

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 13 December 2017 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.40 pm
Concluded 6.20 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	INDEPENDENT
M Pollard	Engel Mullaney Peart Tait	Sajawal

Voting Co-opted Members:

Sidiq Ali, Parent Governor Representative
Claire Parr, Church Representative (RC)
Joyce Simpson, Church Representative (CE)

Non-Voting Co-opted Members

Kerr Kennedy, Voluntary Sector Representative
Tom Bright, Teachers Secondary School Representative

Observer: Councillor Val Slater

Apologies: Councillor Dale Smith, Councillor Fozia Shaheen, Councillor David Ward
(Independent) and Irene Docherty,

Councillor Pollard in the Chair

31. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

- (1) **In the interest of transparency Councillor Engel and Councillor Peart disclosed an interest in Minute 35 as they both had children who attended Bradford College.**
- (2) **All those who were school governors disclosed an interest.**

- (3) **Councillor Mullaney disclosed an interest in Minute 37 as she had a family Member who worked with missing children.**
- (4) **Siddiq Ali disclosed an interest in Minute 38 due to his role in independent fostering.**

Action: City Solicitor

32. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

33. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

34. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No Referrals had been received.

35. THE BRADFORD EDUCATION COVENANT

The Education Covenant was a District-wide collaboration composed of public, business, schools, colleges, higher education, non-profit, community, and parents. It served as a catalyst for organising community efforts and resources around a shared vision: all Bradford's children and young people will travel a safe, healthy, and successful educational path from cradle to career.

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "Q"** which provided a summary of the progress that had been made in implementing the Education Covenant to increasing the level of support, time and investment from the local community, whether voluntary organisations, businesses, or parents, in children and young people.

Members were informed of the wide range of activities that were part of the Education Covenant and the staffing resources that had been secured from external partners which included a Schools Liaison Officer from Queens College Cambridge who attended the meeting and spoke about her role around widening the participation agenda and social mobility for the most able but disadvantaged young people.

A Bradford Magistrate attended the meeting and spoke about the Bradford Community Champions who were a team of diverse and very carefully selected

individuals. She reported that when requested a team member would visit a chosen school, engage with the students and talk about their own journeys. They gave inspirational talks to inspire, encourage and motivate their audience; by the end of the inspirational talk the students would have realised the importance school had on their future.

In response to Members questions it was reported that next year there would be developments in the Education Covenant for parents and how they could support their child in their learning.

It was reported that the Education Covenant prospectus detailed all the programmes/activities available for children and young people of all ages, for teachers, school staff and parents.

A Member suggested that where a child was not engaging in education other avenues should be considered such as shadowing someone in their job in a career the young person would be interested in.

In response to the above suggestion the Assistant Director, Performance Commissioning and Partnerships agreed that it could be an area that could be looked into.

It was reported that inspirational talks were normally undertaken during assembly.

A Member suggested whether an achievement reward system could be looked into to encourage children taking part in the various activities.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that the success of the Industrial Centres of Excellence Programme needed to be developed further; children needed to be able to access high vocational pathways which would be part of the Education Covenant in supporting schools being able to do that.

It was reported that working with voluntary organisations and what they could offer would be the next step in the programme.

Resolved-

- (1) That the progress that has been made in implementing the Education Covenant be welcomed.**
- (2) That the work of community partners in delivering work with Bradford children and young people undertaken as part of the Covenant be commended.**
- (3) That as part of their roles Committee Members agree to promote the Education Covenant.**

36. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "S"** which detailed the annual admissions to schools process, the current position with annual admissions, appeals and in year applications. The report provided an update on the progress the Admissions Team had made with the programme of change over the last 12 months and outlined changes of the forthcoming year.

A Member questioned whether the admissions process could be made simpler; application forms did not contain a map of the geographical areas; some schools had supplementary forms others had a fair banding process; parents did not understand the application process for some schools; needed to consider whether parents are provided with further information for schools whose application process was complex or look at whether schools could return to the catchment area process.

In response it was reported that the applying for schools booklet had been improved and schools with complex admissions processes were highlighted at the front of the booklet.

It was reported that free schools and academies had an agreed admissions process which was in line with the policies in the district. Consideration would be given to making parents further aware of the importance of completing applications appropriately. Having a sibling in school did not automatically give a parent a place at the school for the second child.

Members were informed that parents sometimes applied for 5 schools which all had random allocations and therefore there was no guarantee that they would obtain a place in any of the schools they had listed as a preference.

Resolved-

- (1) That the Committee notes the current position with Admissions.**
- (2) That the Strategic Director Children's Services be requested to remind all schools, regardless of status, their requirement to be compliant with the Code of Practice regarding consultation of their admission policy every seven years and to comply with the requirement to send their policy, every year to the Local Authority by the deadline of 15th March.**
- (3) That the Strategic Director be requested to ensure that all new educational establishments comply with the Code and their admissions policies compliment the policies of the current educational establishments already in operation within Bradford.**
- (4) That the Strategic Director be requested to consider the role of the**

BACs (Behaviour and Achievement Collaborative) and how it aligns with the Fair Access Protocol to ensure the legal rights of parents are met.

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

37. CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE

The Deputy Director, Children's Social Care submitted **Document "R"** which highlighted the work being undertaken in Bradford to prevent children being missing from care, the actions taken to protect young people when they did go missing and the provision that was in place to meet their needs.

It was reported that there had been a concerted effort over the last 24 months across partners to improve the local arrangements for children missing from care. The Authority was now in a much stronger position to prevent, protect and ensure there was the correct level of provision in place to address the issue. A new Police Superintendent was in post as children's safeguarding lead.

Members commented on the following:

- Was there a reason why there was an increase in males going missing?
- What was happening to protect those children that went missing repeatedly?
- How were children with high risk dealt with?
- It would have been useful to have information relating to missing children on gender and ethnicity in the report.
- What was the difference between missing and absent?
- Statistics in paragraph 2.4 and 2.5 of the report and the number of children in care that were going missing was concerning.
- Officers needed to look at what processes colleges and universities had for children that were missing.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that:

- There had been an increase in the number of looked after children; issues like grooming meant that Bradford authorities were quicker to class children as missing as a precaution; as well as moving some children who were cared for outside of the area back into Bradford.
 - When a concern was raised for a missing child a joint decision between the authority and the Police was made to undertake a missing persons appeal; a review was undertaken on whether the placement was suitable for children who went missing repeatedly; action was taken when needed.
 - A grant had been received to work with children at high risk and further work would be undertaken in this area.
 - Gender and ethnicity would be included in future reports.
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- Missing was referred to when you could not find the whereabouts of the

person; absent was referred to when there was no risk of harm or threat (child late returning home etc); there was a low number of recorded absent instances.

- A future report would include case studies to understand what was working.

Resolved-

- (1) **That the work being undertaken to safeguard looked after children who go missing in Bradford be welcomed.**
- (2) **That the Multi-Agency Strategy to safeguard children who go missing be supported and reported to the Committee on a yearly basis.**

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

38. PURCHASE OF INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCY PLACEMENTS UNDER THE REGIONAL WHITE ROSE FRAMEWORK PROCURED BY LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

The Yorkshire & Humber regional commissioning arrangement for placements was through The White Rose group. In June 2011 the Association of West Yorkshire CEO's directed officers to collaborate to achieve savings in the purchase of external placements. The local authorities of Bradford, Calderdale, Leeds, Kirklees, Wakefield and Doncaster agreed to join this collaborative approach. The membership of this group had increased to include local authorities from across the region; there were currently 14 local authorities involved. The overall aim of the project was to deliver a contractual basis for each Local Authority to purchase IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) and Residential Care placements from Framework Agreements in line with the demand for LAC (Looked After Children) placements. Leeds City Council led the overall procurement of regional Framework agreements.

Document "T" reported on the decision by the Strategic Director, Children's Services to utilise the regional White Rose framework in order to purchase placements with Independent Fostering Agencies for looked after children. A new framework would be advertised by Leeds City Council, in order to replace the current framework that ended on 31st March 2018.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that the authority had a direct relationship with the provider and had control over the contract. The IFA framework being procured on a regional basis ensured more consistent availability of provision, enabling suitable placements in Fostering to be available to meet in the individual needs of Bradford children and young people. The continued purchase from a regional framework would provide savings as opposed to spot purchasing being undertaken by Bradford Council on its own.

It was reported that out of area placements were reviewed to ensure the

placement was in the best interest of the child, foster placements would not be disrupted for financial reasons.

Resolved-

That the Committee note the decision of the Strategic Director of Children's Services, that CBMDC is named as a purchasing organisation in the IFA framework advertised by Leeds City Council, and that. Children's Services purchase IFA placements from this framework, utilising a competitive process where placement requirements are advertised to all providers on the framework and the placement that best meets need is purchased.

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

39. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The report of the Chair of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "U"**) presented the Committee's Work Programme 2017-18.

It was reported that the item relating to SEND Transformation would be considered at the February meeting of the Committee rather than January.

Resolved -

That the Work Programme continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.

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