

**Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday,  
9 March 2022 at 4.30pm in the Committee Room 1 - City  
Hall, Bradford**

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Commenced 4.30 pm  
Concluded 7.15 pm

**Present – Councillors**

<b>LABOUR</b>	<b>CONSERVATIVE</b>	<b>LIBERAL DEMOCRAT</b>	<b>BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP</b>
<b>Alipoor Humphreys Jamil Mohammed</b>	<b>Winnard Pollard</b>	<b>Stubbs</b>	<b>Sajawal</b>

VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Joyce Simpson

Church Representative (CE)

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Tom Bright

Teachers Secondary School Representative

Apologies: Councillor Suhail Choudhry

**Councillor Winnard in the Chair**

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

There were no alternate members.

**76. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made for matters under consideration.

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

No requests were received to remove the restriction on a report or background paper.

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

No referrals were received.

**79. PURCHASE OF ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT FOR BRADFORD YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE AND VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE (16-25 YEARS)**

The Strategic Director of Children's Services presented a report (**Document "V"**) on a procurement exercise to put in place a new framework arrangement for the purchase of accommodation and support for Bradford young people leaving care and vulnerable young people (16-25 years).

The Strategic Commissioning Manager provided a summary on the purchase of accommodation and support for young people leaving care in Bradford.

The Officer explained that Children's Services had been undertaking a procurement exercise to put in place a new framework arrangement for the purchase of accommodation. The new framework is required as the current Dynamic Purchasing System requires improvement and was not specific to Bradford. The new Framework would allow the Service to guide providers better because it would have more stringent quality assurance arrangements and high expectations of providers of this service. The enhanced quality assurance would ensure that placements meet the individual young person's needs and that negative impacts for protected characteristic groups do not arise.

Members of the Committee were keen to understand why the large volume of providers on the existing DPS framework were an issue, as more providers would increase options.

In response the Service Manager advised that the current list of providers under the existing framework were not regulated but they would be registered with Ofsted and regulated under the new framework. Furthermore, managing such a large portfolio of providers had proven difficult and going forward, even though the number of providers coming on board will not be restricted, there would be new stronger specifications and higher expectations.

Members wanted to know what the main drive was for the new Framework and requested more information that would elaborate the findings of the study stated in section 3 of the report.

The Service Manager explained that the Young People – Child's Voice

work had been carried out by a care leaver apprentice who had lived experience of the services. The apprentice had worked with other young people to create a wish list which helped identify some of the key changes they wished to see such as consistency in staffing and location of accommodation. This feedback from the study had driven the change that was required to ensure that every young person that was leaving care received the tailored support allowing them to transition to their own tenancies successfully.

Members of the Committee wanted to know if the Service received any financial support from the Home Office for young people seeking asylum and the impact of changing frameworks on young people.

In response the Service Manager of Placement Coordination informed that the Service received a small percentage of funding from the Home Office. The Officer advised there would be no disruption caused to young people as changes would be happening behind the scenes. Children would stay on with the provider until the contract came to an end unless there were concerns with their current provider which warrants an early termination, they would then swiftly move on to a provider on board with the new framework.

Members were keen to understand more about the social value mentioned in the report and the monitoring process to be elaborated.

The Officer informed Members that the new framework consisted of new and improved key performance indicators, and a quarterly monitoring mechanism would be specified for suspension from the framework should the providers did not meet the quality standards. The new pricing structure would provide a breakdown of cost to ensure value for money and a fair pricing structure that is transparent and auditable.

Members were concerned that the excessive pricing by providers would lead to change which may lead to disruption for young people. Members wanted to know if the timeline suggested in the report will be met.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services informed Committee Members that although costs would be considered, ultimately decisions would be made in the best interest of the young person and their specific needs.

Members of the Committee were informed by the Service Manager of Placement Coordination that the Service did not anticipate any delays and the new framework would be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022.

**Resolved –**

**This Committee requests that the comments raised by members, be considered as part of this procurement exercise.**

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

### **80. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS - EARLY YEARS TO KEY STAGE 4**

The Strategic Director of Children's Services will present a report on the attainment outcomes for the academic year 2020/21 (**Document "W"**)

The Education & Learning Strategic Manager from Children's Services provided a summary of education standards along with outcomes of examinations and assessments.

Members of the Committee were informed that the changes to the way GCSE grades had been awarded over the last two years had resulted in significant changes therefore pupil attainment in 2020/21 would not be comparable to that in 2019/20. The statistics showed that in Bradford girls had performed better than boys however, both girls and boys had not performed as well nationally.

Members were keen to understand if there were any particular issues that had been identified.

In response the Officer advised that the Service had been working to identify issues relating to the underperformance of children and also looked at how the Local Authority could influence the outcomes.

Committee Members wanted to know where the data was collected from as there had not been any SAT exams for the past two years.

Members were informed that most secondary schools had carried out initial standardised assessments, the data for which was obtained from the National Data Trust.

Addressing Committee Members regarding their questions on early intervention and working with academies, the Education & Learning Strategic Manager advised that the Service carried out early years' interventions and worked within the communities to identify any concerns. Officers continued to work with children and families struggling with attendance, which had enabled children to attain education and good grades.

Committee Members were concerned that children had missed a significant amount of education during the Pandemic which had led to increased pressure on young people. Members wanted to know if measures had been taken to alleviate the pressure from young people.

In response to this, the Officer advised that teachers had been made aware of the difficulties faced by young people. Furthermore, help with mental health has been in place and schools have been encouraged to promote mental well-being especially with so many young people struggling with lockdown issues. Schools had been carrying out inclusion chats with students to ensure young people felt included and any issues could be addressed. The Service has also been in the process of developing working consultations with parents to try and manage the situation at home with children who had been struggling.

Committee Members were keen to understand how children could get the best start for school life and if there were any projects in place to encourage parents to take advantage of early years at school.

In response it was noted that families were encouraged to access early years help, this service could be used to respond to the needs of children, young people and their families. Whilst this service had been available to everyone and officers regularly engaged with families, ultimately it would be up to the family to take advantage and gain access as families had the right to make the choice.

**Resolved –**

- 1. That a report relating to the impact of Opportunity Funding across the District, be presented to the Committee in the new municipal year.**
- 2. This Committee requests that a report be presented in the new municipal year, which specifically focuses on:**
  - More up-to-date data;**
  - Approaches being used to improve educational attainment across the District.**

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

**81. SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY TO INCLUDE IN-HOUSE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION**

The Strategic Director of Children’s Services presented a report (**Document “X”**) on the Bradford Sufficiency Strategy which details how Bradford City Council intends to meet the ‘Sufficiency Duty’ 1 set out in Section 22G of the Children Act 1989.

It set out the Council’s vision and approach to meeting its responsibilities to provide secure, safe and appropriate accommodation to children in need, children in care and care leavers over the next three years

The Assistant Director for Children’s Service provided a summary on the Sufficiency Strategy.

The Officer reported that the population for Looked After Children continued to increase nationally but has increased above average in Bradford. Therefore, the new strategy would focus on issues related to sufficiency of placements for these children and aims to ensure a sufficient range of high quality accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers in Bradford.

The Officer outlined what the strategy would allow the Service to achieve.

Committee Members wanted to know more about the existing recruiting process for foster carers.

In response the Officer informed that currently an external agency was being

used to assist with recruitment. However, this process had not proved to be very successful as it has not been delivering the correct message to potential recruits. The Officer further informed that ways to improve the process were being explored.

Members of the Committee wanted to know if there was an ongoing progression assessment for foster carers.

In response, the Assistant Director for Children's Service advised that annual reviews are carried out for each fostering household but these needed improving, which was being looked at. Reviews play an important part in measuring progress and identifying issues with foster carers that can then be addressed.

Committee Members were keen to understand what the key factors for the increase in Children in Care were, and if lack of early years help could have been a factor.

The Officers response to this was that there were many reasons for the increase and lack of early years help may have also been a factor that lead to a child being care.

The Members of the Committee questioned figures in the report and wanted to know if the payments were capped. In response the Officer provided further clarification on revenues and funding.

Committee Members were concerned that the report lacked targets which made it difficult to trace actions. Committee Members stated that the Sufficiency Strategy needed to be more transparent and required more detail. This was noted by the presenting officer.

Committee Members were concerned that care leavers continued to be at risk of homelessness and wanted to know what efforts were made to rescue vulnerable young care leavers.

In response the Assistant Director for Children's Service reported that young people were in care due to substantial difficulties and some have very complex needs. The aim had been to identify the needs of young people and direct them to the correct agency/provider.

#### **Resolved –**

- 1. That the comments and views raised by members be considered as part of the ongoing developments of the strategy and the documented presentation thereof.**
- 2. This Committee requests that a report be presented in 12 months, which specifically focuses on the progress being made against the Sufficiency Strategy Action Plan.**

#### **ACTION – Strategic Director Children's Services**

- 82. **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**
- 83. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
- 84. **RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES AND RELATED ISSUES**

The report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services (**NFP Document "Y"**) contained the findings from the external review of the quality of provision across the Council's children's homes.

**Resolved –**

**The report sets out in detail some challenging shortcomings in the operation of some of our Children's Residential Homes. This provides good guidance for departmental action and informative background for members. However, it is clear that further improvement is required.**

**ACTION – Strategic Director for Children's Services**

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