

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL  
THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2016**

Councillors: Kirsten Hearn (Chair), Mark Blake, Clive Carter, Toni Mallett, Liz Morris, Reg Rice and Charles Wright.

**CYPS32. 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.

**CYPS33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Taye and Ms Denny.

**CYPS34. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**CYPS35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mallett stated that she was a governor of Broadwaters and Chair of its Community Services Committee. Councillor Wright stated that he was Chair of Governors at Highgate Wood School.

**CYPS36. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS**

None.

**CYPS37. MINUTES**

**AGREED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of 1 February 2016 be approved.

**CYPS38. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Cabinet Member reported on issues arising from her portfolio. Amongst the issues raised were the following:

- The number of Looked After Children (LAC) was currently 410, which was the lowest that it had been for some considerable time. It had previously been over 600. The number of permanent staff had been increased and adoptions speeded up. The reduced numbers reflected the fact that better systems were now in place.
- All secondary schools, including special schools, were now rated as being either good or outstanding. For primary schools, this figure had increased to 92%.
- She had made a number of visits to front line areas of work, including safeguarding, early help and fostering and adoption. She had been particularly impressed by the quality of foster parents that she had met.

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- The most pressing challenge was the £1.7 million overspend. The service expected to spend around £55 million this year, which was down from the £60.3 million that it had been last year. Notwithstanding the overspend, this still represented a huge saving. The budget for the service had been £80 million four years ago and good performance was still being achieved despite the large reduction in budget.
- More placements with “home grown” foster carers needed to be found. All local authorities were finding this a challenge.
- It was necessary to reduce the number of social workers who were agency staff. The middle management structure was now in place so progress was being made.
- There was a need to plan and develop the 30 hours of free childcare for three year olds that was to be made available to working parents and this was a significant challenge for the Council.
- There were to be changes in the funding for schools, with the introduction of a new funding formula that was likely to move funding away from London to other parts of the country. At the same time, the Pupil Premium was also being reduced due to changes in how it was calculated.

In answer to a question, the Cabinet Member stated that a location for a Children's Centre in the west of the borough had not yet been identified. A commissioning plan was being drawn up and work taking place with providers. In the meantime, Highgate Family Centre provided some services, as did Stonecroft and Northbank. It was hoped that the commissioning arrangements for the Centre in the west of the borough would be put in place as soon as possible.

In the remaining Children's Centres, staffing had now been restructured, with some being assimilated and others taking voluntary redundancy. The services offered had changed to reflect the reduced resources and work had taken place with partners to address this. The changes would be communicated to residents shortly but most parents were probably already aware of the changes.

She stated that the 30 hours of free childcare for three year olds could not be implemented overnight and was proving a challenge for all local authorities. Progress had been made more difficult by the fact that the government had not yet stated how much funding that there would be for the scheme so providers who might be interested did not know how much they were likely to be paid. Providers would also need additional space to accommodate the demand and many were not currently in a position to do this. Discussions were taking place with providers, including schools, on how the new scheme could be progressed. It was not due to be implemented until September 2017 but some local authorities were implementing it from 2016 and it would be interesting to see what could be learnt from them. In order to benefit from the scheme, it was necessary for there to be two parents in work. It was likely that there were people not in work who needed the childcare even more but it was not possible to provide the same free service for them.

The savings that had been made to the budget in the past year had come from a number of areas, including looked after children placements, staffing, special

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educational needs, youth services and youth offending. Despite the need to reduce the budget, the demand for services remained and the service was under an obligation to provide many of these. In terms of future budgeting, it was necessary to estimate how many children might come into care in the future, as well as those who might no longer need support. Thresholds were also being looked at. However, not every eventuality could be planned for and it was also very difficult to anticipate accurately the level of demand. The placement of every single looked after child had been examined to see if savings could be made but this was not always possible. There was now a far better understanding of how the service spent its money though.

There were now more consistent thresholds for intervention. The work force had also been addressed and there were less interim and agency staff. These were mainly front line social workers rather than senior managers. Despite the considerable efforts that were being made to save money, there was an overriding responsibility on the service to ensure that children were safe. In addition, it had also been necessary to spend money to ensure that the service was assessed as adequate by OFSTED. Had this not been achieved, the Council could have lost control of relevant services and there would have also been serious financial implications. There was no wish to run the service at a deficit but circumstances were very difficult. She felt that the position of the service was appreciated corporately. Since the budget had been set, a considerable amount of detailed work had been undertaken to look at where money was spent and case loads, which would help to prepare the service well for the future.

In answer to a question, she stated that a lot of work was undertaken in schools to help prevent children and young people becoming involved with gangs. The Metropolitan Police had withdrawn Police officers from schools two years ago but Haringey had retained its officers, although they were now shared between two or more schools. They could play a role in helping to prevent young people becoming involved with gangs. In addition, the Council had youth practitioners. Work was also undertaken to tackle radicalisation in schools.

The Local Safeguarding Childrens Board (LSCB) had a training programme for people working with gangs. There was also an Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU). Youth practitioners worked with family support workers in Early Help where there was an indication of gang involvement. When children went missing from care, consideration was also given to any involvement with gangs. There was a need to ensure that information was shared better with the IGU and progress was being made with this. It was noted that young people who had been identified as being associated with gangs came off the list if there had been no offences for three years.

In terms of safety in parks, most young children who went to parks were accompanied by parents, carers or grandparents. Health and safety of play equipment was now much improved. Greater use of parks could help to ensure that they were safe. Police Safer Neighbourhood teams patrolled parks regularly and Friends groups were able to raise any issues of concern. It was noted that the Environment and Community Safety was undertaking a review on this issue and the Council's Licensing team had undertaken work with off licenses to address the issue of drinking in public open spaces.

In respect of the lessons that had been learnt from the ABCD case, the Cabinet Member reported that the correct formalities had not been followed by social workers and this had been taken on board. The issues had been mainly concerned with the

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following of due process and recording of actions. Since the case, a completely new protocol had been agreed by the LSCB.

A programme of holiday play schemes for children and young people was due to be circulated to schools shortly. The Council did not provide any of the schemes itself and commissioned only a limited number. In particular, it no longer provided the longer summer schemes.

In terms of Early Help, it was noted that the team had started work in October. It was agreed that a report would be made to the Panel in the summer on progress, based on information from data from the first six months of work.

She reported that the Council's contract with iMPower had finished on 30 October. It had been originally scheduled to end in March 2017 and estimated to cost £2 million. In August 2014, it was decided that the contract needed to be amended and, as a result of this, all of the work that it had been agreed would be done had been completed earlier. The total cost of the contract had been £1.53 million. The contract had helped the Council through a difficult period, which had included the inspection by OFSTED. They had assisted the Council in devising plans, which had since been taken forward. New staff had been brought in and, whilst iMPower's input had been felt to be very useful, it was considered that they were no longer needed. As part of their work, they had helped to identify potential areas for savings.

In respect of recruitment and retention of social workers, there were 211 established posts in the service. 60 of these were vacant, with 58 filled by agency staff, representing 28% of the workforce. There was ongoing recruitment of social workers and 47 staff had been taken on permanently since last April. 12 were currently undergoing pre-employment checks. There was now a specific recruitment and retention package for social workers, which was proving to be effective. The appointment of permanent managers had helped with this as staff now knew who they were likely to be working for. Some agency staff had also been persuaded to become permanent. Over £1.1 million had so far been saved by reducing the number of agency staff.

In answer to a question regarding academies, she stated that the main way in which the Council could influence them was by building good working relationships with them. The Council retained some direct powers, including responsibility for special educational needs children, but these were relatively few for academies that were working well. If schools were not working well, there were some formal powers to help bring about improvements. The government wished all schools to become academies and would take action to convert failing schools, which could be done without consulting parents. The Council would rather that local schools who had chosen to become academies provided support to other schools facing challenge rather than them being taken over by external sponsors. Schools and governing bodies had been briefed on the options open to them. It was not possible for the Council to act as a sponsor.

In respect of secondary school admissions, 77% of applicants for places had received their first choice whilst 93% had received one of their three choices. There were some boroughs where higher rates had been achieved but these had been where there were more free schools and where there were a lot of empty school places. The new Harris Academy had this year for the first time taken significant number of pupils. She

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felt that there was now a good balance between the number of applications and places in the borough. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide figures to the Panel for the number of pupils that there were within the Harris Academy. All of the school years were not yet full. In respect of the University Technical College (UTC), it was noted that they had recently notified the DfE that they would no longer act as a UTC. They were not taking any new pupils from September and it was not fully clear at the moment what would happen to the pupils that were already there. The indications were that it would act as a 6<sup>th</sup> form and that it would no longer take pupils from age 14. The UTC had not been successful but others had also not been successful.

### **AGREED:**

1. That a report be made to the Panel in the summer outlining the progress that had been made to date by the Early Help service, based on performance data from the first 6 months of operation; and
2. That figures be provided for the Panel on the number of pupils that there currently were within the Harris Academy.

### **CYPS39. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADOPTION AND PERMANENCY**

Dominic Porter-Moore, the Head of Service, Children in Care and Placements, reported that the Munby judgement continued to impact on placement orders and adoption plans. It was now very difficult to get a Placement Order. Special Guardianship Orders were now being made increasingly on younger children than was originally envisaged. There were now more adopters than children requiring adoption. Specific work was being undertaken by the Council to persuade adopters to consider older children and those who were harder to place. Adoptions were also taking longer to go through Court as birth parents were increasingly being allowed to challenge orders. One positive development was that the government had now provided additional funding for post adoption therapeutic support.

It was noted that the Coram Adoption charity had undertaken an adoption diagnostic on Haringey in August 2015, which had identified a mixed picture. It highlighted some significant recent improvements in the number of children adopted but also identified areas for development. Avoidable delay was not found to be a prominent feature. However, work to respond to the findings had been overtaken by the regionalisation agenda.

Mr Porter-Moore reported that the Council's contract with NRS to improve the fostering process had not been as successful as anticipated. It had been negotiated in 2013/14 and had been found to be poorly constructed, with no effective oversight or clear targets. They had focussed attention primarily on the adoption of babies and young children. Disappointing outcomes had been delivered, which were very similar to those that had previously been achieved by the in-house team. Various options were being considered in response to this, including renewing the contract, re-tendering or setting up an in-house team.

He stated that the government was keen to promote the development of regional adoption agencies, who would undertake recruitment, matching and support functions. It was as yet not fully clear what the impact on Haringey would be but there was a risk of redundancies. However, fostering would no longer be inhibited by borough

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boundaries and it might also assist in increasing the range of therapeutic options available by freeing up resources. It was nevertheless possible that the anticipated improvements might not materialise. Information sharing protocols were already well established with other local authorities and adopters.

In terms of how the voice of the child was heard, software had now been developed to allow children to pass on their views via a Smartphone or a laptop. In addition, views were also received from Aspire, the Complaints and Representation Service and Guardians.

In answer to a question, Mr Porter-Moore stated that relationships between social workers and children had been improved by there being a larger base of permanent social workers. In the past, there had more frequently been changes of social worker which could prevent a good relationship being developed. Most foster carers were from black and ethnic minority communities and there had been success in finding ones from a wide range of communities. Work to develop stronger relationships with Moslem communities was being undertaken as the majority of unaccompanied children came from Moslem countries.

There was no formal monitoring of the success of adoptions but adopters often did not wish to have further involvement with the local authority. Adopters could nevertheless request further support if they felt that they could benefit from it. Research had shown that approximately 3 out of 100 adoptions were disrupted. Mr Porter-Moore agreed to provide the Panel with data on the number of disruptions that there had been involving Haringey children in the last five years.

In answer to a question, he stated that Special Guardianship Orders were intended for older children than many of those that were currently subject to them. They could work very well as they enabled children to remain within the family but there had been an increase in cases where the Council was forced to intervene.

He reported that there was a wide range of adopters, including same sex couples. However, there were currently no adopters with disabilities although this would not prevent them being considered.

In answer to a question, he reported that it was normally the Courts who directed birth parents to give up their children. Although they were encouraged to seek support, they were very unlikely to approach the local authority for this. Regionalisation could assist with this as it would be a different body to the one that had sought the order from the Court. There were currently 6 cases in Haringey where children were being considered for adoption and their birth parents had previously had other children removed from their care. If the new child came in quick succession after the previous child, the Court could decide to remove it. If there was a gap, it was not automatic and the local authority would have to provide a case.

### **AGREED:**

That the Head of Service, Children in Care and Placements be requested to provide the Panel with data on the number of adoptions of Haringey children that had been disrupted in the past five years.

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**CYPS40. PANEL PROJECT ON YOUTH TRANSITION - FINDINGS PART TWO,  
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel commented that the current issues in respect of Tottenham UTC had strengthened the need for the Council to take a lead in respect of the development of post 16 options. The Director of Children's Services commented that the Council was trying to provide leadership by looking at how it could broker relationships. In particular, consideration was being given to developing collaboration between the College of North East London, Haringey Sixth Form Centre and Highgate School. In terms of the UTC, the model was flawed but was not one designed by the local authority. If children were happy at their school, they were unlikely to want to change at the age of 14. However, the UTC building could provide an opportunity to develop provision in Tottenham.

He stated that it was important that the area was promoted in a positive way. Mentors could play an important role in developing ambitions and expectations which, for some young people from Tottenham, could be low. The Post 16 offer had to be good and encourage ambition. In terms of vocational options, these needed to fulfil the needs of employers. There was also work to be done to ensure that more young people left school with GCSE English and Maths.

**AGREED:**

1. That a specific target be set for narrowing the gap in the percentage of young people entering the top or Russell Group universities between the borough's two parliamentary constituencies;
2. That a further report be submitted to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel on progress with the development of post 16 provision within the borough in autumn 2016;
3. That the Panel expresses its support to the proposals:
  - a. to commission a detailed survey on the perceptions of young people on the options open to them; and
  - b. to arrange a Haringey wide careers event, subject to this being suitably publicised and located in an accessible venue in order to ensure a good level of attendance.
4. That work be undertaken to develop a means of monitoring the attainment of young people that is based on residence in the borough rather than attendance at in-borough post 16 provision;
5. That further work be undertaken to develop effective monitoring of progress in respect of the take up and success rate of apprenticeships and that performance in respect of these be given a higher priority as a key Corporate Plan performance indicator;
6. That a suitably ambitious target for the increase in the number of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds by 2018 be set, with consideration given to this being to reach the same number of take-ups that was achieved in 2010-11.

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7. That the Council take a lead role in developing a strategic borough wide plan for young people to develop and pursue their career aspirations that focuses on improving the range of options and addresses the areas where demand for labour is high and training provision is limited locally.
8. That measures be taken to provide greater challenge to schools on their performance in respect of the number of NEETs and not knowns originating from them where data shows performance falling below expectations.
9. That the proposal to introduce a kite mark for good quality independent advice and guidance on careers be supported.
10. That, in respect of their role as corporate parents, specific guidance be provided for all Members on how independent careers advice should be provided for looked after children.

**CYPS41. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**AGREED:**

That the work plan for the Panel be noted.

**Clr Kirsten Hearn  
Chair**