

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 11 January 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor M Mutton (Chair)
Councillor S Bains
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor D Kershaw
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor A Lucas
Councillor P Male
Councillor K Mulhall
Councillor P Seaman

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson

Other Members: Councillor R Bailey

Employees (by Directorate):

J Gregg, People Directorate
G Holmes, Place Directorate
N MacDonald, People Directorate
M Rose, Place Directorate

Apologies: Councillor Miks
K Jones
R Potter

Public Business

32. Declarations of Interests

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th November, 2017 were approved, subject to Minute 31/17 'Any Other Business – Mrs Hanson's Award for her services to education in the City', now reading as below:

The Scrutiny Board congratulated Mrs Hanson on her recent nomination for Maundy Money from the Queen. The Board were very supportive as Mrs Hanson was a valued member of the Board and had been part of the Board since it was established. She had been nominated by Bishop Christopher for her services to Education in the Coventry Diocese. The award will take place on Maundy Thursday in St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Further to Minute 28/17 'Exclusions, Alternative Provision and Elective Home Education' a Task and Finish Group to consider Mental Health from an Educational Perspective had been established and the opposition group were welcome to nominate a representative.

34. **Private Fostering**

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided an update on current private fostering activity in Coventry and compliance with national standards. The draft private fostering communication plan 2018 was appended to the briefing note.

The briefing note explained that private fostering was when a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) was cared for by someone who was not their parent or a 'close relative'. This was a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more.

During March 2017 Ofsted undertook an inspection of Coventry Children's Services and published their report in June 2017. One of the recommendations was to "Review the authority's arrangements for privately fostered children and ensure that those arrangements and associated practice comply with statutory guidance". Since that time an officer task and finish group had been established to implement the recommendation and improve practice. There were 7 national standards for private fostering and progress had been made against each of them since the inspection. The standards were listed and progress noted against each standard in the briefing note.

The Scrutiny Board questioned officers on the following:

- The review request from Ofsted
- The implications of the review including costs and responsibilities
- Under-representation
- Children privately fostered outside Coventry
- Safeguarding
- Local Safeguarding Childrens Board
- Communication from schools

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

- 1) **Notes the briefing note.**
- 2) **Requests the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People promote the identification of private fostering arrangements within schools in order to offer support.**
- 3) **Requests a report back following implementation of the promotion/ communication plan.**

35. **Quality Assurance Audit Activity**

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which provided information about progress on quality assurance and auditing activity to date and provided a summary of case audit activity undertaken in Children's Services this year.

The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Framework articulated how Coventry City Council Children's Services managed and measured quality. Improving the consistency in the quality of work improved outcomes for Coventry's children. This supported the development of a culture that expected and valued high standards to improve the experience of users/carers. These aspirations and standards drive expectations, improve learning, strengthen outcomes and impact.

The framework continued to evolve as changes as a result of information learnt from the assurance activity was embedded. It was informed by learning from the audits, single agency learning reviews and serious case reviews overseen by Coventry Safeguarding Children Board.

Since January 2017 there had been a renewed and relentless focus on improving the quality of practice through the audit and review cycle, which was linked to developing practice through the use of supervision, team meetings, practice improvement forums and manager briefings. The service had developed a more robust programme of audit activity to inform continuous improvement in front line practice.

The briefing note detailed:

- Monthly audit activity
- Training and good practice
- Lead member and scrutiny oversight
- Senior management oversight
- Quality Assurance reporting
- Monthly Findings 2017 April – November including areas of progress and areas requiring improvement
- Audit Schedule to March 2018

Officers discussed with Members the 'lens of good' the performance information in the context of what Ofsted's expectations of what 'good' required and the 5 year journey that the Authority have begun.

The Scrutiny Board thanked officers for the clear information in the report and challenged them on the following:

- statistics that officers would expect through the 'lens of good' and benchmarking targets to give context to the data
- concerns about not seeing improvements when auditing different areas
- poor performance
- themes remaining a concern
- areas for improvement including assessments incomplete, out of date, not having chronology and decision making not being timely
- concerns about slow progress

Officers offered to provide further context in the next update and hoped that the informal audit workshop would also help provide reassurance about the audit process.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

- 1) **Notes progress information.**
- 2) **Agrees that an informal audit workshop be held for Members on 14th February 2018.**
- 3) **Requests an update on areas requiring improvement to the Board in March 2018.**

36. **Improvement Board Report from 18th October, 2017**

Further to minute 8/17 the Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which informed the Board of progress with the Children's Services Improvement Plan reported to the Children's Services Improvement Board on 18th October, 2017. The report was based on data from September, 2017 and the next Improvement Board was on 10th January, 2018.

The first six month Department for Education (DfE) review would be held on 23rd January, 2018 followed by a further review in 2018. The Children's Services Strategic Plan was published in September, 2017 and was appended to the briefing note. The briefing note also updated on the Children's Services Redesign and Communication.

The Scrutiny Board discussed the DfE review and noted that the Chair had invited the DfE to Scrutiny should they wish to attend. The Board also discussed communication of the e-newsletter.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board requests that the e-newsletter communication also be circulated to co-opted Members.

37. **Outstanding Issues**

The outstanding issues were picked up in the work programme.

38. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board discussed the Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the following items be added to the Work Programme:

- 1) **Private Fostering report back**
- 2) **Audit report back**
- 3) **Education Progress to the February meeting**

39. **Any Other Business**

Exclusions and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

Members requested that this item be discussed at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board agrees that Exclusions and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) be added to the next agenda.

(Meeting closed at 4.00 pm)