

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 23rd June 2011

Report of the Lead Officer

Terms of Reference And Rules of Procedure of The Committee and Associated Matters including the Work Programme of the Committee for 2011 – 2012

Purpose of Report

1. To receive the terms of reference and procedure rules applicable to this Committee, and details of associated matters, and to consider the Committee's work programme for the municipal year 2011 – 2012.

Background

2. Article 6 of the council's constitution provides for the appointment of five Scrutiny Committees, including the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
3. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committees referred to in Article 6, and more fully in Table 1 of the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules. The terms of reference provide for this Committee to fulfil all the functions of a Scrutiny committee as they relate to children's services, and in particular, the functions of the Council under the Children Act 2004, and associated regulations and guidance including (a) the roles and responsibilities of relevant partnerships and (b) listening to and involving children, with the objective of improving the well-being of children in the Council's area by promoting the outcomes in Every Child Matters. Article 6 also prescribes the general role of Scrutiny committees and their specific functions including those relating to scrutiny.
4. The Scrutiny Committee procedure rules are contained in part four of the Constitution. Procedure rule three sets out details of education representatives, both voting and non-voting. Legislation and regulations entitle the church and parent governor representatives to vote at meetings of the committee on matters relating to education. As indicated, these arrangements have been incorporated into the Council's Constitution.
5. The relevant extracts from the Constitution are set out in Article 6 (pages B11 to B14); the terms of reference of the committee (page D 63), the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules (pages D54 - D62); and the Scrutiny Protocol of Scrutiny committees (pages F 40 to F47).

6. Members of the Scrutiny Committee are also asked to note that other bodies concerned with children services include the following:

The **Schools Forum** which acts as a consultative body on the local management of schools, school budgets and other issues relating to schools.

The **Corporate Parenting Committee**. The committee comprises a membership of elected members and officers from each directorate of the council. Its purpose is to ensure that the council is delivering its corporate parenting responsibilities to children in the care of the Council. It does this within the context of the wider children's agenda, promoting an early intervention approach to reduce the need for children to become looked after. The committee has a link to the Children in Care Council, to ensure that the children's voices are heard and are able to influence service developments.

The **Dudley Local Admissions forum**. This statutory body comprising representatives of the various admissions authorities within the borough has responsibility for monitoring and coordinating admissions policies.

7. The draft work programme for 2011 – 2012 was circulated at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 23 March 2011, and Members were invited to contact the Chairman or Vice-Chairman with suggestions of items they might want to have considered by the full Scrutiny Committee, as part of the work programme in the new municipal year.
8. The work programme has been organised in several themes across the five planned meetings of the Scrutiny Committee during the coming municipal year.

9. It is proposed that the work programme to 2011 – 2012 should include consideration of a number of key themes. The themes with the topics they include are set out below for each meeting of the Scrutiny Committee:

Date of Meeting	Theme	Topics
23rd June 2011	Children and families – contact, referral and assessment	Practice, process and legal framework for assessment of children in need
15th September 2011	Early years Vulnerable groups	Children's Centres Time for two's project Child Poverty report Travelling children
16th November 2011	Corporate parenting Role of children's services	Children in care Care planning and legal processes for children in need, to include adoption update. Redesign of children's services – national and local
25th January 2012	Safeguarding & Health	Safeguarding roles and responsibilities Annual report of the Safeguarding Board Responding to child protection enquiries Update on NHS reforms – implications for children. Care planning and management of resources for looked after children
22nd March 2012	Role of the local authority in School improvement School standards	Responding to new legislation on School improvement (Education Bill 2011) 16-19 Commissioning School standards report OFSTED outcomes

10. In addition, the Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive the quarterly performance management reports (Quarter 4 2010-11 to the September meeting;

Quarter 1 2011-12 to the November meeting; Quarter 2 in January and Quarter 3 in March); budget (January); and key national and local policy issues. The Directorate of Children's Services Equality and Diversity Annual Report will be presented at the September meeting. A report on the Pensnett Education Campus will also be provided in September when year 11 results are available.

11. In previous years, the Scrutiny Committee has appointed working groups. In consultation with the Chairman, it was decided not to appoint such groups in the year 2010 – 2011 as they were considered to have limited value. The proposal for the coming year is also to bring any substantive items to the full Scrutiny Committee without the need to appoint separate working groups.

Finance

12. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

13. The relevant provisions relating to the constitution contained in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, together with regulations, orders and statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Equality Impact

14. This report complies with the policies of the Council on equality and diversity.

15. Children and young people have not been consulted in the preparation of this report that their views will be taken fully into account in each of the matters which are referred to the Scrutiny Committee during the coming year.

Recommendation

16. That the Terms of Reference, Rules of Procedure and Protocol relating to the Scrutiny Committee be received and noted.

17. That the work programme set out in paragraphs 7 - 10 of this report be approved

18. That no working groups be established in 2011 – 2012 and instead any substantive issues be brought to the full Scrutiny Committee.

Richard Carter

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