



BRIEFING NOTE

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE – 7TH February 2007.

SCRUTINY BOARD 2 QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT (OCT – DEC)

As a result of the Council Diary and Christmas holidays the Board only held two formal meetings during this quarter.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The Board has taken an interest in the delivery of the CAMHS strategy as a result of comments made by the Joint Area Review (JAR) Inspectors. The Action Plan includes targets for the delivery of a comprehensive strategy for the City and accordingly the Board met with City Council officers and a Director of the new Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust to discuss progress. Whilst there had been some slight slippage in meeting early targets the new strategy appears to be on course and the Board expect to receive a further update on this and other JAR Action Plan items in due course.

Children and Young People Affected by Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA).

The Board had been concerned to learn more about how joined up services were for families affected by DVA and heard from officers in both the Children Learning and Young People's Directorate and the Chief Executive's Directorate about the local DVA Partnership's activities in tackling this issue. A series of new initiatives have been developed by the Partnership including dedicated officers being based within the Police Service to improve signposting and referral to services. The Board have asked for further information on the delivery of this strategy as well as further information on multi-agency training for DVA awareness.

Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood

Following on from work done earlier in the civic year the Board has resolved to hold an event to celebrate and raise awareness of the various efforts being made in Coventry to reduce teenage pregnancy. This event is in the planning stage presently and is to be considered further by the Board, however it is anticipated that the event, if held will require a contribution from the Scrutiny Budget.

Anti-Social Behaviour / Respect Agenda

Coventry has recently been selected as a Respect Zone with additional support coming from the Home Office to support work with Housing Associations, the Police and the courts to tackle anti social behaviour. Before this announcement the Board heard about the various efforts being made by various parts of the City Council to work with the Youth Service to provide alternatives for young people and divert them from participating in anti-social behaviour.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

A Scrutiny Review Group has been formed to give this major programme a strong Member focus. The Review has considered the various bid documents and early work done by officers to develop the Coventry bid. The Council is set to receive over £300 millions in capital investment for local schools and shortly the Review Group will commence scrutiny work looking into the stock condition and rationale for planning replacement and refurbishment.

Academies Review Group

One issue that remains unresolved is the question over whether or not proposals for a City Academy to replace Sidney Stringer School should be rolled into the BSF Group? Whilst proposals for new Academies are intended to be funded through the BSF programme, the proposals for a second Academy in the City is something already the subject of initial scrutiny work by the Academies Review Group. One concern is that the work of the BSF Group will become “bogged down” in the individual proposal for one site when the whole project is about educational transformation across the City.

Co-opted Representatives

The Board has been modestly successful in filling vacancies for the various co-opted positions available. The most recent addition was a representative from the non-Christian faith sector, a vacancy open for over three years. The Board’s Chair has been to meet with school Chairs of Governors and Head Teachers to promote the parent governor vacancies on the Board and these vacancies are expected to be filled shortly.

Cabinet Member Plan Questions

In January the Board held a particularly successful meeting with the Cabinet Member to discuss his Cabinet Member Strategic Plan. The Board was able to meet the new Director of Children, Learning and Young People during his first week in post and obtained useful information to assist their work during the remainder of the year.

Corporate Parenting

In December officers were able to convene a training session for elected Members on Corporate Parenting. This event attracted around 20 City Councillors and was particularly useful in raising current issues in the care of looked after children. Officers have pursued a number of new initiatives since this meeting, including additional work to secure training and employment opportunities for looked after children leaving school.

Future Meetings / Work Programme

The next meeting of the Board will give further consideration to the Respite Care Review. This Review considers the respite services and facilities necessary for children with physical and learning disabilities in the City.

The next major item in the work programme concerns the effect on Coventry schools of the induction of children and young people whose first language is not English. Officers from the Minority Group Support Services (MGSS) will appraise the Board of their work and provide detailed information about the scale of this issue and the potential impact on services across the City. The Board has also requested information on the various Supplementary Schools operating in the City, these, often linked to minority groups in the City provide valuable additional tuition to children and play an important part in integrating new arrivals into Coventry.

A number of Scrutiny Board 2 site visits remain outstanding and these should be scheduled to take place during February and March.

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27 January 2007.