

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 11 February 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Tuesday, 11 February 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Cutler (Chair), Woolf (Vice-Chair), Bell-Bradford, Jeapes and Williamson
	Co-opted Members:	Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese Zaleera Wallace, Parent Governor Representative (Secondary) Claire Ballak, Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Councillor Vivien Cutler in the Chair

154 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. A1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Graham and Ngongo.

Councillor Jeapes was attending another council meeting and had submitted apologies for lateness.

155 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. A2)

None.

156 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. A3)

None.

157 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

158 CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. A5)

The Chair advised that Item B2 would be considered as the first item for discussion.

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

None.

160 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. A7)

None.

161

**UPDATE ON THE FAIR FUTURES COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS
(ITEM NO. B2)**

Tania Townsend, Children's Partnership Development and Strategy Manager, introduced the report that summarised the progress of the Fair Futures Commission recommendations.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- The Fair Futures Commission sought to reimagine Islington as a fairer, child-friendly borough, taking account of the borough's inequalities and the changing political and financial landscape. The Commission was led by young people and informed by young people's experiences.
- The Commission had held a number of engagement events prior to concluding. These included borough tours led by young people, showing council officers their local area through their eyes, and a "Fair Futures Hack" event where young people proposed solutions to local issues.
- The Commission had considered the impact of austerity on young people's lives. It was commented that austerity had affected young people from both lower and middle incomes and some of the young people taking part in Commission events had lived the majority of their lives under austerity.
- The Commission's recommendations were focused around five long term ambitions: 21st century skills for growing up, 21st century skills for work and the future of work, a child-friendly place to live and grow, connected communities, and alliances for ambitious and fairer futures.
- Work to implement the recommendations extended beyond local authority services for children and young people; all public services could learn from the recommendations.
- The Commission's recommendations had informed many high profile council programmes, including the '100 Hours Work of Work' initiative and the '11 by 11' cultural enrichment programme.
- The Commission had recommended that young people's voices should be heard in development proposals. This was to be trialled in the Holloway Prison development and council new build schemes.
- Work to make Islington a child-friendly borough included the further development of play streets and developing affordable workspaces with childcare facilities. The Commission's recommendations had led to the removal of 'No Ball Games' signs from estates.
- Islington Council was developing a young entrepreneur mentoring programme.
- In response to the Commission, a specific policy had been included in Islington's draft Local Plan about developing a child-friendly borough.
- Young people had reported feeling unsafe on public transport and the council was engaging with the British Transport Police to address this.
- The Commission had been influential across London and other boroughs, as well as the GLA, were currently developing their own commissions.
- The Commission had been an effective vehicle for challenge and change. The Commission's recommendations had changed mind-sets

within the council and partner organisations. It would be important to continue to collaborate with young people in future.

- The Committee queried what had been learned from the process of carrying out the Fair Futures Commission, what the challenges had been and what could have been done better. In response, it was advised that it can be challenging to engage with certain groups of young people, however, the Chairs of the Commission had been very helpful in engaging with 'hard to reach' young people and establishing a safe space for them in which to contribute. It was also commented that the process could have benefited from more targeted engagement on estates as this may have encouraged greater numbers of young people to take part.
- The Committee noted the importance of meaningful engagement with young people; it was essential that engagement led to tangible outcomes. Officers involved in the Commission were providing guidance to other services on how best to engage with young people in a meaningful way.
- Over 250 young people had engaged with the Fair Futures Commission.
- A member of the public commented that the Fair Futures Commission recommendations made no mention of the climate. Officers commented that the climate emergency was very important to Islington's young people however this was not a prominent theme at the time the recommendations were drafted. It was suggested that if the Commission was held again now, the climate emergency would likely feature as a strong theme.
- A member queried the implementation of Islington's play streets scheme, commenting that many of the streets seemed to be based in traditionally middle-class areas, and asked if more could be done to target the development of new play streets in areas with the highest levels of need. In response, officers advised that they would look into this matter further.
- The Committee queried the budget for delivering the Fair Futures Commission recommendations. In response it was advised that all recommendations were delivered through existing resources. Many of the recommendations could be progressed through staff time, rather than specific expenditure.

The Committee thanked Tania Townsend for her attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Fair Futures Commission recommendations be noted.

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UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF POST-16 EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (ITEM NO. B1)

Andrea Stark, Director of Employment, Skills and Culture, and Lorraine Blyth, Post-16 Participation Manager, introduced the report that provided an update on the committee's review of Post-16 Employment, Education and Training.

The following main points were made in the discussion:

- The Chair stated that the scrutiny review was carried out in 2017-18 and that she felt that the review did not sufficiently address the role of school sixth forms and colleges. It was advised that this would be reviewed further at a later date.
- Officers summarised recent developments in the council's employment support services, stating that the services had progressed significantly since the time of the scrutiny review.
- Recent service developments included an employment and progress coach being based within the Youth Offending Service and the capacity and expertise of the iWork service being increased with the result that the service was able to offer more employment coaching and was also working to develop the coaching skills of young people to enable them to support their peers.
- Islington had 820 young adults claiming jobseekers' allowance. However, data available to the Public Health service indicated that up to 2,000 young adults were NEET (not in education, employment or training).
- Islington Council was providing consultancy support to schools on how to develop their employment support offer.
- At the time of the scrutiny review there was a particular concern about the employment support available to young people in Alternative Provision and New River College. Since the review had concluded, New River College had received new funding from the Richard Reeves Foundation to develop their employment support offer and this had made a significant difference to young people who were not in mainstream education. The Chair declared a personal interest that she was a governor of the Richard Reeves Foundation.
- The council was funding some community groups to work with young people who were not well suited to traditional employment pathways.
- A member noted that the initial scrutiny review highlighted concerns about the support available to young people dropping out of college; namely, how the support available to these young people had developed in recent years. In response, it was advised that the council's Employment and Skills team was now providing tutors, as well as employment coaches, as it was recognised that some young people needed additional support to remain in education.
- In response to a question, it was advised that a number of young people engaging with the Youth Offending Service had learning disabilities. It was important that progression support for those young people was tailored to their specific needs. The service had recently engaged with an Educational Psychologist and this had helped the service to better understand the needs of the cohort.
- The service had significantly increased the amount of engagement with employers in recent years. Officers were working to support employers in developing apprenticeships and other training opportunities. The importance of maintaining positive working relationships with employers was emphasised.

- In response to a question, officers explained how the council fostered good working relationships with employers. It was explained that the council sought to work with employers in a range of sectors and of all sizes. While some larger employers were keen to provide training and work experience opportunities through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, smaller employers tended to need additional support from the council. The council could encourage smaller employers to offer training and other opportunities by offering small financial incentives.
- In response to a question from a member of the public, it was advised that Arsenal Football Club engaged with the council on employment and work experience opportunities.
- A member of the committee queried the quality of careers advice and guidance provided in schools. In response it was noted that the quality of careers education had been a challenge for many years, however schools understood the importance of careers education and had appointed dedicated staff to oversee their advice and support offer. The council arranged borough-wide learning opportunities for school careers leads and this contributed to staff CPD.
- The council was in the early stages of drafting a borough-wide Skills Strategy that would guide the work of the local authority, schools and employers in future.
- The Committee requested a short report to a future meeting on the performance of school sixth forms and colleges in preparing young people for further education, employment and training. It was requested that this include demographic information on the sixth form and college cohort.

The Committee thanked officers for their attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the scrutiny review of Post-16 Education, Employment and Training be noted.

163

**EQUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES - DRAFT
RECOMMENDATIONS (ITEM NO. B3)**

The Committee considered the draft recommendations and discussed how they were informed by the evidence received at previous meetings.

In relation to Recommendation 4, it was noted that exercise and happiness was also a crucial component of pupil wellbeing.

The Committee thanked officers for their contribution to the scrutiny review.

RESOLVED:

That the draft recommendations be agreed.

164 **WORK PROGRAMME (ITEM NO. B4)**

The Committee requested that a further report on the performance of school sixth forms and colleges be submitted to a future meeting.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.10 pm

Chair