

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Monday, 9th September, 2024, 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Anna Abela, Gina Adamou, Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Grosskopf, Anna Lawton, George Dunstall and Bernard

ALSO ATTENDING:

68. 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'.

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

70. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

71. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on Monday 29th July were agreed as a correct record.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

73. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

74. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

The panel received a short verbal update from Cllr Zena Brabazon, the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families on recent developments within her

portfolio. This was followed by a question and answer session with the Cabinet Member. The key developments within her portfolio were summarised as:

- The Cabinet Member advised that in relation to school exam results:
 - A-Level results were at the national average, with good outcomes for young people. This extended to both A-Levels and more vocational courses like BTECs.
 - GCSE results were also at the national average, again good outcomes were achieved.
 - Primary school SATs were at the national average. Early years provision and phonics scores were above the national average.
- The Cabinet Member advised that Haringey had featured in a Sky news article in relation to the alternative provision it provided for children excluded from school for behavioural issues. Following this clip, the Council had been contacted by a number of authorities wanting to know how Haringey had achieved this. It was noted that the success of this scheme was down to the success of the HLP, the leadership of the unit, and the decision to insource the service providing an opportunity to do things differently.
- It was noted that two more schools had achieved an outstanding Ofsted rating; St Aidan's and Bounds Green. 98% of Haringey schools were rated either 'good' or 'outstanding'.

The following arose as part of the Q&A part of this agenda item:

- a. The Panel sought clarification about whether organisations such as fire cadets reported their additional qualifications through to the Council. In response, officers advised that there was no formal reporting mechanism for third sector organisations to report this to the Council. Any arrangements that were put in place would be bespoke and were outside of the local authority statutory framework for things like GCSE results.
- b. The Panel sought clarification about the extent to which the Haringey Learning Partnership (HLP) model differed from the model used by other boroughs. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that the model in Haringey was very different and that it was a high quality, inclusive educational based provision that emphasised learning, rather than disciplining children. The Director added that she had not done any benchmarking to know whether the model had been replicated elsewhere, but stressed that the model was right for Haringey. The Director emphasised the fact that when she started in 2017, no one wanted to send their child to the Octagon and no educational professional wanted to send a pupil there either. The DCS set out that the service put in place a vision for a pupil referral unit that was best in class and one that supported every pupil. It was added that they were very fortunate to have such an experienced head teacher running the unit.
- c. The Panel questioned whether there was exam data on outcomes for home schooled children and looked after children. In response, officers advised that they didn't have detailed information on this yet but that in relation to home schooled children, the Council had been successful in finding them somewhere to sit their exams (the HLP). In relation to looked after children, they only had KS2 and phonics information, the rest would not be validated until later in the year. Officers stressed that sometimes these cohorts could be small numbers and that benchmarking data was not always useful given small sample sizes.

- d. The Cabinet Member offered to bring a report on the virtual school to a future meeting, if the Panel wanted.
- e. The Panel sought clarification about what support there was in place for children who did not get the exam results they had hoped for. In response, officers advised that the local authority used to have a statutory duty to provide information advice and guidance on results day, but that the education providers did this now. Officers provided assurances that each school had someone on site during results day to assist pupils who didn't get into their first choice higher education provider.
- f. The Chair questioned the take-up levels in relation to early years provision and whether there was an estimate of the amount of additional resources required to meet the extra need. In response, the Cabinet Member outlined that provision had been expanded so that two-year olds received 15 hours free provision from April 2014, rising to 30 hours in April 2025 and that from September 2024, infants under nine-months also received 15 hours free provision. As a result, it was explained that take-up had increased in the borough and that there had been a concerted effort to reach out to harder-to-reach groups to advertise the existence of this provision. Officers agreed to provide a written response on the take up levels. **(Action: Jane Edwards)**.
- g. The Cabinet Member advised that the authority had received around an extra £10m in the early years grant as part of the DSG provided by the Department for Education. Funding for Early years had to remain within the budget for early years which was around £31m. This funded the entire early year provision, including staffing costs. It was noted that like all educational funding, it was based on 'bums on seats' and for that reason it was important that take-up levels were maximised.
- h. The Chair sought assurances about what was being done to tackle child poverty, in response the Cabinet Member advised that the government had expanded the Household Support Grant for another 6 months, the primary output of this was to provide free school meals during the holidays. The provision of free school meals in primary settings had been secured for another 12 months, this was a provision for all children to have one free school meal a day. The Cabinet Member added that it was incumbent upon the local authority to ensure that everyone who was eligible for free school meals claimed them as this drew down additional funding through the Pupil Premium. In relation to a follow-up question, the Cabinet Member advised that schools routinely provided food banks, clothing banks, toy banks and other services of this type.
- i. The Panel sought assurances about what the Council was doing to reach hard to reach groups around free school meal take-ups or parents from communities who may have an aversion to taking up the free school meals for cultural reasons. In response, the Cabinet Member commented that she wasn't sure that reason some people didn't take up their entitlement was necessarily down to cultural issues, but that the Council had been active in getting comms messages in different languages and had also centralised the process of communicating with parents when they applied to schools.
- j. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member advised that the government expanded entitlement and that free school meals were available to families with no recourse to public funds.
- k. The Chair sought assurances about how the Council maintained accountability in schools. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that there were a

number of different types of schools in the borough and that each had a different set of rules. In relation to maintained schools, these were self-governing and ultimately accountable to a board of governors, however the authority had a range of powers it could use to intervene if the school was failing. The authority did not have the same powers in relation to academies, which were accountable to the regional academy schools commissioner and the Secretary of State. Similarly, church schools and catholic schools had their own accountability structures.

RESOLVED

That the portfolio update and the responses to the questions put to the Cabinet Member were noted.

75. HARINGEY LOCAL AREA SEND CQC/OFSTED INSPECTION OUTCOME

The Panel received a report which outlined the progress made in delivering the Haringey SEND and Alternative Provision Local Plan during the period April-July 2024. The Panel received an update on the outcome of the CQC/Ofsted SEND inspection at its last meeting. This report was a further update to the Panel, and provided an opportunity to ask questions. It was noted that Haringey Ofsted/CQC SEND inspection took place in January 2024 and resulted in Haringey achieving the highest grade for SEND service. The report was introduced by Mary Jarrett, Head of Integrated SEND as set out in the agenda pack at pages 7-32. The Director of Children's Services was also present for this item, along with the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel sought clarification about the liquid logic system and what the costs were of procuring it. In response officers advised that Liquid Logic was a recording system, which provided a more modern way of recording cases and was an upgrade from the previous Mosaic system. The system was used by both Children and Adults. Officers advised that the cost would be set out in the Cabinet report. Philip agreed to circulate the Cabinet report to the Panel. **(Action: Philip).**
- b. The Panel asked how children with speech and language needs were identified and where they get referred to. In response, officers advised that speech and language needs tended to get picked up either through early years settings, through the two-year health visitor check or parents would refer their child themselves. The speech and language service screened any referrals and offered pathways of support to that child. The service also offered outreach speech and language therapy at family hubs.
- c. A co-opted member of the panel welcomed the progress that had been made around SEND provision over the last two years and advised that she had previously spoken to the Panel about her concerns in this area. It was commented that whilst there had been improvements in a number of areas, some parents may feel that their experience was not reflected in the outcome of the inspection report. It was commented that the key factor in achieving this improvement was the concerted effort made to co-production and parent/family involvement. The co-opted member praised the role of SEND stakeholder groups and the Haringey Education Partnership in helping to achieve an improvement.

- d. In response to a question, officers advised that under priority 5 of the SEND strategy, there was a supported internship programme. Following on from the safety Valve programme, it was hoped that the number of internships could be raised to 97. It was acknowledged that there was a lot of work to do get there and that a key facet of the offer had to be that there was a job available at the end of it.
- e. In response to a question about children who suffered from emotionally based school avoidance, officers responded that there was a conference held in June on this topic and it was acknowledged that the Council's offer for supported internships had to be different for those children.

RESOLVED

That the report was noted.

76. UPDATE ON THE KEY ISSUES RELATING TO HOUSING AND CHILDREN

Clerk's note – 20:24: Cllr Adamou let the meeting at this point

The Panel received a report that set out the overarching picture of Housing Demand and Homelessness in Haringey, as well as providing an overview of the key issues affecting children and families in temporary accommodation and social housing. The report was introduced by Sara Sutton, AD Partnerships and Communities and Darren Fairclough, Head of Lettings and Rehousing as set out in the agenda pack at pages 33-66. Cllr Brabazon was also present for this agenda item. The following arose during the discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel sought assurances around bespoke adaptations for families with SEND and commented that they had seen a recent example and were very impressed. It was commented that there needed to be more of these. In response, officers acknowledged that the adaptations were transformational and assurances were provided that there was a pipeline in place.
- b. In response to a question about how to rehouse families in an emergency, such as a fire, officers advised that there were emerging planning processes in place along with an out-of-hours rota of staff who would be responsible for responding in an emergency situation.
- c. In relation to specialist adaptations in private rented sector accommodation, officers advised that funding was available through the Disability Support Grant in the first instance, however landlords may not wish to have adaptations carried out in their property. Depending on the unsuitability of the accommodation, it may be necessary to find alternative accommodation and the Council may have a homelessness duty to that person and need to prioritise them on the housing register.
- d. In response to a question, officers advised that there was no statutory limit to the amount of time that somebody could be placed in Temporary Accommodation. The only limits were around being placed in bed and breakfast type accommodation, which was six weeks.
- e. The Panel sought assurances around the prioritisation process for families with children with SEND and keeping them in the borough. In response, officers advised that under Priority four there was specific criteria for SEND children and a placement being detrimental to their wellbeing, however the paucity of

- large family homes meant that some families were sent out of borough. There was a transfer list which identified families living in unsuitable accommodation, however this had around 300 families on it.
- f. The Chair queried how the process of finding families with a disability suitable housing could be made quicker. In response, officers advised that ultimately there was no easy answer due to the fact that demand far outstripped supply. In relation to new-build accommodation, it was noted that things like the Neighbourhood Moves scheme offered a degree of flexibility for priority need.
 - g. In response to a number of questions around nightly paid and bed & breakfast accommodation, officers clarified that the two were slightly different. The nightly paid accommodation was self-contained units, whilst B&Bs were more emergency provision and done for shorter periods. Officers advised that they did block book accommodation in advance and that Travelodges were used as a last resort. An example was given where someone may require short term accommodation as a stop gap whilst they wait for an AST in the private sector. Officers advised that food payments were provided to those staying in a Travelodge.
 - h. Officers advised that a range of mitigations were in place to try and reduce the amount of short-term accommodation but that it was hard to say what the future direction of travel might be given there was an 8% increase in demand expected this year and up to 15% next year. It was commented that future legislative changes such as a ban on no-fault evictions would conceivably have a positive impact on this.
 - i. The Panel queried the membership of the Housing sub-group and the extent to which parents and families were represented on there, particularly in terms of families with children who had SEND. In response, officers advised that this was an officer group with representation from key external partners when required. It was emphasised that it was not a policy development group, and that it reported into the Safeguarding Children's Board and Safeguarding Adults Board. The co-opted member of the Panel agreed to pick up this point with officers outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the report was noted.

77. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel noted a verbal update on the process and timescales for developing the work programme. The Panel noted that outcomes from the Scrutiny Café on 20th September would feed into the work programme development process.

78. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

79. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 19th November 2024
- 13th January 2025

- 13th February 2025

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date