

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 15 January 2020 at 4.30 pm in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4.30 pm
Concluded 8.30 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AND INDEPENDENT GROUP
Engel Arshad Hussain S Khan	Gibbons Pollard	Ward

Councillor Gibbons in the Chair

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Claire Parr	Church Representative
Joyce Simpson	Church Representative
Katherine Haskett	Parent

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Kerr Kennedy	Voluntary Sector Representative
Tom Bright	Teachers Secondary School Representative

Apologies: Councillor Mullaney

27. **ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)**

There were no alternate members.

28. **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

- (1) Councillor Engel disclosed an interest in the item relating to Special Educational Standards 2019, (Minute 7), as her child was on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, (CAMHS) waiting list.
- (2) Claire Parr disclosed an interest in the item relating to the OFSTED Improvement Plan, (Minute 6), as her daughter was a Social Worker.

(3) Mr Kerr Kennedy disclosed an interest in the item relating to Bradford Opportunity Area, (Minute 8), as the school that he is connected to received money from the programme.

29. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 October 2019 be signed as a correct record.

30. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

31. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

32. PROGRESS UPDATE FOLLOWING OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) - OFSTED MONITORING VISIT PREPARATION, PROGRESS AND CONTINUED CHALLENGE

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "k"**) provided the Committee with a progress update in respect of improvements identified within the Ofsted Improvement Plan, namely:
Ofsted monitoring visit preparation, progress and continued challenge.

Members were also given feedback from the Ofsted October 2019 monitoring visit, along with the planning and identified projects in Phase One for innovation and improvement.

The Strategic Director of Children's Services informed members that Bradford's third Ofsted Monitoring Visit took place on the 16 and 17 October 2019, with the focus of the visit being on Children who are subject of a child protection plan, those subject to the Public Law Outline process and children who were at the edge of care.

Members were informed that the third Ofsted Monitoring Visit stated that Children's Services were making progress in some areas, but with many areas that still needed improvement. A key outcome that Ofsted found was that changes have not happened quickly enough.

In response to members questions about what the key challenges were moving forward, it was reported that the key challenges included preparing all documents and strategies, maintaining the basic core practices, ensuring that interventions were correct and supporting the children of the District. In addition, officers highlighted that working with partners, to ensure that children received help sooner was also a key challenge.

Members were keen to understand the level of progress in making the required improvements. In response, officers indicated that the basic foundations were in place along with the management team, to drive improvements over the coming months. Furthermore, following a meeting with the Quality Assurance Inspectors, officers were informed that there had been good use of performance management, the strengthening of management arrangements and the service was now focusing on the right areas.

Moreover, members expressed their concerns about the high levels of agency staff being used, their cost and quality and questioned officers in the approach being used to reduce the over reliance on agency staff. Officers indicated that they had now put in robust recruitment processes and were fast tracking applications. Members also learned that the applications of agency staff who were keen to become permanent staff, were also being fast tracked.

Officers also stated that the key features which staff were seeking included improved supervision and better training and managed caseloads. There was concern amongst members in relation to the areas of improvement identified in the OFSTED letter, specifically relating to the capacity and competence of staff to undertake their roles. In addition to this, members also stated that as the service was 15 months into the improvement programme; basic areas such as qualified practitioners being able to deliver core and fundamental tasks, were still not being done.

Officers replied by informing members that whilst ensuring that consistency of practice was difficult, they were strengthening core practices and staff now had clear expectations of what was required.

Continuing with the areas of improvement identified highlighted in the OFSTED letter, several members raised concerns regarding the issue of Social Workers failing to see basic improvements in children's lives. Members stated that officers needed to find ways of listening more sensitively to what children were saying. Members wanted to learn what changes officers would be pursuing to Social Worker practices.

Officers responded by saying that OFSTED did identify good work being undertaken, but not across the whole of the District. Good work was being carried out in areas which had stable and robust management arrangements in place. It was imperative that Social Workers were given the assessment tools and standards. It was stated that this could not be achieved quickly, but plans were in place to deliver these improvements.

There was considerable discussion amongst members, in relation to how the Improvement Plan should be considered at future meetings of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny. Whilst members accepted it was important to keep an overview of the Improvement Plan, members stated that in future it would be more productive to scrutinise specific aspects of the Improvement Plan.

Resolved –

That this Committee requests an overview and more focused reports to be presented on key aspects of the improvement plan, starting with Children's

Social Care Contact and other areas such as:

- **Children's Social Care Referrals;**
- **Rate of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan;**
- **Length of time on Child Protection Plans;**
- **Trends in the number of looked after children number and comparison with other authorities;**
- **percentage visits completed on time.**

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

33. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS 2019 - EARLY YEARS TO KEY STAGE 5 - PROVISIONAL REPORT

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "L"**), showed that the improvements in primary phase attainment this year had reduced performance gaps that existed against the national averages at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.

It was reported that improvements in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at Key Stage 1 were particularly notable.

However, gaps in the test results between various groups within the primary phase persisted and the performance gaps between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils had widened or had remained the same.

Members were informed that disadvantaged boys had some of the lowest levels of performance at Key Stage 1 and 2 out of all pupil characteristic groupings. Provisional Key Stage 4 outturns indicated a general downturn in performance since 2016 for attainment 8, and a decline in performance for Basics compared to 2018.

Provisional information about Key Stage 5 outcomes also indicated a decline.

Members stated that the data contained in the report was interesting, but they were more concerned about the problems and outcomes for children who had been in education up to 15 years old.

It was highlighted by members that at a recent Council meeting it was reported that Bradford was ranked 150/152 in relation to outcomes for children who had been in education up to 15 years old and were disappointed to hear that an independent review had been commissioned into this and the findings of that independent review had not been presented to this Committee.

In response officers informed members that as there was not the capacity internally to undertake this review, it was commissioned externally. This was a small review and Officers would provide feed back when the Post 16 Education report was considered by members.

Furthermore, a member raised concerns that the progress rates of disadvantaged boys was declining for writing and they were keen to understand what work was being undertaken to improve the outcomes for that group.

Officer informed members that of programme of events was in place with all disadvantaged groups. Work was being carried out in disadvantaged areas and this was based on where the need was. Furthermore, officers indicated that some schools were doing well, however the quality of teaching in schools needed to be of a higher standard.

There was consensus amongst members that Bradford rank of being 150/152 in relation to outcomes for children who had been in education up to 15 years needed to be improved urgently.

Resolved –

That this Committee requests that future reports also contain details of key areas of improvement, and actions being taken to continue to address them, focusing on the approaches being taken to improve Bradford Council's ranking in this area.

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

34. BRADFORD OPPORTUNITY AREA

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**Document "M"**) provided a requested update relating to the Bradford Opportunity Area. The Bradford plan identified four priorities for action over our three year confirmed funding period and subsequent targets for improvement.

This report also confirmed activity and investment underway to date and in delivery for the final academic year of the programme (2019/2020). Highlights included investment of the additional £500k confirmed in summer 2019, £1.5m for school improvement in at least 26 underperforming schools, just under £1m to establish and run a Centre of Applied Educational Research, leading work to overcome health barriers to learning; and a new £200,000 investment on supporting Primary schools parental engagement practices following a baseline assessment.

Councillors were unanimous in seeking greater clarity as to who the disadvantaged communities were that were being targeted as part of this programme and also how the programme was being performance managed to ensure that resources being allocated were delivering the right results for Bradford.

In response officers replied that the programme was never a whole City intervention and the key was to spend money where it was most likely to have an impact. As part of the Opportunity Area programme, Bradford schools received funding.

Members wanted to have an understanding of who the Partnership System Leaders were.

In response, officers highlighted that Partnership System Leaders were people who had been identified as national leaders of education and were also teachers.

Members questioned how much money as part of this programme had been allocated to the Voluntary Sector and whether any evaluation of the programme had been undertaken.

Officers informed members that money had been allocated through the programme, to schools and colleges and it was the schools and colleges decision as to how the money was allocated. Furthermore, the programme was being evaluated as it progressed and feedback from the schools suggested that the projects had been positive.

Members highlighted that they had come into contact with many programmes such as Opportunity Area and questioned how sustainable these projects were.

In response, officers indicated that they would need to evaluate the projects and have discussions with Bradford Council, as to the continuation of these projects.

Resolved –

- (1) That this Committee requests that more up-to-date information in relation to the Bradford Opportunity Area be circulated to members, as soon as possible and within three months.**
- (2) That a progress update be presented in relation to the programme in 12 months, with a specific focus on outcomes for children.**

ACTION: Strategic Director of Children's Services

35. ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL PROVISION SCRUTINY REVIEW - DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "N"**) presented the Draft Terms of Reference for the Alternative School Provision Scrutiny Review.

Members expressed that as part of the information gathering for this scrutiny review, they wanted to explore additional areas such as managed moves and temporary and permanent exclusions.

Members also stressed the importance of fully understanding the legal context for Alternative School Provision.

With regards to individuals and organisations that members wanted to engage with as part of this scrutiny review, members expressed that they would like to engage with the Police, as well as other key stakeholders.

Resolved –

That the Terms of Reference be adopted, subject to the amendments raised by members.

ACTION: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

36. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The report of the Chair of the Committee (**Document "O"**) included the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20.

The Overview and Scrutiny Lead presented the work programme for the committee.

There was discussion amongst members about the key areas of work that should be considered by the Committee.

Resolved –

That the work programme continue to be kept under review.

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.

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER