



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2015 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Willmott (Chair)
Councillor Unsworth (Vice Chair)

Councillor Clarke

Councillor Dr Moore

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr Bernard Monaghan

Ms Carolyn Lewis

Mr Mohammed Alauddin Al-Azad

Roman Catholic Diocese

Church of England Diocese

Parent Governor (Primary /
Special Needs

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Brahmpreet Kaur Gulati

Nikhil Gondalia

Ms Rabiha Hannan

Anu Kapur

Peter Flack

Youth Representative

Youth Representative

Muslim Faith Representative

Leicester Secular Society

Teaching Unions

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66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bhatti and Cleaver.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dr Moore declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business of the meeting, as her company was teaching a Looked After Child, and also that she was the sole publisher of a book which was supplied into

schools.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, those interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of public interest. Councillor Dr Moore was not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

68. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members of the commission were asked to confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 January 2015.

Ms Rabiha Hannan (Faith Representative) requested additions to the minutes as follows:

Minute item 60. Local Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report, final paragraph on page 5:

Rabiha Hannan questioned whether the Board had undertaken any work, prior to the Prevent initiative, to avoid radicalisation and/or extremism in young people. *She stated that no religion would legitimise radicalisation and that the Council and other partners should not be afraid to tackle this issue for the fear of upsetting any religion.*

(Addition to the minute text in italics)

Minute item 62: Early Years Prevention Stage and Key Stage 1 Education Attainment Results 2014, page 11, first paragraph

Rabiha Hannan (Faith Representative), addressed the commission at the invitation of the Chair, *and stated that whilst pleased with the progress that the Council was making to address improvement, she expressed concern at the level of improvement reported and asked if there were identified patterns relating to deprivation and poverty and to ethnic minorities and cultures.*

(Addition to the minute text in italics)

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Schools' Scrutiny Commission held on 6 January 2015, subject to the above amendments, be confirmed as a correct record.

69. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

70. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations or

statements of case had been received.

71. EDUCATION ATTAINMENT RESULTS: KEY STAGES 2 AND 4, 2015

The Interim Director, Learning Services submitted a report which reviewed the outcomes for children in Leicester schools at the end of Key Stage 2 (Primary) and Key Stage 4 (GCSE).

KEY STAGE 2

Councillor Dempster, Assistant Mayor for Children, Young People and Schools, introduced the report and stated that there was an improving picture in Key Stage 2 as more children than ever before were reaching Level 5. The report demonstrated that the Council were aspirational for their young people; however it was recognised that there was a need to drive forward further improvements, and to this effect the Council were working in partnerships with schools.

The Interim Director, Learning Services confirmed that the Council supported any schools which were causing concern; this was a statutory duty. In addition the Council were supporting and encouraging peer to peer schools. The Interim Director had just recently been appointed to the post but in respect of peer to peer schools had started to work with a small group of primary and secondary head teachers in order to find a sustainable way forward.

Members considered the report and during the ensuing discussion a number of points were made, including the following:

- Schools in the city had been working on a collaborative approach for approximately five years. There were successful innovative schools working with others to help them become self-improving.
- Concerns were expressed at the level of attainment amongst boys and that this needed to be addressed as a priority.
- A query was raised as to whether parents in general were aware of the expectation that children should progress by one level every two years.

It was noted that Ofsted judged progress by one level as 'satisfactory'. There was however an expectation that some pupils would progress by two or more levels.

- A concern was also raised about parents that had low attainment levels and the effect that this had on their children's learning. It was noted that there was some good practice of schools working with parents and a case study could be shared if wished.
- The city's position in relation to the national average was noted and a query was raised as to what Leicester needed to do to catch up with that national average. The statistics showed a slow improvement over time

and it was queried whether this improvement could take place at a faster place.

The Interim Director, Learning Services responded that they were setting challenging targets as part of strategies to bridge that gap.

- Concerns were expressed at the general emphasis on statutory test results. A member commented that they were meant to be a guide on what schools were achieving but this was no longer the case as some parents were paying for their children to have private tuition to improve their test results. There were also concerns that some schools, though not necessarily in the city, placed undue emphasis on their pupils' achieving good test results to the exclusion of other aspects of the curriculum.
- Comments were made that Leicester's test results were good, in view of the complex issues that the city faced, such as deprivation and the number of pupils with English as a second language. Alternate views were expressed however that such issues should not be used to excuse levels of performance and that SATs results demonstrated that children who had English as a second language achieved well.
- A view was expressed that there was a need to move away from targets and that it was important to consider the child's journey as a whole. Further to this, a comment was made that progress was a key issue of a child's journey.
- Suggestions were made that it would be more appropriate to compare Leicester to similar authorities rather than the country as a whole. An alternative view was expressed that Leicester would be judged by this data and that people would make comparisons against the national data rather than comparator authorities.
- A member of the Youth Council questioned whether any Leicester schools were providing the opportunity for pupils to enter Level 6 SATs, The Interim Director, Learning Services replied that Level 6 SATs were taking place and this data would be shared with the Youth Council.
- A request was made for information on the number of schools that were making the expected progress and the number of schools that were not achieving this.

Assistant City Mayor Dempster said that there was some inconsistency across schools but taking education results on their own was not that helpful. The important issue was what the council were doing. There were some excellent results and very good schools sharing good practice. The Assistant City Mayor suggested that it might be helpful to bring a report to the commission that addressed education results as well as the steps the council were taking to bring about further improvements.

The Chair agreed that this would be helpful in order to ascertain how the initiatives impacted on performance and whether the council were doing enough or whether more needed to be done. He added that the commission used to receive quarterly performance reports and it would be helpful to reinstate these. It was also suggested that it would be useful for the commission to receive details of the council's own assessment of their schools.

KEY STAGE 4

The Commission then considered the education attainment results for pupils in Key Stage 4. Assistant City Mayor Dempster explained that it was difficult to make comparisons against previous years because some courses had changed in 2013. There had been some very strong results but also some disappointing results, some of which were because of the system of re-sitting tests. However secondary schools were working very well and supporting each other.

During the debate, a number of points were made, including the following:

- Concern was expressed that some schools were consistently failing on the English Baccalaureate and it was questioned how the council were responding to this.
- The Teaching Unions' representative reported that there had been a 3% increase in the number of pupils achieving 5 A* - Cs at GCSE between 2010 and 2014, which bucked the national trend. He said that there was a need to recognise that Leicester had some excellent secondary schools.
- A query was raised in relation to the performance results, as to the wider determinants that needed to be taken into account. The Strategic Director, Children's Services concurred that performance data only formed part of the overall picture and stated that there was also a need to look at other factors such as exclusion data, attendance and financial management.
- It was noted that some schools entered pupils for their SATs early, as a useful form of exam practice, but this could have a detrimental effect on their overall performance data if those pupils did not do well in their tests and decided to re-sit them.
- New College was mentioned as one of the secondary schools which had made vast improvements and a suggestion was made that Members could find it useful to visit the college to find out at first-hand what they were doing, particularly in relation to literacy.
- It was noted that when looking at the schools on an individual basis, the performance of two schools in particular had resulted in an overall lower average score,

RESOLVED:

- 1) that in respect to Key Stage 2, details in relation to Level 6 SATs be brought back to a future meeting of the commission;
- 2) that in relation to Key Stage 2, details of the number of schools that were exceeding expected progress be brought to a future meeting of the commission;
- 3) that the good progress in relation to Key Stage 4 be noted;
- 4) that the commission endorse the aspirational targets;
- 5) that a report be brought back on the effectiveness of the Action Plan; and
- 6) that the commission request that they receive quarterly performance data at future meetings.

72. LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2014/2015

The Interim Director, Children, Young People and Families presented the Leicester City Council Fostering Service Statement of Purpose and stated that it was important to acknowledge the work of the city's foster carers, as they held a very important role.

The commission heard about the 'Staying Put' Policy which set out the conditions to extend a fostering arrangement beyond a young person's 18th birthday. It was noted that the policy made provision for a young person with issues of vulnerability to remain with their foster carer for a further year after their 18th birthday. Concerns were raised that this might not be long enough and that more time might be needed for that young person to make the transition to independent living. The Interim Director responded that this was an issue that they could look at; however there might be budget implications as 'Staying Put' was not fully funded by the government.

Assistant City Mayor Dempster commented that there were many implications with young people moving into independent living and it would be helpful if the scrutiny commission looked at this further.

In response to a query, the Interim Director, Children, Young People and Families explained that the Statement of Purpose provided a partial picture as it only included children placed with the council's own foster carers. About 1/3 of children were placed with other agencies.

A query was raised as to safeguarding measures in relation to kinship carers and the Interim Director advised that full viability assessments and safeguarding checks were carried out.

Members referred to the Pathway Reviews which were held to plan young people's transition to independent living. Views were expressed that the reviews were held mostly with just the young person and their advisor and that more professionals should be involved. The young person should also agree as to who should be invited. Concerns were expressed that the Pathway Plan Reviews currently commenced after the young person's 16th birthday and it was felt that this was too late and they should commence just after the 13th or 14th birthday.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted; and
- 2) that the Scrutiny Commission look further at leaving care arrangements for young people and Pathway Support being provided for young people from the age of 14.

73. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS SERVICE (LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE) 2013-14

Members were asked to consider the Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Offices' Service for Looked After Children and Young People 2013-14.

The Interim Director, Children, Young People and Families explained that an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) was not a social worker, but their role was to review the care plan and act independently of the social worker.

Concerns were expressed as to whether the staffing levels in the service were adequate and that there might be too much pressure on relatively few officers. The Interim Director responded that this issue was under consideration because it was recognised that there were insufficient IROs and that their case-loads were too high. The Chair stated that the role of the IRO was very important and the commission would wish to support any measure to address their staffing levels and workload.

RESOLVED:

- that the commission note the report and support any action to reduce the case load of the Independent Reviewing Officers, including increasing the number of officers if necessary.

74. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2014-15

The Strategic Director, Children's Services submitted a report that summarised how Youth Justice Services in the City would be provided and funded and how the Youth Offending Team would be composed and funded; how it would operate and what functions it would carry out. The Head of Service, Early Help and Specialist Services presented the report and explained that the plan was retrospective and the views of the commission were sought as to what should be included in the next plan.

Members of the commission requested that the next plan should include more detail and qualitative information. The Head of Service agreed to this request.

RESOLVED:

that the commission note the report and look forward to receiving the next plan at a future meeting, prior to submission.

75. WORK PROGRAMME

There was no discussion on the work programme.

76. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor Dr Moore thanked the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission for chairing so efficiently during the past year.

77. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.