



To

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 6th February 2008

Subject

Update on Scrutiny Board 2 (Children, Learning & Young People) Work Programme

1 Purpose of the Briefing Note

- 1.1 To inform Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee as to the progress of the Scrutiny Board 2 Work Programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to note the Briefing Note and discuss with the Board's Chair any issues arising as appropriate.

3 Background / Information

- 3.1 During October and November the Board held four formal Board meetings and continued to progress their published work programme.

The Board considered the following issues during this period:

4 Short Break Review

- 4.1 Formerly entitled Respite Care Review, this work programme item concerns the provision of short breaks for young people with moderate to severe physical and learning disabilities. Currently provision is provided from three sources including the Council's Broad Park House, and an officer review is continuing to ensure that the mix of services and the availability of services are appropriate for the needs of the client group. The Board will return to this item as firmer proposals are formulated.

5 Social Work Candidates from Overseas

- 5.1 The City Council has recently completed a recruitment exercise targeting new social workers from English speaking overseas countries. The Board has considered a report on the success of this exercise and the reasons for it. The Council continues to have difficulties in recruiting children's services social workers and this is an issue that may appear in the work programme for 2008/09.

6 Domestic Violence

- 6.1 The Board received a report back on the success of a joint working pilot between the City Council and West Midlands Police. The Board's interest in this issue centres principally around the children of victims of domestic violence, however they have asked for a report back early in 2008 on various matters relating to the developing Domestic Violence Advisory Panel and other issues which may possibly lead to the establishment of a Scrutiny Review Group on this subject.

7 "Snowline"

- 7.1 Over a couple of meetings the Board has received the City Council's policies on the emergency closure of schools in the event of severe weather. The Board canvassed the views of various stakeholders including local headteachers and school staff, meeting with three headteachers in person to discuss the operation of the current policy.
- 7.2 As part of efforts to improve the communication of closure decisions to parents and the public and Council has introduced a new computerised notification system, which was demonstrated to the Board. In conclusion the Board has recommended to the Cabinet Member that the current policy of individual schools taking closure decisions be retained, and the Cabinet Member has confirmed this recommendation.

8 Special Educational Needs / Autism

- 8.1 Officers were requested to report to the Scrutiny Board on the current arrangements for providing education and other services to children and young people in the city with autism. The Board met with the Director of the Corley Centre and other senior officers engaged in Special Needs support and were appraised of the current position in the City. Members will be visiting the Corley Centre as a result to see the Council's work in action.

9 Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

- 9.1 The Board's BSF Scrutiny Review Group continues to meet to scrutinise the planning for this major project. The Board's next meeting will include a visit to Caludon Castle School to consider the recent PFI project there.

10 Future Work Programme Issues

- 10.1 Future meetings of the Board will include work programme items about teenage pregnancy, parenting support and early years services. Additionally Members have requested that officers report on the current position regarding school place planning. This follows concerns about several schools in the city reaching capacity, combined with the current growth agenda.

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