

# Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 18 July 2018 in Reception Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 6.50 pm

## Present – Councillors

CONSERVATIVE	LABOUR
Gibbons M Pollard	Engel Arshad Hussain S Khan Peart Wood

### VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Sidiq Ali

Parent Governor Representative

### NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Kerr Kennedy

Voluntary Sector Representative

Observers: Councillor Farley (Children and Families Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Thirkill

Apologies: Councillor David Ward, Councillor Talat Sajawal, Claire Parr, Joyce Simpson and Irene Docherty

## Councillor Gibbons in the Chair

### 1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interests of transparency Councillor Gibbons disclosed an interest in the item relating to Joseph Nutter's Foundation (Minute 6) as he was a Trustee of the Foundation and a signatory to the Accounts.

In the interests of transparency Kerr Kennedy disclosed an interest in the item relating to Joseph Nutter's Foundation (Minute 6) as he worked with the Foundation.

In the interests of transparency Sidiq Ali disclosed an interest in the item relating to Procurement for the Purchase of Accommodation to Support Young People Leaving Care (Minute 8) as an independent Social Worker providing such support.

**ACTION: Interim City Solicitor**

### 2. MINUTES

**Resolved –**

**That the minutes of the meetings held on 14 February and 11 April 2018 be signed as a correct record.**

**ACTION: Interim City Solicitor**

**3. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

**4. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

No referrals had been received.

**5. APPOINTMENT OF NON-VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

**Resolved –**

**That the appointment of the following non-voting co-opted representatives for the 2018/2019 municipal year be recommended to Council:**

**Teachers Secondary School Representative: Tom Bright  
Teachers Special School Representative: Irene Docherty  
Voluntary Sector Representative: Kerr Kennedy**

**ACTION: Interim City Solicitor**

**6. JOSEPH NUTTER'S FOUNDATION**

The Committee received a presentation on the work of the Foundation from the Chair of the Foundation, Sir James Hill and John Lambert the Foundation's Administrator. They explained that the objects of the Charity were to provide assistance to children and young people in need and who had at least one deceased parent. Their aim was to offer modest support in the form of annual and one-off grants for essential items that would improve the welfare of the child or young person. It was noted that referrals were received from Primary Schools, from Children's Social Care and through word of mouth and that the Foundation had capacity to work with more families. A number of suggestions were made to widen channels of communication with the Foundation such as through GPs, Bradford schools on line, pastoral care staff and designated safeguarding leads in schools, and Young Carers. The Voluntary Sector Co-opted member would liaise with the Strategic Director of Children's Services on this issue.

**Resolved –**



- (1) That Sir James Hill and John Lambert be thanked for their presentation.
- (2) That the Joseph Nutter Foundation information flyer be circulated to all members of Council.

**ACTION: Overview & Scrutiny lead**

## **7. WORKLOADS OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES - UPDATE**

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "A"**) 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> March 2018.

There had been a further slight rise to the overall workloads of social workers, and pressures upon the service since the last report was presented. It was noted that this slight increase was on top of those reported on the last three occasions which was having a cumulative impact and was causing additional pressure on Social Workers. There were 182 Social Workers employed by the Council and at 31 March 2018 and 19 agency social workers which was the 11<sup>th</sup> lowest level in the country. Bradford had created an additional 8 Social Worker posts and recruitment was currently underway, however nationally there were not enough Social Workers or experienced Social Workers to go round. Vacancies were being held that were not able to be filled with agency Social Worker because of concerns about quality. Child Protection and Looked After Children figures had risen, which followed the national trend but Bradford's rate per 10,000 was still less than its statistical neighbours. There was concern regarding the balance between experienced and newly qualified Social Workers with 40% of Social Workers being experienced where a figure nearer 60-70% experienced Social Workers would be more desirable. There was little problem recruiting new Social Workers, the problem was in retaining Social Workers and recruiting experienced Social Workers.

The Deputy Director Social Care referred to the destabilising effect on the Bradford Social Care workforce of the aggressive recruitment practice of neighbouring authorities. Kirklees Council Children's Services had been judged as inadequate in recent years and had increased the pay scales of Social Workers which had attracted Social Workers to move away from Bradford. He noted that Wakefield Council Children's Services had recently been judged as inadequate and he anticipated that this would also have an impact on Bradford in terms of recruiting and retaining Social Workers. He added that a recruitment fair had been held in June in which experienced Social workers in other fields were targeted. This had resulted in 41 Social Workers being shortlisted of which 25 had been recruited. Some of those recruited were experienced Social Workers but not experienced in Children's Services but the majority were newly qualified. Details of the support given to newly qualified Social Workers were outlined to members by a Social Work Practice Supervisor. It was noted that the retention allowance that brought Bradford's pay scales in line with Calderdale had been



well received and had already made a difference to recruitment and retention. It was stressed that there was no quick fix to the issues being experienced and that they should be viewed in the long term. The key to the retention of Social Workers was manageable workloads, appropriate support and levels of pay.

A member asked about the national shortage of Social Workers and it was noted that a lot of work had been undertaken nationally and some areas were more successful than others at retaining Social workers. Good Ofsted outcomes, lower caseloads and good administrative support had been identified as significant. Additional finance had been allocated to increase administrative support in Bradford which had been well received. Work was on going with universities to support Social Workers in their performance development.

The Strategic Director Children's Services noted that the lack of a national pay scale for Social Workers had been recognised nationally. He pointed out that the recent Bradford Ofsted inspection had found that Social Workers enjoyed working in Bradford and that they were well supported.

The Deputy Director agreed to provide members with the figures on Social Workers on maternity leave and long term sick leave. He advised members that 8 new posts had been created and agency workers were specifically targeted so that the posts would be filled which would relieve pressure on permanent Social Workers. He responded to a further member question that agency staff were paid 30-50% more than permanent staff. He agreed to provide members with the annual cost of agency Social Workers.

It was noted that the Principal Social Worker supported newly qualified staff and that once they became level 2 Social Workers, work would be undertaken with them on professional training and development. Bradford was part of the phase 2 pilot for a national accreditation for experienced Social Workers.

In response to a member question in whether performance targets were being met the Deputy Director stated that there were no unallocated cases but that quality would be better with more staff. He added that there was too much turn over at the present time and that the desire was to offer children and families stability.

A member asked whether the West Yorkshire authorities could combine to create an agency and reduce costs. In response the Deputy Director advised members that the Directors of Yorkshire and Humberside had an agreement that capped the rate and expectations regarding notice period. The cost of agency staff was capped to prevent the market from spiralling.

A member asked whether the authority "grow your own" social workers and it was noted that this was done in the past where they were sponsored to go to university. There were some very skilled unqualified social workers in the authority and some roles could only be undertaken by qualified Social Workers. Work was being undertaken with Bradford College to establish apprenticeships into social work. Administrative staff were undertaking apprenticeships.



A member asked whether there had been any progress on cases being open for a long time. The Head of Service (Social Work) explained that managers were examining caseloads to ensure that the work was appropriate and that cases were closed down and added that up to 500 cases had been closed in the previous months.

A member asked whether less permanent staff were being lost since the introduction of more agency staff. The Deputy Director explained that the authority was still holding vacancies so that position had not been reached.

The Chair asked what the lowest number of vacancies had been over the previous two years. The Strategic Director responded that there had been no vacancies in the previous year and that the level of agency staff had remained at 5% or 10 agency staff. It was pointed out that there had been an increase in workload nationally over the previous 12 months and that there had been no increase in staff which had resulted in additional pressure on Social Workers.

A member asked whether any agency staff were on long term contracts. The Deputy Director explained that there were valued agency staff that had moved from one team to another. They could have been with the authority for up to 18 months. A capped rate was negotiated with agencies. Valued agency staff were asked if they wanted to become permanent members of staff and were advised of the advantages in terms of pensions, career development and support.

The Deputy Director noted that the retention allowance would be reviewed annually based on whether it was needed. It would be payable if a Social Worker was still in post on 1 January 2019 and there were eligibility criteria based on capabilities and disciplinary record. He added that Kirklees had 25% agency staff and were told to recruit permanent staff which was having a knock on effect for Bradford and Calderdale.

A member asked what mechanisms were in place for the Roma community regarding CSE. The Deputy Director responded that there was an over representation of children using the service from Central and Eastern Europe, the main driving issue being poverty. The service has excellent links with the community but currently had to work through interpreters as there were no staff in the service of Eastern or Central European origin at the present time.

In response to a member question the Deputy Director agreed to provide members with information on the number of Social Workers that leave the authority within 12 months of being appointed.

A member referred to the fact that referrals received by Social Care Services had increased from 540 to 630 the previous month and was assured that Bradford was following the national trend and that this had been taken into account in the calculation to recruit 8 Social Workers. Neglect had seen the highest increase with a correlation between the number of families living in poverty and children being neglected.



A representative of UNITE attended the meeting and asked why staff were not going to be paid more rather than just a bonus. He also contended that UNITE and UNISON both opposed the retention allowance. The Deputy Director stated that if a national pay scale was introduced for Social Workers this would have been preferable but a judgement was made to introduce the retention allowance to retain social workers using the £450,000 allocated in the budget.

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the Strategic Director of Children's Services continue to closely monitor the retention and recruitment of Social Workers.**
- (2) That the Strategic Director of Children's Services continue to lobby National Government for a National Pay Scale for Social Workers.**
- (3) That it be recommended to the Executive that during the budget process the possibility of enhancing Social Worker pay scales be explored.**
- (4) That the Committee consider a further report in December 2018 to include details of how the retention scheme is working to ensure the continuation of safe workloads and practice into the future given the current financial climate.**
- (5) That the Committee establish a task and finish group to look into ways of improving recruitment and retention of Social Workers and report back to the Committee in December 2018.**

**ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services**

**8. PROCUREMENT OF A NEW PURCHASING SYSTEM ARRANGEMENT FOR THE PURCHASE OF ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE AND VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE**

Children's Services were undertaking a procurement exercise to put in place new commissioning arrangements for the purchase of Accommodation and Support for Young People Leaving Care and Vulnerable Young People. This would establish a purchasing system that will name Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield Councils as participating authorities.

The new arrangement was required as the existing regional framework ended in December 2018 and regional arrangements for purchase of this type of provision would no longer be in place.

The Contract Standing Orders identify the following requirement:

*4.6 Before inviting tenders or quotations, the Authorised Officer must:*



*4.6.1 for contracts with a total estimated contract value in excess of £2m, report details to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee using the standard Committee report template.*

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "B"**) therefore, set out the details of the provision to be procured to inform Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the intended process.

The Strategic Director stressed that new arrangement only applied to the Young People Leaving Care and Vulnerable Young People element of the contract and that other elements would remain in place.

In response to a member question as to whether the views of children in the care of the authority had been sought it was agreed that young people needed to be more involved.

A member asked question about the number of young people supported and it was confirmed that 30 places were spot purchased per year and 100 places block purchased per year.

**Resolved –**

**That the contents of Document "B" be noted.**

**NO ACTION**

## **9. COMMITTEE'S DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19**

**Resolved -**

- (1) That the Committee agrees the Work Programme with the addition of an item on budget proposals at the 23 January 2019 meeting.**
- (2) That the Work programme 2018-19 continues to be regularly reviewed during the year.**

**ACTION: Overview and 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

