

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

24 August, 2015

Summary of Matters Considered at the Board

Report of the Chair, Councillor Underhill

The Scrutiny Board met on 24 August, 2015 and the following items were considered. I have selected the main points of the discussion which I feel members of the Council will be particularly interested to know more about. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

1. Education Improvement Strategy 2015-2018

The Director of Children's Services attended the meeting and introduced the revised Education Improvement Strategy for 2015-2018. This has been developed to strengthen the constructive partnership approach that the Council will be taking with local schools and academies to continue to improve education performance within the borough.

Head teachers have been consulted throughout the development of the Strategy and feedback has been positive.

It was noted that the Cabinet has agreed a strong role for the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board in monitoring the impact of the Strategy annually as well as in reviewing school or academy improvement plans following Ofsted inspections at individual schools. The Board also decided to receive an interim update report six months after the Strategy is approved to review how the partnership approach was developing.

2. Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015-2017

Members considered the Children's Services Improvement Plan which has been updated following Ofsted's inspection findings and subsequently agreed by the Cabinet. It was noted that the Improvement Plan is not only aimed at addressing the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted, but also to continue to drive improvement in Children's Services more generally as the Council strives for 'good'.

The Director reported that the Principal Social Worker position has been appointed to and the successful candidate is in post. There will also be a team of assistants to the Principal Social Worker to help ensure that learning identified from the quality auditing process is fully embedded within the Directorate.

Members feel that a vital aspect of social care to get right is consistency and continuity of allocated social workers. It was acknowledged that there are legitimate reasons for having to change which social worker is allocated to a particular young person, for example an employee leaving the Council. However, with the importance of ensuring the stability of allocated social workers, the Board has agreed to monitor social worker allocation changes and the reasons for the changes to identify any areas where improvements can be made to current practice.

3. Children's Services Directorate Risk Register

The Board considered the Risk Register review for Quarter 1 of 2015-2016 for the Children's Services Directorate. The Board will consider these reviews twice a year so that it can be assured of the mitigation in place for the identified risks. The Director of Children's Services provided further explanation of some of the ratings and what is being done to limit the Directorate and Council's exposure to the risks.

4. Progress on Recommendations from the Children's Scrutiny Boards

Members noted an update on progress against recommendations of the former Children's Services Scrutiny Board and the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board.

**Councillor Underhill
Chair**