

**Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 17 May 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, 17 May 2016 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**           **Councillors:**           Debono (Chair), Diner, Ngongo, Perry, D Ward, N Ward and Wayne

**Co-opted Members:** James Stephenson, Secondary Parent Governor  
Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

**Councillor Theresa Debono in the Chair**

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rakhia Ismail and Councillor Joe Caluori.

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

None.

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

Councillor Alice Perry for Councillor Rakhia Ismail.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

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

None.

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

None.

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

A member of the public enquired if the council was aware of any unregistered schools operating in the borough. In response, it was advised that the council was aware of one such school which had applied for registration with the Department for Education however had been refused. It was understood that the school was appealing the decision.

Following a query by a member of the public, it was advised that the committee supported the NUT campaign against the government's Education White Paper.

**138        MEMBERSHIP, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DATES OF MEETINGS (ITEM NO. B1)**

**RESOLVED:**

That the membership, terms of reference and dates of committee meetings be noted.

**139** **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (ITEM NO. B2)**

Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz introduced the recommendations as she was Chair of the Committee during the alternative provision review.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The Committee noted that the recommendations would be incorporated into a full report of the scrutiny review which would be reported to the Executive. The Executive was to respond within three to six months of receiving the report and officers would then report back to the Committee on progress made after 12 months. The Committee would be able to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations at this stage. It was also possible for members to query progress with the service or Executive Member as required.
- The Committee considered if it was reasonable to expect alternative provision pupils to achieve 95% attendance. Officers advised that this was the national benchmark for pupil attendance and it was concluded that alternative provision pupils should not be treated differently from their peers in this regard.
- Following a query from a member of the public on recommendation 4, the Committee noted that GCSEs would be moving to a numerical grading system from 2017 onwards and it was confirmed that the council should aspire for all pupils to achieve the benchmark pass grade in GCSE English and Maths.

**RESOLVED:**

That the draft recommendations be agreed.

**140** **THE IMPACT OF SEN CHANGES ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (ITEM NO. B3)**

Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services, introduced the report which evaluated the impact of SEND reforms.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- The SEND reforms introduced in 2014 were wide-ranging and changed the emphasis of support from assessment and identification to problem-solving and outcomes.
- One challenge arising from the reforms was an increase in the number of young people eligible for support. Since 2014 local authorities had been required to provide SEND support up to age 25, whereas statutory responsibility had previously ended at 19.
- The reforms had replaced Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments with Education, Health and Care Plans. The council was in the process of converting existing statements and assessments to EHCPs. This represented a practical challenge as the council was required to convert approximately 850 statements by 2018. This service had converted around 29% of statements, which was better than the national rate of progress at 15%.
- It was noted that SEND covered a broad range of additional needs, such as autism, physical disabilities, and sensory disabilities such as hearing impairment. Officers commented that one difficulty of the new system was its focus on successful outcomes in terms of employment and independent living. Whilst this was a positive approach for many young people with SEND, it was noted that this was not achievable for all young people, particularly those with chronic pain or a limited life expectancy. A discussion was had on children with life limiting conditions and the importance of access to education.
- Local area SEND inspections were carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission on a five year rolling programme. The Head of Pupil Services had

## Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 17 May 2016

acted as an inspector during the pilot phase which provided useful insight into the inspection regime.

- It was advised that the council's statutory responsibilities in regards to SEND started from birth and this had not changed from the previous regime, however previously support was provided in early years settings outside of the formal identification and assessment framework. Following the introduction of the SEND reforms the council had been engaging families in the formal processes earlier as this was beneficial within the context of EHCPs.
- The Committee suggested that the service had identified too many priorities for 2016 and suggested that these be prioritised further. Officers noted that the most significant priority was improving transitions to adulthood, whether that be into education, employment, training, or social care. It was explained that transitions would be improved through the ongoing service re-design which was expected to be completed by September.
- Engaging young people was also a key priority; as although young people were successfully participating to develop their own support plans, greater engagement was being sought at a strategic level.
- The service was working with parents to establish what they considered to be reasonable expectations of support in order to agree a baseline offering with schools.
- The Committee queried if the service had identified any learning points from implementing the SEN reforms. In response, officers highlighted the importance of consultation, providing the right services at the right time, ensuring staff across the council were informed of SEND issues and the importance of specialist staff. As a result of the reforms the service was exploring the scope of satellite provision, where pupils were taught in a specialist setting linked to a mainstream school but the provision was staffed and managed by a special school. It was noted that one such provision was operated by The Bridge Special School in partnership with Ashmount School. This model accorded with parents' wishes for provision somewhere between mainstream and special, which provided opportunities for inclusion at a manageable pace.
- Following a query on the number of new EHCPs being issued, it was advised that there had been no reduction in comparison to the number of Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments previously issued.
- A member of the public queried the number of EHCPs completed within the 20 week timeframe. It was noted that not all EHCPs were completed within this timeframe and it was thought that this was because colleagues in health and social care had not yet been able to adapt resources to the changes implemented through SEND reforms. It was advised that the previous regime was less resource intensive and required statements to be completed within 26 weeks. The average EHCP took 40 hours to complete whereas previously statements required around 24 hours work. It was confirmed that parents were kept informed throughout the EHCP process.
- Members noted parents' concerns that more specialist CAMHS support was required and emphasised the importance of supporting the mental health of young people.
- The Committee requested that a further update on progress and an action plan for implementing the service's priorities be reported to a future meeting.
- Officers noted the importance of developing pupil resilience. It was commented that previously schools had focused on providing one-to-one support from teaching assistants, however it was thought that this could perpetuate dependency and a focus on developing resilience could better prepare pupils for adulthood.

The Committee thanked officers for their attendance.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the progress outlined in the report be noted; and
- 2) That a further update on progress and an action plan for implementing the service's priorities be reported to a future meeting.

**141** **EXECUTIVE MEMBER ANNUAL PRESENTATION (ITEM NO. B4)**

The Committee noted apologies for absence from Councillor Joe Caluori and deferred the item to a future meeting.

**142** **SCRUTINY TOPICS 2016/17 (ITEM NO. B5)**

The Committee considered possible scrutiny topics for 2016/17. It was noted that the constitution required that the Committee identify one main topic for review and the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee could assign another review topic to the Committee as required. The Committee was also able to consider one-off scrutiny items throughout the year.

Following discussion, the Committee selected 'Outcomes Post-16' as its main review topic for 2016/17. The Committee commented on the need for a clear focus and for the review to be of a manageable scale. Suggested areas for scrutiny included NEETs, work experience, pathways to employment, social mobility, work with partners such as schools, businesses and the voluntary sector and if the recommendations of the Employment Commission had been implemented successfully.

Other topics proposed for scrutiny were:

- Update on Youth Crime and the Youth Offending Service;
- The impact of school funding changes;
- Further information on the educational attainment of BME pupils and white working class boys;
- The shortage of school places;
- The Prevent Strategy and youth radicalisation.

Members were asked to submit any further proposed scrutiny topics to Democratic Services in advance of the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Committee review 'Outcomes Post-16', subject to approval by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- 2) That the Committee undertake any further reviews as instructed by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee;
- 3) That a draft work plan and scrutiny initiation document be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.50 pm

Chair