

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 28 June 2016**

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 28 June 2016 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**           Debono (Chair), Diner, Gill and Wayne  
**Co-opted Members:** Erol Baduna, Primary Parent Governor  
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

**Also Present:**   **Councillors:**           Caluori

**Councillor Theresa Debono in the Chair**

**143       APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. A1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rakhia Ismail, Michelline Safi Ngongo and Nick Ward.

**144       DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. A2)**

None.

**145       DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. A3)**

Councillor Satnam Gill for Councillor Rakhia Ismail.

**146       MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. A4)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**147       CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. A5)**

The Committee noted that Councillor Diarmaid Ward had been appointed as the Executive Member for Housing and Development and as a result his membership of the Committee had ended. It was intended for the Council to appoint another member to the Committee at its meeting on 30 June.

**148       ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. A6)**

None.

**149       PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. A7)**

None.

**150       EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL PRESENTATION (ITEM NO. B1)**

Councillor Joe Caluori, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, made a presentation to the Committee summarising the highlights and challenges of the past year and his priorities for 2016/17.

## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 28 June 2016

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Councillor Caluori reported that the launch of Project Pause had been a success. The project provided holistic support and long-term reversible contraception to women who had repeatedly had children taken into care. The project was seeking to work with 50 women who had 200 children taken into care. The cost of keeping a child in care was £48,000 a year and the project had already proved to be cost effective by decreasing the number of pregnancies likely to result in care referrals.
- Analysis of the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme was ongoing. This programme was developing the use of motivational interviewing techniques and it was hoped that such innovation work would lead to better outcomes and help to attract high quality staff to the service.
- Islington children had received positive SATS results, with 79% of disadvantaged pupils achieving the benchmark grade. It was noted that Islington was in the top 10% of local authorities for value added scores. The council was working to develop new school places by expanding good and outstanding schools as required.
- Councillor Caluori commented that there had been multiple changes to the Children's Services management team over the past year and was pleased to report that overall performance had remained stable during this period of change.
- It was reported that the unsatisfactory inspection of the Youth Offending Service had been a significant challenge and the council had needed to reevaluate its work. The Executive Member was concerned by the re-emergence of serious youth violence and geographically specific gang activity.
- There had been a variation in GCSE performance between schools and it was considered that differences between school intakes were not significant enough to warrant such a variation. It was hoped that improvements would be made in 2016/17.
- There was a continued lack of Islington children progressing to higher education and the council was implementing mentoring projects and developing links with higher education institutions in order to resolve this.
- The changing focus of the emerging Education Bill had been a challenge however the Executive Member welcomed that the government had abandoned its policy of forced academisation. There was a need for the council and local schools to develop their own vision of education in Islington. It was reported that the Islington Community of Schools was working well, however there were concerns that the government's 'Fairer Funding' proposals would have a negative impact on the finances of Islington schools.
- The number of children outside of mainstream education remained a challenge and the Executive Member welcomed the Committee's review of the Alternative Provision service.
- Tackling youth violence was a key priority for 2016/17 and it was hoped that the development of the integrated gangs team and changes to the leadership of the Youth Offending Service would have a positive contribution. Co-location with the Police was expected improve communication between agencies. The service was working with young people on the de-escalation of conflicts, as it was known that youth violence could be fuelled by seemingly minor disputes.
- Tackling peer-to-peer child sexual exploitation was also a priority. This was often gang related and was considered to be one of the biggest safeguarding risks in the borough. Work with schools was underway to engage young people in conversations about healthy relationships. It was suggested that youth services had to listen more in order to shape services to the experiences of young people; this was a strategy supported by Ofsted.

## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 28 June 2016

- The transformation of Early Years provision was prioritised as part of the council's commitment to early intervention. The council was funding additional childcare places and working to further integrate health and family support services. Promotional work was becoming increasingly targeted and data-driven as it was known that those who needed support at a later date often had not engaged in Early Years services. Consideration would be given to implementing a more progressive charging policy to better reflect the income distribution of local people.
- The Executive Member commented that investment in universal youth services needed to demonstrate effectiveness and a deliberative event had been scheduled with young people and community representatives to explore what services young people really want. The Executive Member suggested that a budget for youth services could be devolved to the Youth Council.
- Councillor Caluori advised that The Bridge and Central Foundation schools had indicated that they would consider academisation. The council was in talks with the headteachers, unions and parents about this matter.
- It was queried what the council and local schools could do to encourage more young people to apply to Russell Group universities; particularly to study courses which required interviews such as medicine and dentistry. In response it was advised that the Executive Member was not aware of application rates to particular courses, however suggested that coaching and guidance on interview preparation could assist young people with those aspirations. It was noted that all local authority areas were linked with Oxford and Cambridge colleges; some contributed to funding services whereas others provided mentoring programmes, however this mentoring was often only for a short period and therefore was not always effective. Anecdotal evidence suggested that Islington pupils preferred to study closer to home and were adverse to taking on the significant debts associated with university study. Some parents were also unable to support their children financially. It was commented that pupils resident in Islington wishing to study at elite institutions would often study at sixth form colleges outside of the borough. Members of the Committee reflected on their own experiences and the importance of inspiring and supporting young people. It was suggested that schools could invite former pupils who had studied at university to engage with their pupils. It was noted that such issues could be considered further a part of the Committee's scrutiny review of Education, Employment and Training.

The Committee thanked Councillor Caluori for his attendance.

### 151 **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION: FINAL REPORT (ITEM NO. B2)**

The Committee considered the final report of the Alternative Provision scrutiny review. The Committee thanked officers for their work in supporting the review.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be agreed.

### 152 **OUTCOMES POST-16: SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (ITEM NO. B3)**

The Committee noted the proposal to further specify the review title to 'Post-16 Education, Employment and Training'.

The Committee emphasised the importance of a focused review and the need to use time at meetings efficiently. It was requested that a reading list and relevant data be circulated to members for the August break.

## **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 28 June 2016**

It was requested that witnesses be selected to provide a range of views and asked to submit written evidence in advance of meetings. It was also commented that the Committee could accept written evidence in lieu of a presentation as appropriate.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the scrutiny initiation document be agreed.

**153**

### **WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17 (ITEM NO. B4)**

The Committee considered the draft work programme and selected three items for one-off review.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be agreed subject to the inclusion of the following items for one-off review:

- i. Update on trends and demand for places at Islington schools
- ii. The Children's Services response to Prevent
- iii. The educational attainment of BME and White British pupils

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.35 pm

Chair