerr Kennedy

Observers: Councillors Cooke, Dunbar, Imran Khan and V Slater

Councillor D Smith in the Chair

Apologies: Sidiq Ali, Gull Hussain, Joyce Simpson and Tina Wildy

8. **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillor Engel disclosed a non pecuniary interest in the item relating to Young Carers (Minute 14) as a former young carer, and the item relating to Home Education (Minute 16) as she had experienced a period of home education.

9. **MINUTES**

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 be signed as a correct record.

ACTION: City Solicitor



10. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

11. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS

The Committee received the referral from Council on 12 July 2016 regarding Academisation of Schools (Council Minute 30) and noted that it would be taken into consideration during the discussion of the items relating to Schools Forum Update (Minute 15) and The Changing Educational Landscape (Minute 17).

12. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Resolved –

That it be recommended to Council that the following be appointed non-voting co-opted members of the Committee for the 2016/2017 municipal year:

Health Representative: Tina Wildy

Teachers Secondary School Representative: Tom Bright

Teachers Primary School Representative: Stephen Pickles

Voluntary Sector Representative: Kerr Kennedy

ACTION: City Solicitor (for reference to Council)

13. YOUNG CARERS

The report of the Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services) (**Document "D"**) provided an annual update on plans to meet the needs of Young Carers, within the Bradford District, following the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding 2010, refreshed in Feb 2014, July 22nd 2014, April 2015 and 21st July 2015.

Members were advised that every high school now had a named staff member to support young carers. School nurses undertook assessments and referred young carers who required more intensive support. Work was being undertaken with Bradford District Care Foundation Trust to encourage staff to refer young carers to Barnados. Concern was expressed at the lack of referrals from Adult Services and from GP's.

A number of young carers attended the meeting and addressed the Committee about their experiences and the support that they received.



Responses to a member questions were given as follows:

- All young carers that had been identified had been allocated a key worker. Groups were held throughout the year for young carers and attendance varied according to the needs of the young carer or the relevance of the group to individual young carers.
- The instances of young carers who cared for non family members was rare and none had been identified in the previous year.
- The issue of carers that had not been identified was a national one and there would always be a cohort that remained unidentified
- The case load to support young people not in school was held by school nurses.
- The case load for the school nursing service covered ages from 5 to 19 and 5 to 24 for those with extra needs.
- Pressure could be put on Clinical Commissioning Groups's to encourage GP's to raise awareness of the importance of identifying and referring young carers to the school nursing service.

Resolved –

- (1) That Document “D” be received and welcomed and the young carers be thanked for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.**
- (2) That the collaboration with school nurses and governing bodies be welcomed.**
- (3) That the Health and Wellbeing Board be requested to promote the needs of young carers by encouraging GP's to identify and refer young carers to the Young Carers Service.**
- (4) That a further report be presented to the Committee in 12 months.**

ACTION: Assistant Director (Children's Specialist Services)
City Solicitor (for reference to Health and Wellbeing Board)

14. SCHOOLS FORUM UPDATE

The Director of Children's Services presented **Document “E”** in response to the request of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a regular update on the work of the Schools Forum.

Members were advised that the Secretary of State had announced that the



Government was still committed to introducing the National Funding Formula but it would be delayed by one year. The main areas of concern for the authority were in respect of high needs provision, how the growth in places was to be financed and that no announcement had been made on early years funding and in particular the 30 hour for working parents to be introduced in September 2017.

Reference was made to the financial implications of the conversion of a significant number of maintained schools to academies. On 12 July 2016 Council Resolved to :-

- (1) Ask Scrutiny to work with officers to prioritise a full examination of this issue so that the prospective costs can be quantified.
- (2) Write to the District's MPs to ask them to lobby the Secretary of State for Education to request a fairer, more equitable system regarding the financial burden placed on the local taxpayer when a maintained school switches to sponsored academy status.
- (3) Work with other local authorities to make the case for Government to grant some funding to accompany their unfinanced academisation agenda.

It was noted that the Schools Forum had established a working group to look at issues arising from academisation.

The Education, Employment and Skills Portfolio Holder welcomed the delay in the announcement regarding the National Funding Formula and he expressed concern regarding the significant financial implications for the Council of the academisation of schools. He added that Local MP's and the Regional Schools Commissioner were being lobbied to make the case for additional resources or support for the Council to alleviate the financial effects of academisation.

It was noted that Bradford was one of a smaller number of authorities where mobility was significant. It was also noted that there were other authorities with fewer places than they needed but they did not have the same levels of deprivation as Bradford. Discussions were on going with regional colleagues and the Education Funding Agency and it was stressed that a clear message had to be sent to the Government to ensure that the pace of high needs transition was correct and joined up. Reference was also made to the pressures on Special Educational Needs that the Council faced.

The Strategic Director stressed that officers were having a robust discussion with the Education Funding Agency, that the Council's position had not changed and it would do what was right for individual schools. He added that a number of schools had recently stepped back from academisation. The Regional Schools Commissioner had insisted that Carlton Bolling should become an academy. He pointed out that the school had been inspected and it had improved and was still a maintained school. The Council's continued strategy would be to develop expertise and work with academy sponsors. He added that the Council was not negotiating from a position of strength due to the educational standards of the



district, however the current strategy being deployed was being successful.

The Director of Finance explained that the Department for Education's policy stance is that when a school converts to an academy the Council inherits any historic liabilities, including accumulated financial deficit. He added that discussions were taking place with the Schools Forum about how to put arrangements in place to minimise the risks associated with these circumstances, including how such liabilities can be controlled and funded. He also explained that the Council would be liable for transactional costs of conversion such as legal costs and elements of due diligence. He was aware that in other authorities these costs were being charged to schools. As s151 Officer he contended that the policy stance of the Department for Education required the Council accepting liabilities in a way which was inconsistent with sound public money management, and that discussions were taking place with the Regional Schools Commissioner in this regard.

A member questioned how much control or influence the Council had over academies regarding school expansion and the lack of school places in specific areas.

The Portfolio holder concurred that this was a concern, as was the move to replace parent governors with business nominees on governing bodies.

The Strategic Director confirmed that the Council would still have a role in ensuring there were sufficient school places. He added that the equivalent of two additional secondary schools were required in the next two years. The capacity of existing schools could be expanded and the post 16 review could create additional capacity however there would still be a need for one additional secondary school for which the Council was lobbying.

Resolved –

- (1) That members lobby local MPs regarding the National Funding Formula to highlight the District's mobility factor and high needs issues.**
- (2) That the Executive be asked to request the Director of Finance to explore all options regarding recharging schools for conversion costs incurred when they convert to Academies.**

ACTION: Director of Children's Services
City Solicitor (for reference to Executive)



15. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING HUB

Safeguarding children across the District was the Council's highest priority with the Director of Children's Services having a legal responsibility for the safeguarding of children. In order to meet this responsibility there was a requirement to have information about children who were unknown to statutory agencies so that their well-being could be assured. Once identified missing children and children not on the roll of a school needed to have a swift response to ensure their well-being. The Deputy Director of Children's Services presented a report (**Document "G"**) on the establishment of the Education Safeguarding Hub (ESH).

The following discussion took place on the report, the Strategic Director requested members to share information with him and he undertook to look into any issues of concern.

A member was advised to report details of an individual child that was out of school to the Behaviour Support Services Manager for a response.

An observer member referred to issues that had been raised with him regarding the context of the report. He also referred to concerns raised by a constituent that home educated. He was of the opinion that the two issues of children missing from school and those being home educated had been conflated and should be dealt with separately. The Strategic Director undertook to respond to the member's concerns.

A member of the Committee stated that a broader based report had been requested at the previous meeting which looked at those missing education including those registered but not attending school.

A member of the Committee commented that there were many reasons why parents decided to home educate and noted that this information was not requested on the notification form provided by the Council. She was of the opinion that there did not appear to be any particular ethnic over representation in children being home educated. She referred to the high profile case where children were taken by family members to Syria. She asked how many cases of concern had been identified and the reasons for the increased numbers in year 11. She noted that parents/carers were not required to inform the local authority of their decision to home educate and asked what action could be taken by the Council to address this issue.

The Strategic Director stressed that it was for the Committee to establish the terms of reference of the review. He pointed out that two of the children taken to Syria by family members were electively home educated. With reference to the issue of children missing from education he added that there was a need to focus on how the Council shared information with different national organisations.



A Co-opted member stressed the need to focus on those children who were not in school for whatever reason. He added that elective home education was a separate issue and that those who home educated should not be stigmatised.

A member of the Committee was aware of parents that home educated who were reluctant to communicate with the authority.

It was noted that the number of children that were home educated had increased by 32% in the last 3 years.

A member asked how children would be identified if the parent/carer did not have to notify the Local Authority that they were being home educated. She questioned how the authority identified whether a child was receiving an efficient full time education in compliance with the statutory guidance. She also asked what happened if a child expressed a wish not to be home educated.

A member asked what other Councils were doing in relation to this issue. The Strategic Director responded that this could be looked into.

A member stressed that it was the responsibility of the authority to ensure that the children of the District received a good education, including those on roll at school and those not attending school.

Resolved –

That the terms of reference of the review of the Council’s approach to elective home education in which the safeguarding of children is central be amended and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION: Overview & Scrutiny Lead

16. THE CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The Deputy Director of Children’s Services presented **Document “F”** on the ‘Educational Excellence Everywhere’ White Paper which was published in March 2016 and set out this Government’s ambitions for the future of education and the approach they would take to realise this ambition. The title ‘educational excellence’ articulated the twin ambitions of the Government: to champion excellence and set high aspirations for all children so that outcomes were not dependent on affluence or geography. The paper accelerated the Government’s ambition for all schools to be removed from LA control, becoming academies by 2022.

The Strategic Director referred to the focus on “system leadership” that aimed to identify good practice which would be used to build capacity in all schools by learning what worked. He gave an assurance that every child would have a school place and be safeguarded. He emphasised that the authority was working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner. He added that the authority had good working relationships with the secondary and primary partnerships and



would continue to work closely with them in the future.

A member stressed to the need to monitor support and challenge schools. He referred to the possibility that schools may not be fully connected to their local communities or accountable to them. He added that there would be a continued need for the authority to have access to information to monitor the performance of academies and hold them to account locally. He made reference to issues of equality and inclusiveness of schools.

Resolved –

- (1) That the reality of the changing education landscape be recognised.**
- (2) That the importance of working with the Regional Schools Commissioner, schools partnerships and academies be supported to ensure the best possible education experience and attainment for the districts pupils.**
- (3) That the appropriate challenge for all Bradford district schools be continued.**

ACTION: Deputy Director Children's Services

17. BLOCK CONTRACT CALL-OFF FROM THE WHITE ROSE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN RESIDENTIAL FRAMEWORK IN BRADFORD & DISTRICT AREA

The Deputy Director of Children's Specialist Services presented a report (**Document "H" which contains a Not for Publication appendix**) on a plan to block buy a number of residential children's homes beds from the existing White Rose Framework to provide better outcomes for looked after young people in Bradford. By undertaking this young people would stay in the Bradford area and this would provide a more cost effective result for the Council.

It was noted that the proposals would provide a better more localised services for looked after children in the district.

Resolved –

- (1) That Document "H" be noted and welcomed.**
- (2) That a further report on the outcomes of the proposals contained in Document "H" be presented to the Committee in 12 months.**

ACTION: Deputy Director of Children's Specialist Services

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

