

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL  
Friday, 18th February, 2011**

Present:- Councillor License (in the Chair); Councillors Ali, Dodson, Falvey, Fenoughty, Kaye and Sims.

Also in attendance were:- Councillor Paul Lakin (Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Developing Learning Opportunities for Children).

Apologies for absence were received from:- Councillors Buckley, Donaldson, Rushforth, G. A. Russell and Sharp and from co-opted members Mrs. J. Blanch-Nicholson, Mr. M. Burn, Mr. C. A. Marvin, Mrs. L. Pitchley and Dr. S. Warren.

**99. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

**100. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

**101. MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE YOUTH CABINET**

The Scrutiny Panel discussed the following issues:-

(1) Members are invited to attend the Youth Service showcase bonanza (part of the Youth Service annual conference), to be held at the Thornhill Youth Centre on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2011;

(2) the UK Youth Parliament is launching the 'carers' card' for use by young people who are carers' for relatives; the card contains and explanation of the circumstances of the young carer (eg: for use in dealing with schools);

(3) the Youth Cabinet has asked that work be undertaken to examine the availability of certain Internet web sites for study purposes on schools' computers.

**102. COMMUNICATIONS**

Members noted the following issues:-

(1) Looked After Children – the number of children in the care of the local authority had increased since the legal action taken as a consequence of the death of baby Peter in the London Borough of Haringey.

(2) Scrutiny Panel members would be provided with the Internet web site link about the Local Government Improvement and Development publication "10 Questions to ask if scrutinising services for looked after children"; the Senior Scrutiny Adviser had been asked to contribute to the document on the basis of Rotherham's previous scrutiny reviews into corporate parenting arrangements.

(3) A report had been published by the NHS Specialist Services concerning proposals to restructure Children's congenital cardiac services in England; a regional health scrutiny committee will meet to discuss the proposals and respond to the consultation; a working group of Elected Members has been set up to look at the proposals and feed into the joint committee; further details will be provided to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Panel.

(4) The dates of the next two meetings of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel are:-

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011 commencing at 9.30 am

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2011 commencing at 9.30 am

**103. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES - NOTICE TO IMPROVE - PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS**

Further to Minute No. 93 of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2011, consideration was given to a report presented by the Performance, Information and Quality Manager providing an overview of the progress made since the update in December 2010. The action plan identifies a Red-Amber-Green rating and a direction of travel for the areas of improvement, and key risks and issues to meeting the stretching targets set for this Council and its strategic partners. Three additional actions have been added following the removal of the Notice to Improve and the receipt of the annual CSA letter in December 2010. There are now thirty-one individual actions covering the key performance measures (including the three social care indicators) in addition to the operational targets around Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Leadership and Management and Capacity Building, Performance Management, and Recruitment and Retention and the Children's Services Assessment recommendations and two actions following the meeting held with the Department for Education in December 2010.

The Scrutiny Panel's discussion of this issue included the following salient items:-

: the increase in the number of common assessment framework cases being completed each month;

: improved performance in dealing with referrals of children and young people;

: recruitment and case loads of social work staff.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the progress being made by Children and Young People's

Services against the targets in the Notice to Improve action plan be noted.

**104. SCRUTINY REVIEW - SCHOOL CLOSURE DUE TO EXTREME WEATHER**

Further to Minute No. 48 of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel held on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2010 and Minute No. 159 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2011, consideration was given to a report presented by the Risk and Regulation Manager outlining the progress made by the Children and Young People's Services' Directorate in response to the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of school closures due to extreme weather. The scrutiny review had investigated:-

- : current policy and legal responsibilities;
- : operational arrangements – what is in place locally and how does this compare with practice elsewhere ?
- : can other support be provided ?
- : the way in which school closures are communicated to parents.

The Scrutiny Panel's discussion of this issue included the following salient items:-

- : the severity of weather during the past two Winters (December 2009 and January 2010 and December 2010 and January 2011);
- : schools' undertaking a risk assessment prior to the decision being made on whether to close a school during inclement weather;
- : communications with parents about school closures;
- : use of the Internet for remote learning;
- : use of local contractors to clear snow from school sites and from access routes near to schools;
- : teachers' reporting to schools near to where they live, if they are unable to travel to their place of employment (nb: this issue is still under discussion on a County-wide basis);
- : awaiting a reply from the Department for Education to the request to relax performance targets during school closures because of inclement weather;

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel notes (i) the actions taken by the Children and Young People's Services' Directorate in response to the scrutiny review report and (ii) the progress made with those actions.

(3) That the issues raised as part of this scrutiny review of school closures shall be used to inform the scrutiny review of the Council-wide response to the difficulties caused by the inclement weather of the past two Winters, proposed to be undertaken by the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel and the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel.

#### **105. KEY STAGE 2 ASSESSMENT RESULTS - SUMMER 2010**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Lead Adviser (Targeted Intervention and Support) informing Members of performance in Rotherham primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2, in 2010.

The Scrutiny Panel's discussion of this issue included the following salient items:-

: the reasons why a small number of primary schools had boycotted the Key Stage 2 tests;

: there are fewer primary schools in Rotherham not achieving the Department for Education national floor targets for pupil achievement;

: higher standards being set by the Government for 2011;

: the action being taken to effect improvement at Key Stage 2;

: federations of primary schools, each supporting the other to raise standards;

: the importance of the leadership/management role of school head teachers and of the governance of schools;

: training of and support for school governors;

: the level of preparation required for Key Stage 2 tests which, occasionally, leaves little room for pupils to learn other aspects of the national curriculum;

: the performance of pupils from black and minority ethnic communities;

: the outcome of the Key Stage 2 performance clinic held on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2011.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the improvements in performance in important areas of Key Stage 2, as detailed in the report submitted, be noted.

(3) That the drive to encourage all schools to continue to improve their results be supported.

(4) That this Scrutiny Panel endorses the drive to:-

(a) reduce the number of schools below the Department for Education new floor target of 60% in both English and Mathematics L4+ and make the expected levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and 2; and

(b) improve boys' attainment and that of black and minority ethnic pupils and Looked After Children.

(5) That this Scrutiny Panel shall include a review of school governance in its 2011/12 scrutiny work programme.

#### **106. KEY STAGE 4 (GCSE) EXAMINATION RESULTS 2010**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Head of the School Effectiveness Service containing information about the Key Stage 4 (GCSE) examination results for 2010 and how they compare to previous years, to the national average and to the results of the Council's statistical neighbours.

The Scrutiny Panel's discussion of this issue included the following salient items:-

: the continuing improvement in Key Stage 4 results, with a further improvement projected for 2011;

: appointment to the part-time post of Head Teacher of the Virtual School for Looked After Children;

: comparative performance of the same cohort of pupils at Key Stage 2 and at Key Stage 4;

: future emphasis on pupils studying the national baccalaureate;

: pupils learning vocational and life skills, as well as academic subject content;

: a trend towards Key Stage 4 studies beginning during Year 9.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the continued improved levels of performance across all indicators at the end of Key Stage 4 be noted.

(3) That all schools be encouraged to continue to improve their results and to strive to achieve outcomes at least in line with the national rate of improvement.

(4) That the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel endorses the drive to:-

(a) reduce the gap between Rotherham's performance and the national average performance especially in relation to 5A\*-C including English and Maths;

(b) continue to improve boys' attainment;

(c) continue to improve the attainment of black and minority ethnic pupils and;

(d) continue to improve the attainment of Looked After Children.

**107. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 21ST JANUARY, 2011**

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel held on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2011 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

**108. MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRUST BOARD HELD ON 19TH JANUARY, 2011**

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Trust Board held on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2011, be noted.

**109. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET MEMBER AND ADVISERS FOR SAFEGUARDING AND DEVELOPING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN HELD ON 19TH JANUARY 2011 AND ON 9TH FEBRUARY 2011**

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safeguarding and Developing Learning Opportunities for Children held on 19th January, 2011 and on 9th February, 2011, be noted.

**110. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 14TH AND 28TH JANUARY, 2011**

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes of the meetings of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January and on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2011 be noted.