

Briefing Note – Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 1st February, 2006

Quarterly Report on the Work of Scrutiny Board (2) – October to December 2005.

Introduction

The Board has concluded the preliminary initially identified major “themed” areas (Children’s Well-Being in Schools & Anti Social Behaviour and Youth Services) and has requested further information on a number of points made during these presentations

Children’s Well-Being in Schools (CWBS)

A number of issues were considered by the board under this theme, including:

- Attendance and Truancy
- Bullying and Disruptive Behaviour
- Healthy Eating in Schools

The work included a presentation on the Coventry Anti-Bullying Strategy for Children and Young People. From this the Board had a number of queries, including regarding the processes involved in the reporting of bullying and, and how disruptive behaviour was recorded and challenged.

The Board considered a joint presentation from Education and City Services officers, updating Members on the current position with regards to encouraging children to eat healthily, both in school and outside. The Board were advised that the Government are about to publish new regulations regarding the composition of school meals, and this could have various implications for the City Council and the city’s schools. The Board were encouraged by the general progress but requested further information on a number of topics, including the results of the Halal Meat Pilot.

Anti-Social Behaviour & Youth Services

Warden Service

The development of the Warden Service and the future role of the Wardens were covered by the Board in this quarter. Members investigated the recruitment, training and deployment of the Council’s wardens.

Youth Matters Green Paper

The Scrutiny Board considered the Government’s recent Green Paper “Youth Matters” and its impact on local authorities. Members of the Coventry Youth Council were in attendance for this meeting and made good contributions. The Board made several comments which were included in the Council’s informal response to the consultation.

Youth Service

The Board received a presentation on the provision of youth clubs, the work of the Youth Service and the various ways in which they assist in tackling anti-social behaviour, alone and in partnership with West Midlands Police.

Review of Social Services Charging – Public Consultation

The Board considered draft proposals for a consultation with service users on increasing charges for domiciliary care. The results of the consultation were to be presented to the Board in January, with a final decision to be taken at the February Council Meeting.

School Performance

In November the Board received an over-view of Coventry Schools performance in 2005. The Board has agreed to carry out further scrutiny work on the School Improvement Service, and a more detailed break down of school performance.

Children's Services – Placement Strategy

The Board considered a report at their October meeting detailing progress towards developing the current Placement Strategy. This includes developing a partnership arrangement with a voluntary/independent sector provider to develop small specialist Children's Homes in the city. The Board has requested that when further work is completed on a more detailed proposal for a revised Placement Strategy (including support given to foster carers) a special Board meeting is convened to fully scrutinise these proposals.

Children's Services – Children's Residential Homes

The Board has convened Members visits to the three City Council operated Children's Homes. It has been agreed that officers will arrange for Members visits to the Children's In-take Teams in January.

Consultation on Mental Health Strategy for Older People

Because of pressure on the Board's Work Programme and the timing of recent developments in the development of these services, the Board has requested that Scrutiny Board 4 (Health Scrutiny) take a lead on this area. The consultation involves changes to the way in which both City Council and NHS Services are organised and Scrutiny Board 2 Members were invited to a meeting of SB4 on December 7th.

Joint Area Review / Inspection / Development of the Work Programme for 2006/07

The Board has been briefed on the impending Joint Area Review Children's Services, and its implications for the affected services.

The Board is conscious of the large scope of work from which it can select its topics for Scrutiny, and has begun preliminary work on developing next years Work Programme, whilst refining the Work Programme for the current year.

The Board has received recent inspection reports by Ofsted and the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI). These reports present a favourable impression of City Council services, clearly demonstrating that both Education and Social Care services are improving, and likely to improve further. The reports do also however give external validation of the various areas these bodies expect the Council to improve on. The Scrutiny Board has identified these various items for improvement as items on which it intends to monitor, with a view to more detailed scrutiny work being completed on a number of the items.

An example of this is the current work of the Community Services Directorate to modernise services for people with Learning Disabilities. This item was already part of the Work Programme, and the Board has resolved to prioritise this work.

Cabinet Member Strategic Plans

Because of pressure on the Board's Work Programme, an additional Board meeting was arranged to consider the progress towards achieving the objectives of the 2005/06 Cabinet Member Plans (except for Children's Services which was only presented initially) in December. The Board have noted that attempting to review all three plans in one meeting is an ambitious proposition.

January 9th, 2006.

Briefing Note Author

Cllr Russell Field
Chair of Scrutiny Board (2)

Peter Barnett
Scrutiny Co-ordination Group

Background Information -the minutes and agendas of Scrutiny Board (2) October – December 2005.

Contact: 02476 831172
Email: peter.barnett@coventry.gov.uk
Web: Coventry.gov.uk/scrutiny