

MINUTES OF MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Thursday, 4th January, 2024, 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Sue Jameson and Matt White

Attending Online: Lourdes Kever

25. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda Item 1 as shown on the agenda in respect of filming at this meeting, and Members noted the information contained therein'.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors; Abela, Adamou, Grosskopf, Lawton and Isilar-Gosling.

Cllr White attended the meeting a substitute for Cllr Abela.

27. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

It was agreed to vary the order of the agenda. Item 9 – Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report, was taken before Items 7 and 8. The Minutes reflect the order the items were considered, rather than the order set out on the published agenda.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

29. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 13 November were agreed as a correct record.

31. HARINGEY SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Panel received the Haringey Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23, as set out in the published agenda papers at pages 111 to 160, along with an accompanying sets of slides which were published as tabled papers. The annual report and presentation were introduced by David Archibald, Chair of HSCP. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families was also present for this item, along with the AD for Safeguarding and Social Care. The following arose during the discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around the confidence levels felt by the independent chair in terms of how Haringey was performing. In response, the independent chair set out that he was confident with respect of the improvements made in delivery of services and how well the Council and its partners worked in relation to safeguarding. It was commented that the Council and its partners needed to continually learn and to get better. There were a number of audits and other opportunities in this regard which would allow them to reflect on how well the Partnership worked and to improve further.
- b. The Panel commented that information sharing was often a key issue when different partners were working together and assurances were sort around how well information sharing was working. In response, Mr Archibald acknowledged that this was a key issue and that it was something that was often highlighted in case file reviews. The Partnership shared information well but that they were continuing to work on how to improve this.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about how the Partnership operated. In response, the Panel was advised that it was a partnership body that worked across borough and had three statutory partners – Police, Health and the Council. The Partnership was not externally based and all partners had to work together to achieve effective safeguarding. In response to a follow up, Mr Archibald advised that the Partnership undertook a huge amount of activity to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding in the borough. These included: Multi-agency training, including training on working together as different agencies; improved performance data collection and monitoring; and learning from the different reviews that the Partnership had to undertake.
- d. A co-opted member of the Panel raised concerns about the lack of accessibility in reports and highlighted the fact that a high proportion of parents in the borough did not speak English as first language. The co-opted member also questioned the extent to which schools had access to the Partnership and was engaged by them. In response, officers set out that it was the responsibility of the Partnership to ensure that the Annual Report was accessible and that the Partnership Executive Board would be working to ensure that it was more accessible in future. In relation to ensuring that schools were involved in decision making, the Partnership had recently recruited a former head teacher to sit on the Board and that they would also be seeking further opportunities to engage with other head teachers. Safeguarding partners met every six weeks and there was a regular newsletter that went out. Officers advised that school governors should raise any safeguarding issues to the LADO and the safeguarding leads for their respective schools. Officers advised that they would take these comments on board when preparing the next local authority quarterly briefing for school governors.

- e. The Panel queried what some of the key difficulties were that the Partnership faced in relation to multi-agency working. In response, Mr Archibald advised that whilst the three statutory partners had very different roles, their agendas in relation to safeguarding overlapped to a significant degree. The partners worked well together and there was little conflict when it came to safeguarding, any challenges in terms of working across different agencies were rapidly overcome. The Cabinet Member added that the Partnership had been going for two years and that it had made a real difference in that time. The Cabinet Member emphasised that safeguarding was everyone's business, not just the Council's and that Partners had taken seriously their roles in safeguarding. It was commented that the Board sat within the Council's structure and the Council provided most of the funding, however it was important to emphasise that this was multi-agency partnership and it had an independent chair.

RESOLVED

Noted

32. SCRUTINY OF THE 2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET & 5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/2029

The Panel received the Council's Draft Budget and 5 Year Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS) 2024-2029 proposals, relating to the Panel's remit. The Panel was asked to consider the proposals and to provide recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on these proposals. The report was introduced by Neil Sinclair, Head of Finance (People) as set out in the agenda pack at pages 7-92. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families was present for this item. The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care was also present for this item, along with the Assistant Director for Schools and Learning.

By way of introduction, the Panel was advised that the December Cabinet report set out that there was an overall budget gap of around £16.4m. This budget gap was largely due to demand pressures, particularly in Adult Social Services. Finance would be working with the Directorates between now and February to close this budget gap and to present a balanced budget to Cabinet in February. It was noted that nationally, a lot of councils were struggling to set a balanced budget and that it was a very challenging picture across the board.

It was noted that within Children's there were a number of challenges arising from the demand pressures created from more people needing those services and from the increasing costs of those services. These included the reorganisation of SEND transport. Appendix 5 of the report set out that there were new savings around the transition of young people into adulthood. This was effectively a new investment in the Adult Social Care and was reflected as a new growth proposal in that budget area, but it sat as a saving within the Children's budget. There were also around £3m of growth proposals in Children's over the next three years, which reflected additional investment in recognition of the high cost of children's social care placements and inflationary pressures within that market. The capital programme in Children's showed £64m of new capital investment, mainly in schools infrastructure which included the costs of dealing with RAAC and other maintenance challenges.

The Cabinet Member commented that the draft budget position in Children's was a C. £600k overspend, which had come down from the Q1 position. The Cabinet Member commented that the fact the service had got to a position where it was presenting an almost balanced budget was very impressive and reflected a huge improvement from previous years. The Cabinet Member set out that the growth in transition services was something that had been in discussion for a long time, and was a key development. It was anticipated that having a dedicated focus on transitioning children with SEND, rather than doing so on an ad-hoc basis would be transformative for the lives of the young people involved and would also provide cost savings to the Council. The Cabinet Member set out that a lot of the pressures faced by Children's were national pressures and were not down to the service. The increasing prevalence of private equity in the Children social care market was seen as a worrying trend and one that would inevitably extract money out of the system. The Panel was advised that a lot of the schools budget was reflected in the Dedicated Schools Grant, which was not reflected in these budget papers as it went straight to the schools themselves.

The following arose as part of the discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel welcomed the fact that last year's savings were achieved and that the overall budget position in Children's was close to being a balanced position. The Panel also commented that this was the only opportunity that it would have to scrutinise the budget and in that context it sought assurances about the extent to which further savings would be extracted from Children's services in order to meet the budget gap. In response, the Cabinet Member set out that in the past the service had not put up savings that it couldn't achieve. The Cabinet Member set out that the service knew where the hotspots were and it was around residential accommodation, which was very costly and even a small number of additional cases where secure accommodation was needed, could have a detrimental impact on the budget. The AD Safeguarding and Social Care echoed the Cabinet Member's comments, reiterating that the service only put forward savings that achieved the balance between efficiencies and safety of the children affected. The Panel was advised that the service recognised the inherent pressures within the residential placement market and that it was aggressively pursuing an insourcing model, with a proposal for a new mother and baby residential unit. The Head of Finance set out that a collaborative approach had been taken to the budget setting process and that Finance had worked closely with services. The budget included a growth budget so that additional investment was provided around demand led growth. Work to present a final balanced budget was ongoing, but it had been a challenging budget setting process in the context of comparing it to recent years.
- b. In response to a follow up, officers advised that at present, there were no additional savings proposals expected from Children's Services.
- c. The Panel sought further assurances about the possibility of further savings being made in Children's Services, given the draft budget position of a £16.4M gap. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there weren't many areas that could be cut in Children's Services, given the statutory responsibilities and the need to ensure the safety of the children involved. The Cabinet Member elaborated that the Service had recently achieved a Good Ofsted inspection rating and that the Council could not risk jeopardising this with cuts to social workers. The Cabinet Member suggested that there was no political will to make savings in youth centres. Similarly, there was no desire to make savings

- in Early Year's provision, particularly as the government provided a lot of funding for this. The Council was already engaged in a DfE led savings programme around SEND, the Safety Valve programme. It was commented that there was very little room for manoeuvre within the Children's budget and there were no obvious areas where additional savings could be made.
- d. The Panel sought assurances around RAAC and schools infrastructure and the extent to which the Government had committed to covering the costs of this. In response, the officers advised that discussions with the DfE were ongoing and that in essence, they had committed to covering the capital costs of these works, but that the Council had not received any money to date. Officers set out that the budget papers highlighted a risk that there were also revenue costs incurred by schools arising from RAAC and that the government had not agreed to cover all of these costs. Examples of these costs included; provision of temporary classrooms, additional IT costs and catering costs. Any costs incurred that were not directly related to the construction costs in repairing defective school buildings, could have an impact on the General Fund revenue budget if the government did not provide funding.
 - e. The Panel sought assurances that the allocated budget was enough to meet demands. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the budget was the budget, and that the reality was that there was no more money. Growth Funding for 2022/23 & 2023/24 allowed the service to eradicate the historical overspends that had previously existed and that this had made a big difference. In relation to a follow up in relation to non-statutory services, the Cabinet Member advised that she did not want to see any cuts to non-statutory services, but that she was unable to give any firmer assurances at this stage.
 - f. The Panel sought clarification about whether the new round of budget savings proposals would go out to consultation. In response, officers advised that the draft budget went out to consultation and the responses to it would help formulate the final budget. However, there was no scope for a further consultation process, given the need to agree a budget for February Cabinet. The Cabinet Member emphasised that all councils were facing similar challenges around their budgets and that this was a national issue.
 - g. The Panel sought clarification around the new revenue saving proposal in relation to development of a new transition service. The Panel requested more information on how this would work and why it was profiled so that £673k would be saved in the first year from a total saving of £4.5m. In response, officers advised that this was a dedicated service to provide support to young people with SEND as they transitioned in to adulthood. Officers advised that young people with a high level of care and intersectional needs attracted the highest fees and that this occurred within a broken market. The proposal would establish a programme of work to bring these young people in borough. The profiling reflected the amount of work that needed to be done across a number of different teams and the profiling reflected the number of cases that existed at a particular age and the knowledge that they would need support at key age points of 18, 21 & 25. Officers advised that bring forward the savings was not something that management could recommend to Members due to the work that needed to be done in the background and the potential negative impact on young people. Part of this related to trying to ensure that Children in Care could benefit from the high calibre of schools in the borough, and who continued to generate the highest amounts of spending (rather than being sent out of

borough). The capacity to accelerate these savings was limited by the details of the work required in the background from a range of areas, such as schools, Safety Valve, HEP. The whole system had to work together to achieve this. The Cabinet Member set out that by the time a child received an EHCP, it could often be too late to change outcomes. This saving was a recognition that spending money on young people to support them would generate savings in future from adult social care. The saving did not just relate to educational needs, it also supported their health, relationships, independent living and employment opportunities.

- h. In relation to a follow-up, Finance advised that the savings profile was based on the numbers of children that were known would transition to adulthood in the next six years and the same number of young people were used to profile the corresponding growth proposal for Adult Social Care. The savings were showed in the Children's budget and the investment was reflected in the Adults budget as growth.
- i. In light of the need to make further savings and the significant revenue costs accruing from the capital programme, the Members queried whether there were any proposals to review the capital programme. In response, the Head of Finance advised that following an extensive review of the capital programme, there were no plans at this stage to undertake any further amendments to it as part of the final budget setting process.
- j. The Panel determined that it would make a recommendation to Cabinet on these budget proposals around the fact that it did not want to see any further savings being extracted from the Children's service, particularly in light of recent successes such as the positive Ofsted inspection.

RESOLVED

That the Panel considered and provided recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Council's draft budget and 5 year MTFS 2024-2029, relating to its remit.

33. HARINGEY EDUCATION RESULTS 2023

The Panel received a report which provided an update on Haringey's educational attainment for the school year 2022/23 at all ages from Early Years through to A-Levels. The report was introduced by Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families as set out in the published agenda pack at pages 93 – 110. Jane Edwards, AD for Schools and Learning as well as James Page, Chief Executive and Haringey Education Partnership were also present for this item.

By way of introduction, the Cabinet Member advised the Panel that the report set out the good work that was done by HEP around going into schools and working with Head Teachers to improve standards. The Cabinet Member thanked James and his team, as well as Jane and her team for the incredibly positive results achieved. The Panel was advised that in almost every single area, Haringey was performing above the national average. The Cabinet Member set out that she would like to see the work on racial equity expanded into other ethnic groups so that the learning from the work

could be expanded. The Panel was advised that Haringey had largely bucked the trend, following the resumption of the inspection regime after Covid, in that it had 98% of its schools achieving either good or outstanding.

James Page advised Members that this was the best set of results for our young people that Haringey had ever achieved, with every single primary measure scoring above the national average. The KS2 results had met the London average for the first time ever. Haringey was the fourth most deprived borough in London but its results did not reflect that. The Panel was advised that at KS4 & KS5, mathematical inflation due to Covid had been reversed and so 2023 results were directly comparable to 2019. KS4 & KS5 results had improved against 2019 in absolute terms. It was contended that given Covid and all the lost learning, that this should be seen as an astonishing achievement.

The following arose in discussion of this agenda item:

- a. The Chair welcomed the report and the positive narrative that it painted about progress in educational achievement. The Chair queried how HEP had managed to achieve such a positive set of results. In response, officers advised that HEP was able to glue Haringey's schools together and form a collaborative network of schools. As a result, the schools were open to sharing and open to being challenged critically. The schools were also incredible aspirational for their pupils and they worked hard to remove barriers for challenged or challenging pupils. Officers emphasised the importance of the collaborative and collegiate work and the fact that the school leadership was also very strong, both in terms of governors and head teachers. Mr Page emphasised the fact that the support and the challenge was there and that the schools accepted being challenged. It was suggested that crucial to this was having the trust of Head Teachers, so that they were prepared to be honest about areas of concern. It was also suggested that having a real focus on practice was also important, to improve learning in the classrooms.
- b. The Panel welcomed the report and the level of educational attainment that had been achieved in Haringey. A Panel member emphasised the role that schools played in socialising children as they grew up and questioned whether there were any data that showed how well schools did in creating well rounded human beings. In response, the Cabinet Member commented that the journey began with Early Years which gave huge support to children in terms of their socialisation. The Panel was advised that Early Years provision in Haringey had achieved 98-99% of providers achieving a rating of either outstanding or good across the entire sector. Mr Page advised that the nearest thing that they had to outcomes data on this was the personal development judgment by Ofsted as part of their framework. It was acknowledged by Ofsted that it couldn't measure outcomes due to the length of time needed to measure something like this in children, but it did measure how well the schools were doing to support personal development. The Panel was advised that every school had achieved a good or outstanding rating on this metric. Mr Page also emphasised the key role that Pendarren played in personal development for some of Haringey's young people.
- c. The Panel enquired whether there was any way that the authority could capitalise on the success it had in this area, particularly given the pressure on budgets. In response, Mr Page advised that HEP was a not-for-profit and was

funded by the Council, but that it was bringing money in to subsidise the work it did with schools and to not raise prices as well as offer additional support. Officers advised that grant funding had been under significant pressure and that HEP were able to absorb funding pressures through its trading arm. It was also noted that providing support to schools helped mitigate the risk of failing schools being made academies and the local authority having to absorb any deficits.

- d. The Panel raised concerns about schools' ability to recruit and retain school governors given the workloads involved, and financial pressures schools were under. A co-opted member of the Panel suggested that there was a risk of schools having to close because of the financial pressures they faced. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that attracting school governors was difficult for the reasons outlined, but that HEP was providing support to school governors. The Cabinet Member suggested that she would like to see partners collectively invigorate school governors and making it more attractive for people to take it on. Mr Page advised that that National Governors Association acknowledged that the situation was worsening and that representation and diversity had regressed among school governing bodies. It was suggested that it was important to ensure that governing bodies felt connected to each other and that governors had the support and ability to ask questions from other governors. It was important that networks be connected up and that aspiring leaders within schools were encouraged to become school governors.

RESOLVED

That the update was noted.

34. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

That the work programme was noted.

35. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

36. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

20th February 2024

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date