

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
10th July, 2013

Present:- Councillor G. A. Russell (in the Chair); Councillors Ali, Astbury, Buckley, Burton, Clark, Dodson, J. Hamilton, Kaye, Lelliott, License, Read, Sharman and Andrews. Co-opted members:- Mrs. A. Clough and Mr. M. Smith.

Councillor Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services was also in attendance.

Apologies for absence had been received from:- Councillors Donaldson and Robinson and co-opted member Ms. J. Jones.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest to record.

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no members of the public or the press in attendance.

12. COMMUNICATIONS.

There was nothing to raise under this item.

13. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12TH JUNE, 2013.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 12th June, 2013, were considered.

Resolved: - That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as an accurate record for signature by the Chairperson.

14. APPOINTMENTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.

Resolved: - That the following appointments of representatives on panels and working groups from the Improving Lives Select Commission for the 2013-2014 Municipal Year be approved: -

(a) Health, Welfare and Safety Panel – Councillor G. A. Russell
(Councillor S. Ali as her substitute).

(b) Recycling Group – Councillor D. Lelliott.

(c) Environment and Climate Change Strategy Group – Councillor L. Astbury.

15. UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO THE SCRUTINY REVIEW: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL GOVERNORS.

Councillor G. A. Russell introduced the Co-ordinator of Governor Services (School Effectiveness Service, Schools and Lifelong Learning, Children and Young People's Services) to the meeting.

Further to Minute No. C97 of the Cabinet meeting held on 21st November, 2012 (Response to Scrutiny Review: The Role of School Governors) where the outcomes of the review were accepted, the Co-ordinator of Governor Services had now prepared an update report for the Improving Lives Select Commission that outlined the progress against the sixteen recommendations.

The Co-ordinator of Governor Services referred to a number of factors in relation to National policy that were expected to have an impact on the detail of the specific recommendations. Where appropriate, action on the recommendations had been postponed pending publication of national policy guidelines.

Appendix One to the submitted report outlined each recommendation, whether it had been accepted or rejected, the Cabinet's response in November, 2012, the responsible Officer, the timeframe for activity and an update on the actions to date in relation to each of the sixteen recommendations.

Task Groups had been established to enable development and actioning of the recommendations. Since the publication of the report, the educational landscape of the Council had seen the creation of the not for profit 'Learners First Ltd.' company that was a collaboration of a number of highly performing Schools across the Borough, along with links to excellent practitioners across the region and nation. The remit of the Learners First Ltd. was to ensure that schools were improving and to support them to do so. The remit of the company meant that they were now responsible for a number of the Scrutiny Review's recommendations.

An overview was provided in relation to each recommendation and the actions that had been undertaken to implement them: -

1. School Governors' Taskforce

One overarching Taskforce had not been created, but aspects had been selected and groups of Governors had been tasked with certain areas and identifying and developing areas of good practice.

This approach had responded to the development of the school-on-school support model that Learners First Ltd. were working towards, including the use of peer mentoring and training opportunities.

A toolkit had been developed to identify good practice which would be available on the internet for Governing Bodies in September, 2013.

Relevant areas where this was taking place included safeguarding issues. It was noted that national legislation and guidance was due to be published in the area.

2. Recruitment – development of a generic person specification

Production of this had been postponed whilst the Department for Education was updating the 'Handbook for Governors'. The handbook was delayed from the expected date of publication in May, 2013.

It was envisaged that the updated material would be available from September, 2013. Work would then commence and the template person specification would be published.

3. Each School be encouraged to develop a more specific role description

This had already been completed and had been published in January, 2013.

The guidance would be reviewed in September, 2013, following publication of the 'Handbook'.

4. Local Authority Officers to be encouraged to become Governors

This would be an on-going communication to Rotherham MBC employees.

5. Payment of expenses

National government guidance had recently been published relating to this area. A review of Rotherham's policy would take place in light of the revised guidance and any changes would be published in the Autumn Term, 2013.

6. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families clarifies what expectations the Local Authority has of its appointees, including attendance at learning and development events

Actioning of this had been postponed pending receipt of the National Government's guidance.

7. Prior to recruitment, LA appointed Governors complete an expression of interest form and undergo a recruitment process that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of LA Governors

Actioning of this had been postponed pending receipt of the National Government's guidance.

8. Induction and Training

The Local Authority was continuing to publish opportunities available to Governors, ensuring that updated training programmes and e-learning modules were available. Learners First Ltd. were also developing and communicating a programme of training opportunities

Usually at their autumn term meeting, governing bodies reviewed their training and development needs and how these would impact on the school.

9. Programme for Continued Professional Development be developed, including the greater use of e-learning and resources from the National College. This programme should include learning resources to support any specific roles or responsibilities (eg performance management, HR, chairing skills

See update in relation to Recommendation 8.

10. Headteachers to receive training or guidance in working with Governing Bodies

This work would be led by Learners First Ltd. This would intend to support Governors to assess strengths and weaknesses and ask challenging questions of Headteachers.

11. Training in Self Evaluation techniques should be undertaken by all Governing Bodies with a view to undertaking this exercise every two years in line with National Governors Association criteria

Guidance on self-evaluation would be provided to Governors to help them to challenge and assess their own performance.

12. A Personal Development Review (PDR) to be undertaken (by appropriate staff/governor in school or through peer arrangements) ideally every two years with each Governor

This recommendation had been rejected as it would be difficult to implement and monitor.

13. Greater use should be made of online training by all school governors through the NGA and Modern Governor

The training resources available through Modern Governor were raised at a recent Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting. Clerks to Governing Bodies would also be asked to circulate the information in their September Briefing.

14. Further work should be undertaken by the Governor Development Service, with the Rotherham Schools' Forum, to look at options to provide enhanced support to clerks. The review group suggest that this role could be undertaken across a cluster of schools by one 'adviser', whilst each body retained its clerk to undertake administrative tasks.

Learners First Ltd. were developing this offer. This was already taking place in some Learning Communities.

15. The review supports the continuation and strengthening of the Governor Development Service within the current learning communities and other partnership arrangements.

No update provided.

16. That the web pages hosted on the Council's own and associated websites (e.g. Rotherham Connected Learning) are updated to ensure that relevant resources (such as role descriptions, guidance and links to other sites) are available online

This issue was ongoing and continual monitoring would take place.

Discussion ensued on the information presented and issues raised included: -

- **How had the Scrutiny Review's Recommendations been received by Governing Bodies?** – Overall very well, schools were increasingly working collaboratively and sharing good practice was increasingly used to make improvements.
- **How were Rotherham's different types of Schools engaging in incorporating the Recommendations?** – All Schools were engaged, the Governing Body's responsibilities were the same regardless of their status/category and they required the same access to support resources.
- **Who had responsibility for policing the expectations and standards of individual Governors and Governing Bodies?** – Individual Governing Body had the responsibility for conducting a skills audit and addressing any gaps in expertise. Local Authority Governors were appointed by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services. The Local Authority was also able to intervene when there were instances of critical concern in Schools/Governing Bodies. The Local Authority did not have powers of intervention in Academy Schools, but could report their concerns to Ofsted or the Department for Education.
- **Were Clerks to Governing Bodies given opportunities to undertake Personal Development Reviews?** – Yes. Individual and collective opportunities for reflective development were offered to improve practice.

The Chairperson of the Improving Lives Select Commission thanked the Co-ordinator of Governor Services for their informative presentation and contribution to the discussion.

Resolved: - (1) That the report be accepted and the content in relation to the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations of the Review into the Role of School Governors be noted.

(2) That the Governor Development Service and Learners First Ltd. be supported in continuing to implement the Review's Recommendations.

16. HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE - CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND THE RESPONSE TO LOCALISED GROOMING.

The Improving Lives Select Commission considered and discussed the information presented by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services that related to the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee entitled 'Child Sexual Exploitation and the response to localised grooming', published on 10th June, 2013. The report encompassed 36 general statements and/or recommendations.

Councillor P. Lakin, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services was also in attendance to answer the questions of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

Rotherham's Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services had been called to give evidence to the Home Affairs Select Commission on the 8th January, 2013. Tackling the sexual exploitation of children and young people remained the highest priority for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and the Council welcomed the Select Committee report as a body of evidence and advice to be used by local authorities around the Country to improve their response to these horrific crimes. It was noted that Rotherham was one of the small number of local authorities that had a multi-agency response to the Home Affairs Select Commission report; nine local authorities in the region did not have a response in place.

Following publication of the report, the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board's Manager and the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services had undertaken a self-assessment against the 36 recommendations/statements within the report. This exercise had highlighted three areas where the Council was undertaking work as identified in the recommendations but where the work was not reflected in the existing Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan. These were: -

- Recommendation 4: Improvements in Residential Care;
- Recommendation 8: Return interviews for children who had been reported missing;
- Recommendation 31: Resources for the voluntary sector.

Rotherham's Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan would be updated to reflect the activities taking place.

The Council's response to the Select Committee findings would be met from existing resources. However, the Improving Lives Select Commission were informed that an additional £50k per year had been secured for the work of the Child Sexual Exploitation team from Safer Rotherham Partnership managed funds via the Police and Crime Commissioner for each of the next three years.

The Strategic Director explained how the publication of the Home Affairs Select Committees' report enabled the Council and its Partners to review their practices to ensure that all children and young people were safe. All Partners held that strengthened multi-agency working must lead to enhanced disclosure and evidence gathering, investigations and ultimately prosecutions by the Police. All Partners fully acknowledged the deterrent effect that successful prosecutions could bring.

The Strategic Director's report also outlined the other areas of quality control and scrutiny that were expected to be undertaken on Children and Young People's Services and Partner Organisations/Agencies. Children and Young People's Services would be externally assessed by Barnardo's, and it was expected that a review of Children's Services in respect of Child Sexual Exploitation would be undertaken before December, 2013. All Partners welcomed these opportunities.

Appendix One to the submitted report outlined each of the 36 recommendations, the self-assessment that had been undertaken in relation to Rotherham's arrangements, and identified actions. The Strategic Director spoke about Rotherham's actions in relation to each recommendation.

Discussion ensued amongst the Improving Lives Select Commission and the Strategic Director and Cabinet Member in relation to the information presented. Issues raised included: -

- Support for the victims of Child Sexual Exploitation;
- Training: -
 - All Residential Staff had been trained on Child Sexual Exploitation issues;
 - The Learning and Development Sub-group of the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board would expand and had created six modules of mandatory training relating to Child Sexual Exploitation, including on issues of how victims were perceived and worked with;
 - Work was underway to develop training/awareness raising programme for all frontline officers;
 - Partner organisations including Parish Councils and School Governing Bodies were also included;
 - Role for Licensing partners in sharing lessons learned;
- Protocols and procedures for when children were reported missing from care provision;
- 2002 Home Office Report;
- Approaches undertaken by other local authorities and how these differed from Rotherham's;
- Role of Scrutiny process;

- Data collection and standardised recording across a national data set;
- No agencies or individuals (apart from family members) were protected when Serious Case Reviews were researched or published;
- Rotherham's Child S Serious Case Review had been available for publication with the Department for Education for over a year, but to date, had not been published by the Government Department;
- Dubious training opportunities provided by some private providers;
- Risk Assessments – overall numerical incidence and analysis of each case: -
 - 89 cases were open to the Child Sexual Exploitation Team;
 - 6 cases had undergone a Core Assessment;
 - 83 cases were open to Social Care Professionals to work with appropriately;
 - 600 cases were open South Yorkshire Police Force;
- Children and young people who had been victims of sexual exploitation had priority to work with CAMHS and RDASH and a Sexual Health Worker. This was a watching brief for the Sexual Exploitation Sub-group to ensure that there were appropriate resources in place;
- Education and awareness raising with Year 6 and 7 students would be piloted during 2013/14. Tailored programmes had been developed to increase their efficacy, including programmes for Special Schools, topics for consideration in Personal, Social and Health Education lessons, age-appropriate content and peer mentoring opportunities;
- The Children and Young People's Services' Improvement Panel would monitor the issues on an ongoing basis;
- Prosecutions of suspected offenders through the justice process was a priority within Rotherham and the most desire outcome for the cases involving Child Sexual Exploitation. This was explained through the evidence-giving process to the Home Affairs Select Committee;
- Response in relation to the contact between victims of Child Sexual Exploitation and Political leaders;
- Tailored packages of support for victims of Child Sexual Exploitation going through the legal process;
- Differences between conviction rates for different areas. Figures for local authorities often included all child abuse convictions, which included a wider range of crimes than 'just' Child Sexual Exploitation;

- Rotherham had a number of Child Sexual Exploitation prosecutions that were pending court cases;
- Collaborative working with the Police and engaging with their Child Sexual Exploitation structures and response units;
- South Yorkshire Police had increased the strategic-focus of their sub-group, from Tier 3/4 to Strategic level;
- The Action Plan was a 'live' document and would shortly be presented to the independent Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board for comment.

The Chairperson of the Improving Lives Select Commission thanked the Strategic Director for her presentation and contribution to the discussion. The Improving Lives Select Commission requested that regular ongoing updates against the Action Plan were provided to the Commission.

Resolved: - (1) That Rotherham's self-assessment against the Home Affairs Select Commission's 36 recommendations be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet's agreed method of receiving progress reports against the local Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (incorporating the 36 recommendations) be noted.

(3) That the Improving Lives Select Commission continue to receive information, as part of their work programme, in relation to the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board and regular updates in relation to progress against the Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan.

(4) That the issuing of quarterly updates to all of Rotherham's Elected Members be circulated in relation to these issues.

17. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING: -

Resolved: - (1) That the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission take place on Wednesday 18th September, 2013, to start at 1.30 p.m. in the Rotherham Town Hall.

(2) That the other meeting dates of the Improving Lives Select Commission for the 2013 – 2014 Municipal Year take place on: -

- Wednesday 6th November, 2013;
- Wednesday 18th December, 2013 – to start at 2.00 p.m.;
- Wednesday 22nd January, 2014;
- Wednesday 12th March, 2014;
- Wednesday 9th April, 2014;

- Wednesday 11th June, 2014;
- Wednesday 9th July, 2014.

All to start at 1.30 p.m. (with the exception of the December meeting) in the Rotherham Town Hall.