

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee - 7 December 2015

Non-confidential minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee held at on 7 December 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Gallagher (Chair), O'Halloran (Vice-Chair), Comer-Schwartz, Court, Ismail, O'Sullivan, Russell, Andrews , Wayne and Jeapes
Also Present: **Councillors:** Hull and Convery

Councillor Troy Gallagher in the Chair

179 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item 1)**

Councillors Klute, Kay and Chowdhury

180 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item 2)**

Councillor Wayne stated that he was substituting for Councillor Kay

181 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)**

None

182 **TO APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item 4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 02 November 2015 be confirmed and the Chair be authorised to sign them

183 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Item 5)**

None

184 **CHAIR'S REPORT (Item 6)**

The Chair stated that the meeting of the Committee to consider the Budget 2016/17 would now be held on 21 January and the next ordinary meeting of the Committee will now take place on 11 February.

In addition there were visits to be arranged in relation to the Knife Crime scrutiny and Members expressed the view that they would wish to visit Arsenal in the community projects and the New River Green PRU, however they would wish the Margate Task Force and the Westminster Your Choice Gang Diversion programme to attend a future meeting of the Committee in order to give witness evidence

185 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item 7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for Public questions and filming and recording of meetings

186 **SCRUTINY REVIEW - KNIFE CRIME, MOBILE PHONE THEFT ETC.- (Item 8)**

Catherine Briody, Victim and Offenders Service Manager and Tony Nagle, Head of Youth Offending and Targeted Youth support and Justine Wilson-Darke, Operational Manager, Targeted Youth support were present for discussion of this item. Tony Nagle outlined the report.

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Members also considered the list of possible visits to be made in connection with the scrutiny review.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- There is little evidence to show the strategies that actually have worked in deterring young people from crime but work is being carried out with schools to target young people and family intervention and mental health work is being carried out
- Of the current caseload of the Youth Offending service who live locally, 35% used youth provision funded by the Council in 2014/15. This represents 1 in 3 of the current YOS caseload in the general population, the equivalent figure using youth services is 1 in 5
- Families First supports families with a very wide range of needs, from those with newly emerging problems, who have not received support of this nature in the past, to those being stepped down from Children's social care with complex histories. Based on a review of quantitative data and from reviews from 12 case files, support appears to be effective at improving outcomes for around 80% of families it supports
- It was stated that 80% of the families who engaged with Families First had positive outcomes
- There is also targeted youth support and it should also be noted that the vast majority of young people in Islington were not involved in criminality. There is also the importance of the transition work from childhood to adult offending provision
- In response to a question it was stated that for those offenders where criminality is entrenched it is more difficult to turn their behaviour around, and it was noted that 25% of the young people that the team worked with had speech and language difficulties. Some young people were hard to engage as they were more entrenched in offending and these were gang related and 80%-90% of the young people in custody were for gang related offences. The view was expressed that these speech and language difficulties surely should have been picked up earlier at school and it needed to be ensured that progress is being made on this
- In relation to black young men from 2011-14 the numbers in the criminal justice system had fallen from 11% to 4% so there had been some progression in reducing the numbers. Work is taking place with schools and with young people to encourage educational opportunities
- In response to a question it was stated that the Director of Children's Services would provide details of the exclusion of black pupils and whether there was any difference in exclusion rates from Academies to Local Authority schools
- Early intervention is thought to be the key to preventing young people becoming involved in crime and it is hoped that going forward this will help to prevent more young people becoming involved in criminality, however it is more difficult with entrenched offenders
- In response to a question it was stated that there is little evidence of strategies that had previously worked and a range of measures were being tried. Most offending of young people seemed to cease at 21 years of age and if it did not these young people tended to be offenders for life
- The integrated gangs approach is another method in a range of measures being taken to deal with the problems of offending of young persons
- A Member expressed the view that a lot of offending is linked to drugs and family circumstances and that this needed to be addressed, together with the need for tougher punishments for persistent offenders
- Reference was made to the fact that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee had considered a number of these areas in their scrutiny on early intervention and that the work of Families First was good. The issue of mental health is a constant

problem and often being in a gang appeared to be a reassurance of the young persons 'worth'

- Reference was made to the fact that the Council were working closely with the Police and the criminal justice system in order to stop young person's offending and those higher up in the drugs trade and were active in gathering information and intelligence that can be passed onto the Police in order that they can identify the 'ringleaders'
- In response to a question as to the effectiveness of restorative justice measures it was stated that national research had shown that this had not been as successful with some young people as envisaged as they were not able to show empathy to their victims. There were high custody levels of young people and criminal behaviour orders were being used in some instances
- Work is carried out with the Families Board and the work around mental health is crucial and in the youth offending service there is a psychologist to assist in this regard and there is work being carried out to improve this offer
- There is also now a service for young people held in custody overnight to have a mental health assessment and this assists in intervention and young people might accept support services and there is also a youth counselling service and a CAMHS worker in the Youth Offending service and a number of other wider offers
- In response to a statement that youth provision appeared to be patchy across certain wards in the borough, it was stated that there is still a relatively good youth provision offer in the borough and Members requested that details of this provision be provided to the Committee on a ward by ward basis
- The Committee expressed the view that there should be more use of community centres to provide youth facilities and targeted provision
- Discussion took place as to the review of youth offending that is currently taking place by the Ministry of Justice that will be published early next year and Members stated that this be circulated once it is available
- In response to a statement that many residents felt that a lot of time and resources were being put into offenders, it was stated that many of the young people offending have suffered trauma or witnessed or been subjected to domestic violence that meant that they became more vulnerable to criminality
- In addition information is shared with the Police in order to bring offenders to justice

RESOLVED:

- (a) That details be circulated to the Committee on the youth provision available on a ward by ward basis
- (b) That the Ministry of Justice review on youth offending be circulated to Members once this is available
- (c) That details of exclusions of black and ethnic minority children in schools be circulated to Members and also whether there is any differences in overall exclusion rates from Academies compared to other schools

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QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Item 9)

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance and Lela Kogbara, Assistant Chief Executive Strategy and Partnerships were present for discussion of this item.

During consideration of this matter the following main issues were raised –

- In relation to P15 Adult Social Care Members expressed the view that given the value of physical exercise for tackling isolation amongst older people whether this is included as part of the strategy for tackling this and the range of actively planned to tackle social isolation

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- A Member referred to PI 112 Children missing in care and that this is not on target. It was stated that all appropriate measures are taken each time a child goes missing, and that robust procedures are in place to prevent children from going missing whilst in care, but it had to be recognised that these were often very vulnerable individuals
- With regard to P114 Alternative provision, a Member enquired if there was any difference between children excluded from Academies and non Academy schools in alternative provision. It was stated that these figures should be provided to the Committee
- In relation to P115 GCSE results Members expressed the view that the level of ambition was not enough and enquired the London average. Final GCSE figures will be released in January 2016 and these will be included in the Quarter 3 report, however the performance of London schools was generally good
- In relation to P1 116 NEETS Members requested more detail about the measures being taken to retain them in learning, particularly at risk groups
- Discussion took place around PI's for crime and community safety and that in relation to PI's 20 and 21 anti-social behaviour, Members were concerned about these targets and that despite them being unambitious they were still not being met. In addition the response on estates is not considered satisfactory and Members requested additional information in relation as to how it is intended to improve the response rate on estates
- The Committee also expressed concern in relation to PI 24 and 26 Hate Crime and that this is below the target for sanction detections. Councillor Convery stated that this is the role of the Police and that the Council were constantly pushing the Police on this, and that they were leading on a new Hate Crime strategy and consulting on the Prevent Strategy. Members noted that the Quarter 3 Performance report would include details of actions the Police are taking to improve detections
- A Member referred to P127 in relation to employment, and enquired the types of people that are being supported into posts and it was stated that this information could be circulated to Members
- Reference was made to p130a and Members stated that despite this being a Council pledge the target had not been met. In addition, Members stated that they would also like information as to the types of placements apprentices were taking up and it was stated that a list of departments and job roles could be circulated to Members and those that are planned in the future
- A Member enquired as to how the Council were supporting LBI graduates who had not been able to obtain employment. It was stated that this is not presently one of the priority groups for the Council to support into work and Councillor Hull stated that whilst this is not a priority at present consideration may be given to this in the future
- In relation to the Environment and Regeneration PI 131 recycling Members enquired why this is below target and if this is ambitious enough. Councillor Hull stated that Islington has a smaller proportion of gardens than most other Local Authorities, which resulted in less garden waste, which is easier to collect, and there is a reduction in the rate from NLWA
- In relation to P149 overcrowding, there had been a reduction in the number of voids, meant that there is less opportunity to rehouse larger families, although the turnaround times for voids was good. Discussion took place as to instances where properties on estates were empty for long periods. It was stated that information could be provided on the number of voids and turnaround times for re-letting once they become vacant

RESOLVED:

That the following information, as outlined above, be circulated to Members –
Details of whether physical exercise is part of the strategy for tackling social isolation and the range of activities planned to tackle social isolation

Details of exclusions from Academies and other schools where children were in alternative provision and whether there were differences
Details of the 2014/15 GCSE results for Islington schools be included in the Quarter 3 Performance report to Committee
Details of measures being taken to keep NEET's in learning, especially in relation to those at risk
Details in relation to anti-social behaviour on how to improve performance, especially on housing estates
Details to be provided on the types of activity the Police are taking to improve hate crime detection
Details on the types of jobs people are being supported into by sector
Details of the list of current apprenticeships by department/job role and a list of those planned in the future
Details on the number of voids and turnaround times

188 **FINANCIAL UPDATE (Item 10)**

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance, and Mike Curtis, Director of Finance and Resources were present for discussion of this item.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was noted that there is a projected overspend of £3.5m which would be funded by contingency reserves
- The Council were faced with having to make further reductions of £70m in the next 4 years as a result of the Government's recent spending review, however it was not known at this point the savings that would be required in 2016/17
- In response to a question it was stated that schools had largely been protected from spending reductions, however there are likely to be future cost pressures
- Reference was made to the cash flow forecast in relation to Moreland School and the Director of Finance and Property Services stated that more details could be provided to Members following the meeting
- A Member expressed the view that in her view there should have been a resident impact assessment on the report. Councillor Hull responded that this was just a financial monitoring report and that a detailed resident impact assessment is prepared for the Budget report but this could be considered

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the Director of Finance and Property Services be requested to respond to the matter raised on Moreland school as outlined above

189 **USE OF AGENCY STAFF (Item 11)**

Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member Finance and Performance and Debra Norman, Assistant Chief Executive Governance and Human Resources, were present for discussion of this item.

During consideration of the report the following main points were made –

- It was noted that there had been a 10% reduction in agency staff in the previous year and the full time equivalent figure as at 29 September is 719.91 assignments, as compared to the 900.46 reported in June
- Based on headcount, agency workers made up 14.7% of the workforce, based on FTE 13.09%, compared to 17.39%, as reported in June

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- This compares to an average figure of 14.5% across all London Councils in 2014/15
- In response to a question Members were informed that the Council had a target of 12% for agency staff and it is felt that agency staff of this size will always be required to cover sickness, seasonal work etc.
- Members were informed that the employment of agency staff in HR and Legal was due to difficulties in recruitment and provision of maternity cover and implementation of the new HR system
- Members stated that there had been significant progress in reducing the number of agency staff in Digital Services and that there would be further reductions as a result of the forthcoming merger with Camden
- Reference was made to the fact that there should be more ambitious targets set in order to reduce the number of agency staff
- Reference was made to qualified and unqualified healthcare staff in Children's Services and that a high proportion of these were black and ethnic minority and young people and that if these were in house staff this would be better than employing them from agencies
- In response to a question it was stated that in relation to children's social work Islington had the lowest proportion of agency staff in London
- Reference was made to Appendix 3 and that there were a high number of social and unqualified healthcare staff and in manual trades and operatives. Members expressed the view that if significant numbers of these people moved into permanent posts this was acceptable, however if they were not being permanently employed and were agency staff this needed to be looked at
- It was stated that some staff moved to employment under the temp to perm policy and that agency staff could now apply for employment with the Council
- Reference was made to the 183 manual staff employed in E&R and the Assistant Chief Executive HR and Governance stated that she would provide more details on these to Members
- Members referred to paragraph 5.4 of the report – types of assignment undertaken – and that these types of role should be more clearly defined if they were not administrative or clerical roles
- A Member enquired whether the in house agency was still a possibility. It was stated that there were always temporary/agency staff needed available for sickness cover and seasonal work and that given that this is the case for many London Boroughs in north London, it may be worth considering creating a pool of staff that could be drawn on for such work from amongst these boroughs
- Councillor Hull indicated that it would never be possible to reduce the number of agency staff to zero for the reasons stated, and that it is not considered viable to have an in house agency with the reductions that the Council had already achieved

- In response to a question it was stated that the report on the feasibility of an in house agency by the Head of HR that had been considered previously should be circulated to Members
- A Member expressed the view that young people could be offered seasonal work which would give them work experience opportunities and in addition seasonal workers could be employed on flexible hours. The Assistant Chief Executive Governance and HR stated that she would ask for this to be considered by the Director of Environment and Regeneration

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information be noted and that the Assistant Chief Executive Governance and HR be requested to circulate Members the report prepared by

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- the Head of HR on the feasibility of an in house agency and further details of the 183 agency assignments in E&R for manual labour
- (b) That the Assistant Chief Executive Governance and HR be requested to discuss with the Director Environment and Regeneration the feasibility of employing young people for seasonal work to give them work experience and as a way of reducing agency staff and the use of flexible hours

190 **MONITORING REPORT (Item)**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

The meeting ended at 9.50p.m.

CHAIR