

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 1 February 2023 at 4.30 pm in Council Chamber - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 4:30pm
Concluded 7:30pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	BRADFORD INDEPENDENT GROUP
Humphreys Berry Shafiq Thirkill	Winnard Pollard	Sunderland	Sajawal

Councillor Winnard in the Chair

Apologies: Councillor Margaret Alipoor and Shifa Simab

43. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No declarations were received for matters under consideration.

44. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 be signed as a correct record.

45. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

No requests were received to inspect any restricted documents.

46. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the committee.

47. RAISING ATTAINMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (**Document "P"**) which provided an update on the Raising Attainment Strategy.

The Officer reported Raising Attainment Strategy was intended to be a 5-year plan. However, budget constraints had led to much of the work to cease and most would end in July 2023.

The Officer reported that £687,000 had been removed from the Early Years Language for Learning programme as part of this year's budget setting. The primary school work had spent £260,000 on maths and £116,480 on English work. It was reported that the scheme would end this Summer.

It was further reported that £500,000 had been removed from the secondary school scheme due to budget cuts.

£500,000 had been committed to the scheme to tackle persistent absences, but this would only last until July.

The Chair of the Committee expressed disappointment that the whole strategy would end in July 2023 adding that when the report last came to the committee, Members were quite positive and felt that the strategy may have potential.

Members of the Committee were keen to understand how it was decided which elements would be abandoned.

In response the Director of Children's Services reported that some projects that had not yet begun never started, which made it easier than cutting existing schemes.

Members asked if the decision of what to cut was made by officers or if it was a political decision.

The Officer reported that in a situation of budget constraints, officers were asked to put measures forward that would cut costs. Officers looked at several areas and the risks if they withdrew one scheme or another, then a determination was made as to which risks were the least risky.

Members of the Committee were concerned that although a good programme was put together, it would be cut short due to budget restraints. Members felt that a proper evaluation of what was needed was not carried out as Early Years was still not up to standard.

Members sought clarification on engagement levels with families to identify which service they required.

It was reported that Early Years/Health Visitors were trained in family care settings and would help families navigate the system.

A Member of the Committee asked how many schools the Council was working with to tackle attendance issues.

The Officer reported that most schools had internal resources (Attendance Officers) that would assist with absences but at times the schools do not have the time or resources to deal with long term absences.

Members of the Committee commented that the issue of children's school absence was not being taken as seriously as it should. School's do not have the correct resources to tackle long term absence therefore, there needed to be a further investigation into the issue to gain a better understanding of persistent absences as families would benefit from a timelier intervention.

The Officer reported that some schools were not under the direct rule of the Local Authority. Members were assured that there were many families with persistent absence issues but in many cases it was short lived due to intervention and support provided.

Resolved –

- 1. This Committee requests that a further progress report be presented in the new Municipal Year.**
- 2. Members of the Committee agreed to undertake a scrutiny review into persistent absence across schools in the Bradford District.**
- 3. The Committee requests that a briefing note be provided to members, summarising Key Stage 2 outcomes of schools involved in the Primary school interventions, under the Raising Attainment Strategy.**

ACTION: Strategic Director for Children's Services

(Sue Lowndes – 01274 432623)

**48. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS - EARLY YEARS TO KEY STAGE 4 -
OUTCOMES OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report (**Document "Q"**) which provided an update on the outcomes from the national assessments for primary and secondary pupils for the academic year 2021/22 and updated information on the outcomes of Ofsted inspections within education settings.

The Officer outlined the key issues and explained data provided in the report.

A Member of the Committee asked if schools that work closely with the Local Authority performed better.

The Officer reported that this was not the case however, working with schools allowed the Local Authority to identify any issues in good time, provide resources and monitor the situation. Good schools with good leadership worked better as this enabled good teaching and learning.

Members of the Committee commented that the service needed to look at the local communities and recognise issues in order to have an effective model in place to target on focus areas.

Members added that the schools that really made a difference were the ones that were proactive and engaged with the local community.

The Officer reported that currently the LA Raising Attainment Strategy was providing intensive support in literacy and numeracy at KS2 through a commissioned partnership with the English Hub and White Rose Maths Hub. To date 19 schools had benefited from the support which was made available to all schools who had a declining or low attainment pattern and who agreed to be involved.

Members of the Committee sought further clarification on data provided in the report.

The Officer provided a breakdown of the data on page 12 of the report.

Members commented that the data in the report presented some encouragement, however it would be interesting to know what schools were doing differently and possibly compare with neighbouring Local Authorities.

A Member of the Committee added that half of the 62 academies inspected had improved, there was a need to look at non academy schools and see if there was any difference.

Resolved –

The Committee requests that an update report on educational outcomes for the 2022/23 academic year be presented in 12 months and also for Children's Services officers to scope the content of the report, with the Chair and Deputy Chair, as to how the report can be presented in a more helpful manner for members.

ACTION: Strategic Director for Children's Services

(Sue Lowndes – 01274 432623)

49. CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

The report of the Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (**Document "R"**) was submitted to Members for comment and review of the 2022/23 Work Programme.

Resolved –

Members discussed and amended the work programme.

ACTION: Overview & Scrutiny Lead

(Mustansir Butt – 07582 101597)

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