

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

11 January 2016

Executive Member Questions

The Committee is invited to note the below update and question the Executive Member on his work and the work of the Committee.

Any questions that the Committee or members of the public may have should be submitted in advance to jonathan.moore@islington.gov.uk no later than Wednesday 6th January 2016.

Executive Member Update – December 2015

- We have appointed a new Corporate Director of Children's Services. Carmel Littleton, formerly DCS at Thurrock, will start at the end of February. Carmel lives in Highgate and grew up in Hackney – she has also previously worked in Islington, so she knows the patch well. She brings an excellent reputation and the right set of skills to meet the big challenges ahead of us.
- Cathy Blair, our inspirational Director of Targeted and Specialist Children and Families Services, and current acting DCS, has announced her retirement. For my money she is the best Children's Social Care director in London, if not the UK, so we will miss her greatly. We have begun recruitment of her successor. Cathy's last day will be at the end of February.
- Islington has been named as one of nine 'Practise Leaders' for child protection social work. This is a huge accolade, and is testament to the work of Cathy Blair and her team. This will mean continued funding for our innovation pilot in social work; 'Doing What Counts and Measuring What Matters', which utilises motivational interviewing with families. Social workers will have fewer cases, spend more time with families, and have fewer administrative responsibilities. I look forward to reporting back on this work as it progresses.
- Some more good news came our way as verified results from last summer's SATS exams, which are taken by all 11-year-old children in their final year of primary school, revealed that 79% of disadvantaged pupils in Islington achieved the benchmark Level 4 or better in reading, writing and maths – the ninth-best performance in England. The data, released by the Department for Education, reveals that overall, 83% of pupils achieved Level 4 or better and Islington has no schools below the floor target – bettering the averages for both London (2%) and England (5%). Islington is also mentioned in Ofsted's recent Annual Education Report, which cites the borough's secondary schools as an example of high performance despite challenging levels of deprivation. As a borough with the third-highest rate of child poverty in the UK it is incredibly important to us that primary schools do their bit in tackling inequality of outcomes, and they do so with gusto. Congratulations to everyone involved.

- Over Christmas our thoughts should be with the family of Vaso Kakko, who face the festive period without their youngest son, who was murdered last month. The Leader, Cllr Convery, Cllr Kay and I went to meet the family. They were devastated by loss; determined not only that the guilty parties should face justice, but that we all do more to stop the serious youth violence that we have seen in our borough over the last 12 months.
- The draft report of the Youth Offending Service inspection shows that we have moved up one level in the inspection scale, but the lead inspector picked out our relationship with the police as a particular area for improvement. She felt that although we had developed the right plan for improvement, our strategies and structures won't be effective without good joint working with the police. This is a priority area for us and we expect to see swift progress; but there is much more to do, and this is an area of work that will require close scrutiny over the next 12 months.

Procedure for Executive Member Questions at Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

- (a) Elected members and members of the public may ask the Executive Member for Children and Families questions on any matter in relation to the executive portfolio or the work of the committee.
- (b) The intention of the session is to complement and enhance the work of the committee. The Executive Member may submit written information in advance of the meeting to advise of his recent work and other topical and timely matters of relevance. The session is not intended to replace or replicate the questions sessions held at each ordinary meeting of the Council.
- (c) Questions should be submitted in writing to the committee clerk no later than three clear working days in advance of the meeting. Such questions will be notified to the Executive Member which may facilitate a more detailed answer at the meeting. Details of how questions should be submitted will be detailed on the agenda for the meeting.
- (d) Questioners should provide their name to enable this to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting will include a summary of the question and the response.
- (e) The Chair may permit questions to be asked at the meeting without notice.
- (f) The time set aside for questions shall be no longer than 15 minutes.
- (g) No individual may ask more than two questions at each meeting.
- (h) Where there is more than one question on any particular subject or closely related subjects, the Executive Member may give a joint reply to the questions.
- (i) The committee clerk shall have power to edit or amend written questions to make them concise but without affecting the substance, following consultation with the questioner.
- (j) An answer may take the form of:
 - A direct oral answer;
 - Where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
 - Where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner within 5 working days provided the questioner has given contact details.
- (k) Priority shall normally be given to questions notified in advance.
- (l) The Chair may permit supplementary questions to be asked. Supplementary questions must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- (m) A question may be rejected by the committee clerk, or the Chair at the meeting, if it:
 - does not relate to the executive portfolio or the work of the committee;
 - is defamatory, frivolous or offensive;
 - is substantially the same as a question asked to the Executive Member at any meeting within the last six months;
 - requests the disclosure of information which is confidential or exempt; or
 - names, or clearly identifies, a member of staff or any other individual.