

**Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday,  
22 November 2017 at Committee Room 1 - City Hall,  
Bradford**

Commenced 4.35 pm  
Concluded 7.00 pm

**Present – Councillors**

<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	<b>LABOUR</b>	<b>LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT</b>
<b>D Smith</b>	<b>Mullaney Peart Shaheen Tait</b>	<b>Ward</b>

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Claire Parr  
Joyce Simpson

Church Representative (RC)  
Church Representative (CE)

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Kerr Kennedy  
Irene Docherty

Voluntary Sector Representative  
Teachers Special School Representative

Observer: Councillor V Slater

Apologies: Councillor Mike Pollard, Councillor Sinead Engel, Councillor Talat Sajawal,  
Sidiq Ali, Tom Bright and Gull Hussain

**Councillor D Smith in the Chair**

**23. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Kerr Kennedy disclosed an interest in the item relating to Youth Voice in the District (Minute 28) as a Trustee of Bradford Youth Development Partnership.

Councillor Shaheen disclosed an interest in the item relating to Workloads of

Children's Social Care Services (Minute 29) as she was training to be a social worker.

Councillor Tait disclosed an interest in the item relating to Youth Voice in the District (Minute 28) as she had been involved in submitting a bid to the Iwill Big Lottery Fund.

ACTION: City Solicitor

## 24. MINUTES

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2017 be signed as a correct record.**

ACTION: City Solicitor

## 25. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

## 26. SCHOOLS FORUM UPDATE

The Committee had asked for regular updates to be provided on the work of the Schools Forum.

The last update was presented to the Committee on 27 September 2017. The Schools Forum had met once since on 18 October 2017. The decisions list from this meeting was attached at Appendix 1 to the report of the Director of Children's Services (**Document "L"**).

**Resolved –**

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

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

## 27. YOUTH VOICE IN THE DISTRICT

The report of the Director of Children's Services (Document "M") informed the Committee of work to deliver the Bradford Youth Voice Strategy. The Strategy was led by the Council's Commissioner for Youth Provisions, coordinated through the Youth offer working Group and delivered by a range of statutory and non statutory organisations across the district. The report provided examples that contributed to the delivery of the strategy, demonstrating the diversity of the work undertaken by a wide number of organisations within the partnership. The



strategy included youth voice work within communities; for specific groups of young people (e.g. the work with transgender young people); work to influence strategy and policy, and the district wider Youth Survey and Takeover Day.

A number of young people attended the meeting and spoke about their positive experiences with the National Citizenship Service, the Iwill programme the Takeover Day and other Youth Voice events.

In response to a member question about the Early Help proposals the Strategic Director advised members that early engagement had been undertaken through an on line questionnaire the result of which had been reported to the Executive. She added that the consultation in the second phase would be lead by the Youth Service in groups across the district. The Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder emphasised that that the first phase had been engagement and that the formal consultation had started on 15 November and would last for 90 days.

The Strategic Director added that a number of consultation events were to be held and that the feedback would be reported to the Executive.

The young people in attendance spoke of their experience of shadowing people in paid employment and in the voluntary sector during the Takeover Day.

A question was raised about sustainability and funding arrangements going forward. It was noted that the framework was empowering for young people to follow an interest and deal with what was important to them in their neighbourhood. It was stressed that the Youth Parliament had been a national model and this local model was more responsive to the needs and aspirations of individuals.

Young people responded to a member question about how to encourage people to attend youth centres. They referred to the unwelcoming outward appearance of the buildings, the negative activity taking place outside the buildings, that they were not publicised in schools but individuals had to go out and find them and the social stigma and peer pressure associated with attending a youth club. It was suggested that children should be encouraged to attend at a younger age and that teachers could help to encourage attendance at youth clubs. However a youth worker in attendance stressed that individuals could still be involved in activities while not attending a youth centre.

Reference was made to the areas where there had been a decrease in the scores received to the NCS surveys. It was acknowledged that the reasons why those parts of the programme were less effective would be investigated and the results would be reported to the Youth Board.

A member referred to the fact that the cost of travel to Culture Fusion was prohibitive for a number of young people and asked how well it was being used. It was noted that Culture Fusion was run by the YMCA and that a number of organisations operated out of it but that the Youth Service no longer ran information services from it because of the level of footfall.



The young people in attendance were asked for their views on how young people could engage with the work of the Committee and a number of suggestions were made. Reference was made to the difficulty in engaging with those young people who were hard to reach. The young people were asked to report to the 14 February meeting with their proposals. One member suggested that there should be as much emphasis on organisations to change their practice in order to hear young people as on young people to come forward to formal meetings such as this.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the work undertaken by the Youth Sector in terms of Youth Voice be welcomed.**
- (2) That young people be invited to report to the meeting on 14 February 2018 on ways they feel that the Committee can involve Youth Voice in the Committee reports and meetings.**
- (3) That the Committee receive a further update in respect of the work of Youth Voice in 12 months time.**

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

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

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "N"**) 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

There had been a slight rise to the overall workloads of social workers, and 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.

Members were advised that the average workload per social worker was slightly above the national and regional figure. A caseload weighting system had been introduced which was explained to members and which had been implemented across the social work teams.

Members referred to the increase in caseloads since September 2016. Officers acknowledged that there had been an increase which in part had been as a result of the way in which caseloads were recorded. Social workers who did not carry a caseload such as those on maternity leave or sick were not included in the figures. Officers were confident that there were no unallocated cases and that the service was not at a critical point where work could not be allocated. Staff were working to ensure that vacancies were covered. The number of agency staff was



low at 9 but they were needed to cover vacancies.

A co-opted member expressed concern at the rise in caseloads and that managing this relied on the good will of social workers which could have a cumulative effect on their health and wellbeing.

It was noted that the weighting system more effectively identified different workloads between teams. Officers were confident that the cases could be dealt with but that every additional case put additional pressure on workloads. There was however concern regarding the balance between experienced and less experienced social workers and the issue of retaining experienced social workers. It was stressed that workforce stability was the key to delivering services in Bradford.

A question was asked about what was being done to alleviate staff turnover and it was reported that exit interviews and surveys had revealed a number of reasons for leaving such as car parking, caseloads, relative rates of pay compared to neighbouring authorities and “hot desking”, however strong support from managers and strong supervision were also identified.

A social worker attended the meeting and spoke about his experience of working for Bradford and two other local authorities. He noted that although the workloads in Bradford were high, the teams and workloads were well managed. He noted that caseloads were increasing but that management structures were in place to deal with this.

A member asked at what point “breaking point” would have been reached. In response it was stressed that managers had to constantly monitor work coming through and that the key indicator would be if the work was not able to be allocated at the “front door”. It was noted that requests to employ agency social workers had not been turned down as the authority’s priority was to keep Bradford children safe. It was stressed that the service was not at crisis point now or in the near future but that caseloads had to be kept under review and managed.

A member question was asked about the effect that the Early Help proposals will have on workloads it was noted that if implemented correctly it would reduce the number of cases coming through to social workers. However a reduction in Early Help could put at risk, the ability of the authority to close cases. It was noted that the Families First funding was outside the scope of Early Help and that Families First strongly effects referral rates.

In response to a question from a co-opted member reference was made to the quality of the authority’s workforce development offer including the ESYA (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) programme and partnerships with Bradford University. It was acknowledged that there was a need to reflect on giving more experienced staff some protected time for their own development.

A question was asked about “hot desking” and it was noted that it was not an



ideal work environment for social workers but that it did help to have them all in one place. It was hoped that it may be possible to provide zones for social work teams which would provide a more supportive environment for social workers.

**Resolved –**

**That while the Committee acknowledges the strengths of management structures, dedication of social workers and the current safe workloads, it recognises the on going pressures and asks for an update at the meeting on 14 March 2018.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Children's Services

**29. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW LA COMMISSIONED SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH) FREE SCHOOL IN BRADFORD**

The Strategic Director of Children's Services presented a report (**Document "O"**) on the establishment of a new SEMH Free School in Bradford that would create a flexible, centralised facility which would act as an assessment centre with co-located specialised education, health and care services. It would also act as a regional facility offering placements for children and young people from neighbouring local authorities.

Bradford Local Authority was amongst 230 expressions of interest to establish an Local Authority Commissioned SEND Free School. The bid was successful and Bradford was now one of 19 projects that had been accepted onto the Free School Programme. The authority was now moving forward to deliver a Joint Services Residential/Day School for children and young people aged 10-19 years of age with complex social emotional and mental health needs. The timeframe for opening of the new school was September 2020.

It was noted that currently 44 children were provided for outside the district and that the new school would reduce out of area costs.

Members welcomed the development.

**Resolved -**

**That the Committee welcomes this exciting opportunity which is excellent news for the district.**

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

**30. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK**



## **PROGRAMME 2017-18**

**Resolved -**

**That the Work Programme continues to be regularly 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 Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

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

