

**Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday,
11 April 2018 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford**

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 5.50 pm

Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR	INDEPENDENT
M Pollard D Smith	Engel Mullaney Peart Shaheen Tait	Sajawal

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Claire Parr Church Representative (RC)
Joyce Simpson Church Representative (CE)

Apologies: Councillor David Ward, Sidiq Ali and Irene Docherty

Councillor D Smith in the Chair

70. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Resolved-

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

71. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February and 14 March 2018 be signed as a correct record (previously circulated).

ACTION: City Solicitor

72. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

73. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No referrals had been received.

74. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked Councillor Val Slater for her dedication and exemplary service in her role as the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio and wished her well for the future.

Judith Kirk was also thanked for the work she had undertaken which the Chair stressed had made a positive difference to the service.

Judith thanked the Committee for making her feel welcome.

75. SCHOOLS FORUM UPDATE

Previous Reference: Minute 43 (2017/18)

Members were reminded that the Committee asked for regular updates to be provided on the work of the Schools Forum.

In accordance with the above the Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "AL"** which reported that the Schools Forum had met once (14 March 2018) since the Committee's last update and the report provided progress since that meeting.

The following points from the report were highlighted:

- The Schools Forum recommendations on the allocation of the 2018/19 Dedicated Schools Grant were approved by Council on 22 February 2018; the Local Authority was now engaged in delivering those recommendations.
- The reviews of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) and SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) provisions, and Bradford's High Needs Block financial strategy would continue to be high priority agenda items for the Schools Forum and for the Authority during 2018; the Authority was currently establishing a High Needs Block Steering Group.



- Other reports to the Schools Forum meeting on 14 March provided updates on DSG and school and academy budget matters, including an interim update on the anticipated volume of conversions of maintained schools to academy status in Bradford and the likelihood of liabilities resulting from the conversion of schools holding deficit budgets.
- From April 2018, the value per Looked After Child nationally increased to £2,300 with the Authority planning to continue to retain £575 (25%), passing £1,725 to schools and academies.
- The Schools Forum had confirmed its recognition of the value Trade Union Support Services to schools funded from the DSG and had ratified its initial decision to continue de-delegation at current values in the 2018/19 financial year.

There was a short discussion on how the reserve of £917,000 from the Early Years Block would be used.

Resolved-

That Document “AL” and the continued updates provided to the Committee be welcomed.

76. SCHOOL EXPANSION PROGRAMME, EDUCATION CAPITAL FUNDING AND ACADEMY CONVERSIONS

The Strategic Director, Children’s Services submitted **Document “AM”** which updated the Committee on a number of key areas relating to school organisation in the Bradford District and included school expansions, Education Capital Funding and academy conversions.

The following points from the report were highlighted:

- A number of secondary schools had increased their Published Admission Numbers and two new Free Schools, which the Educational Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) were in the process of delivering, would create an extra 1,200 places.
- The increase in primary numbers had slowed with forecast numbers in some areas of the District starting to reduce. The pressure on pupil numbers at secondary level was increasing as the increased primary numbers moved through the system. The secondary school expansions that the Council was undertaking together with the new Free Schools the ESFA were delivering should deliver sufficient places for future years.
- Schools Capital Maintenance Grant and Devolved Formula Capital allocations were normally announced by the ESFA in March/April 2018 for all Councils.



- The ESFA was also expected to announce whether the Council would be allocated any Basic Need funding for 2020-2021. Basic Need funding was the money the ESFA allocated to Councils to be used for School expansion projects so that Councils could fulfill their statutory duty to make sure there were enough school places for children in the local area.
- The Council was also undertaking a program of School Academy conversions in line with the requirements of the Academies Act 2010. To date, the Council had converted 79 schools to academy status, and, there were a further 18 in progress. This left a balance of 125 schools which were not academies – this included maintained schools, trusts, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, nurseries and PRUs (primary, secondary and special).
- £300,000 had been allocated from the Healthy Pupil Capital Fund; Multi Academy Trusts and the Diocese had also been allocated the Healthy Pupil Capital funding; discussions were being held with schools and colleges on how this funding would be allocated.

A short discussion was held on the method used in allocating the Healthy Pupil Capital Funding and the late announcement by the Educational Skills and Funding Agency of the Schools Capital Maintenance Grant and Devolved Formula Capital allocations.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that Governing Bodies of schools decided whether they continued to have/or not have a sixth form.

Resolved-

That the report be noted.

77. PROGRESS OF THE FOSTERING SERVICE

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted **Document "AN"** which provided an update on the progress and development of the Fostering Service and the changes introduced since the appointment of the new Service Manager on 23 October 2017.

The following points from the report were highlighted:

- A full time Recruiting and Marketing Manager was appointed in early October 2017 as well as a Community Resource Worker which supported the Service with the recruitment activities undertaken to attract new foster carers.



- The Service joined a regional campaign 'You Can Foster', which had been advertised widely through social media, street side posters, radio and TV adverts; to date for 2017-18, the campaign had generated 100 enquirers, of which 4 had progressed from initial enquiry.
- There were currently 28 households still in active enquiry stage.
- Bradford had shown the best return on investment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region so far with 1.9 enquiries per 10K in the population, compared to Leeds (1.4 per 10K), Kirklees (1.3 per 10K) and North Yorkshire (1.45 per 10K).
- The Service had revised its telephone service for those interested in fostering. The "You Can Foster" campaign and website directly relayed people into the service.
- At the start of the financial year 2017/18 the target was to recruit 50 new fostering households; the figure to date had now exceeded this with 71 new households; this improvement was significant and was a direct impact of the marketing activity and management direction.
- Additionally, to meet future demand, the service had now shortlisted 9 social workers from the wider Children's Service who would be 'casual workers' for the Fostering Service. The target although ambitious, for the next financial year was to double the mainstream provision to 42.
- The Service had done some drop in information sessions for Council workers across the District. This had provided an opportunity for council staff to pick up leaflets about Fostering and more were planned in the year.
- A Fostering event took place on the 14th September 2017 to launch the revised foster carers' handbook.
- The Fostering Service had now set a date for the first annual carer conference taking place 23rd May 2018 which would be joined by the Director and Founder of Foster Focus, who himself was brought up in care to deliver a Keynote speech.
- Worry Monsters had picked up in pace and the community in the Bradford district had got behind their production. The pace and size of knitting groups had supported social workers being able to put an order in for a worry monster for children they were supporting. The monsters supported direct work with children and young people. The children were reassured that it was ok to have worries, they wrote them down and pop their worries into the worry monster's mouth and the worries could stay there until they were ready to talk to a trusted adult.
- A significant development within the service was the launch of the Fostering Service's Standards of Practice in January 2018. It was a 15 page document which set out timescales and expectations in relation to practice. It was a significant development as the service was in a much better position to challenge poor practice when the standards were not being met.



- Over the last 2 years as part of the Journey to Excellence and the New Model of Care for Looked After Children in Bradford, the Service had worked hard to train, develop and support PACE practitioners in order to help embed the Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE approach).
- To balance workloads across the full Fostering Service, the Service Manager had now reviewed staffing and resources and made a significant change by joining the Support/Shared Care Team with the Special Guardianship (SGO) Support Team, which was under resourced. This change had also provided further opportunity to resource other pressured areas.
- As part of the successful innovation bid by Children's Services, the fostering service had now launched the first 2 Mockingbird hubs in February 2018. The model was proven to achieve greater resilience in placements and reduce the number of placement breakdowns.

In response to Members questions it was reported that the reasons behind so many initial contacts not converting in to enquiries were mainly due to the enquirer:

- not having a spare room to foster
- actually wanting adoption not fostering
- language barriers (not having a good enough level of English to be able to support a child in education, record children's activities and work with the teams around looked after children)
- expressing an interest but not able to foster at this time (life circumstances)
- initially interested because of financial reasons

The Chair suggested that knitting of Worry Monsters could be promoted on the Council's Bradnet site.

In response to a Member's question it was reported that changes in Foster Care Allowances had only resulted in one foster carer leaving the system.

There was a short discussion on the ethnicity of foster carers and it was highlighted that there was a shortage of foster carers from the Eastern European Community.

A suggestion was made that Information Sessions on recruiting Foster Carers should be held in Community Centres. In response it was reported that outreach work was undertaken to recruit Foster Carers including events in Community Centres.

There was a discussion on the need for the temporary posts of Recruitment and Marketing Manager and a Community Resource Worker to continue beyond the contract date.



Resolved-

The Committee recognises and welcomes the significant developments in the Fostering Service and requests a further report in 12 months.

Action: Strategic Director, Children's Services

78. RESOLUTION TRACKING

The Chair of the Committee submitted **Document "AO"** which detailed the progress made against the resolutions passed by this Committee during the 2017/18 municipal year.

Resolved-

That the report be noted.

79. CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their positive contribution to the work of the Committee and thanked officers who supported the Committee for their valued advice offered to Members.

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

