

MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT:

Councillors: Erdal Dogan (Chair), Dana Carlin, Julie Davies, Josh Dixon, Tammy Palmer

Co-opted Members: Mark Chapman and Luci Davin (Parent Governor representatives) and Lourdes Keever (Church representative)

44. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to agenda item 1 regarding filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chiriyankandath and Hakata and Yvonne Denny (church representative).

46. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

48. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

49. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meetings of 2 and 11 March 2020 (joint meeting with the Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel) be approved.

50. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - COMMUNITIES AND EQUALITIES

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Equalities, Councillor Mark Blake, outlined key developments within the areas of his portfolio that came within the terms of reference of the Panel:

- In respect of youth justice, there had been recent improvements in performance. The service was due to be externally inspected soon by HMIC and the progress that had been made meant that they would be well prepared;
- Specific work had taken place on the issue of serious youth violence and disproportionality amongst black and minority ethnic (BAME) young people. This was being undertaken in partnership with Islington Council and assisted by City University. This had been set up in recognition that this was an issue in the area that required attention and to improve practice. Recommendations had been considered at the last Youth at Risk Executive Board meeting. The findings would be shared with the Youth Justice Board, who had also funded the work;
- Work was taking place to develop further the proposals for a youth hub in Wood Green;
- Two new teams had been created to slot into the new Youth Service model. The Contextual Safeguarding Team had been set up to work with young people whose needs currently came below thresholds for intervention but where there were emerging concerns. The Prevention Team would work with young people who had been given out of court disposals to ensure that they did not get caught up in the youth justice system again;
- Core outcomes had been attached to the Youth Service which were aligned to the Borough Plan. These included reducing exploitation, keeping children in education and improving behaviour and attitude in schools;
- Support had been provided to 40 families through food banks during the lockdown;
- Despite concerns regarding Covid transmission, summer programme activities had been well attended and the feedback on them had been good;
- He had visited Bruce Grove Youth Hub, which had been successfully reopened. Consideration was being given to broadening the range of activities that were available to including web design and animation and additional IT equipment had been obtained for this purpose. Good relationships had been established with local Police and they had spoken to young people about careers in the Police.

In answer to a question, Eveleen Riordan, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, reported that Police officers had attended meetings with Headteachers and highlighted areas of the borough that were crime hotspots. Action was also being taken through place based work. This involved staff attending hot spots with the aim of diffusing any flare ups of trouble. Group work was also planned in Wood Green schools on how to stay safe. The Cabinet Member commented that he was anxious not to see a return to previous robbery levels within the borough and was keeping a close eye on developments.

The Panel noted that funding had obtained from the Department for Education (DfE) to place social workers in 7 schools. They would be able to assist with a range of issues, including anxiety. The aim was to enable an early and sensitive response. In addition,

young people could also access the Kooth app through a project funded by Haringey CCG.

It was noted that, in response to the current pandemic, services had needed to adapt their approach. A youth justice podcast was being piloted. In addition, views were being obtained from young people on how they were being supported. Interviews and recruitment were still taking place. A recent assessment for newly qualified social workers had been assisted by four young people.

A Panel Member commented that it could be difficult for young people to move around the borough due to “post code” issues. The Cabinet Member stated that he had emphasised the need for a Wood Green youth hub for young people. Although progress was being made, it had not progressed as fast as he had wished. It was noted that an interim and a permanent venue were being sought. Sufficient space would be required to enable a broad range of activities to take place. A short list of two sites had been identified for the interim venue.

Ann Graham, Director of Children and Young People’s Services, stated that she was pleased that funding had been obtained for the social workers in schools initiative and would be happy to provide a report on progress with the scheme to a future meeting. In answer to a question, she stated that it was only currently operating in secondary schools. She would welcome extending it to primary schools should suitable funding become available.

AGREED:

That a report on progress with the social worker in schools initiative be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

51. RECOVERY PLAN FOR EDUCATION TO CATCH UP ON MISSED SCHOOLING AND TARGETED ACTION FOR DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Eveleen Riordan, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, reported on plans to enable children and young people to catch up with schooling that had been missed during the lockdown. The experience of children and young people had been variable and there had been a significant negative impact on those from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. In particular, some children and young people had struggled to use on-line learning resources due to lack of access to IT. There had been a Department for Education (DfE) scheme to provide laptops to those who needed them but this had been slow to get off the ground. In addition, most schools were not set up to deliver learning virtually, although some had excelled. There was particular concern regarding those young people who were approaching public exams.

It was not possible as yet to determine what the full impact of the lockdown had been on learning. Teachers would be spending the autumn term assessing what progress children had made, what catch up work was required and how best to fill any gaps.

The Council and Haringey Education Partnership (HEP) had participated in the Lost Learning project alongside Enfield, Camden, Islington, Hackney and Barnet to explore in detail the impact of the lockdown on learning. A broadly similar picture had emerged

across all of the boroughs. National research had indicated that children had, on average, lost three months of schooling but this was more for BAME children as well as boys.

The Council and Haringey Education Partnership (HEP) were providing support for schools in providing continuing and blended learning, as well as future proofing against any future lockdowns. Examples of good practice were being shared. The Council had also been collecting and distributing laptops from the DfE for children who had social workers. HEP were working with schools to develop remote learning further in schools. Ofsted would be focusing on this with non-graded 'visits' in the autumn and would resume normal inspections from January 2021.

The Council's BAME achievement group had developed tools and support for schools to tackle the gaps in attainment and outcomes. The Council and HEP would be jointly hosting another conference, checking on delivering against the eight commitments in their pledge, aiming to complete a BAME review in every HEP supported school this year and asking schools to identify and address the impact on BAME communities.

Lockdown had impacted on the learning of all children and young people across all settings. There were wide variations in how families and schools had been able to respond to the lockdown and support children with online and other learning resources. There had also been variations between localities and within individual schools. Teachers would be using the coming term to develop a greater understanding of the impact and this would help to shape the recovery curriculum. There would be an impact on national testing in 2021 but schools would work with young people to minimise this.

In answer to a question regarding the Catch Up Premium funding for schools and how this was being used, Ms Riordan agreed to provide an update to the Panel outside of the meeting.

Panel Members commented that schools and children were finding the current circumstances very challenging, particularly the regular need for learning to take place outside of school. Ms Riordan stated that schools were looking to equip children and young people to learn effectively from home when required. Blended learning was being widely used and the good practice of some schools, such as Mulberry, was being widely shared. It was important that there was consistency in the provision of high quality remote learning and action was being taken to ensure that all schools were providing this. The provision of laptops by the DfE had been a good idea, but had taken time to roll out. Measures were in place to provide assistance if laptops malfunctioned, with schools providing help in the first instance. The gaps in learning varied considerably with some being very small and other instances where there had been virtually no learning at all undertaken during lockdown. Schools would consider what additional support might be needed and this could possibly include booster classes if necessary.

In reference to safeguarding referrals, Ms Graham reported that these had dropped initially. This was because children had been less visible as they were not at school. Additional measures had been taken to address this. These included action to ensure that children remained the responsibility of the local area and were not transferred to a new area when they were deplaned from a child protection plan. She was happy to

report further to the Panel on how safeguarding had been maintained. Referrals were still coming through and were expected to increase sharply. Additional capacity had been put in where required and action taken to ensure that there were stable workloads. Although the Council had received some additional funding, this was not sufficient and had not been ring fenced. A note was being kept on the additional spending that had been required for use in discussions with the government.

AGREED:

1. That the findings of the Lost Learning project be shared with the Panel;
2. That further information be provided to the Panel on how the Catch Up premium funding for schools is being used; and
3. That a report be made to a future meeting of the Panel on how safeguarding of vulnerable children has been maintained during the pandemic and lockdown.

52. MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOLS ESTATE

Gloria Ighodaro, Head of Estate Management, reported on work to maintain the maintenance of the schools that the Council was responsible for. There were two elements to this:

- Planned works, arising from condition surveys and the need for statutory compliance; and
- Unplanned works that were required to ensure that schools remained safe and operational.

Historically, £1 million per year had been allocated for maintenance works but this had been increased to £6.6 million for this year and there was likely to be another £5 million required for the year after. There was a lot of outstanding work that needed to be dealt with and most schools had had works done. A significant number of school buildings within the borough were Victorian and therefore had high maintenance requirements.

Not all schools were aware of their responsibility to undertake statutory compliance tests. All schools received devolved funding for minor repairs and maintenance. A Schools Premises Management Handbook had been developed and issued to all maintained schools which set out the respective roles and responsibilities of schools as tenants and the Council as the landlord. A collaborative approach remained the way by which the Corporate Landlord Team worked with schools, Business Managers and Site Managers. There was no wish to see schools having to close due to maintenance issues and this had been avoided so far. The Panel noted that it would be necessary to prioritise works. Health and safety works were normally prioritised in the first instance.

In answer to a question, Ms Ighodaro stated that it had been recognised that a planned approach was required. Allowances would nevertheless need to be made for reactive work but it was hoped this would comprise a smaller percentage of work. In some schools, major works were required including full refurbishments. The ultimate aim was to make schools more resilient. Condition surveys of all schools had been completed

by the Major Projects Team and all schools had a copy of their respective Condition Survey.

The Panel welcomed the handbook for schools and the additional funding and requested that information on major projects be shared with it when planned. It was noted that the previous amount of £1 million for maintenance works had been set some time ago and was now outdated. Decisions on the future funding allocations for the repair and maintenance programme would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Ms Ighodaro reported that an asbestos survey had been commissioned across the school estate so that an up to date asbestos register could be available and to have a consistent approach to assessing and addressing any remedial works that might be required thereafter. A lot of progress had been achieved and it was hoped to have a clear idea of what further maintenance works were required by the end of this year. There were regular meetings held with schools, including Headteachers and site managers, to ensure that communication on priority works were agreed collaboratively.

AGREED:

That further information be shared with the Panel in due course on any major works that are planned to take place in maintained schools.

53. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

In respect of items for the next meeting of the Panel, it was noted that the results of GCSE and A Level assessments that had been undertaken to replace exams were not to be published by the DfE. It would therefore not be possible to provide the analysis of them and other test results that was received annually by the Panel. Panel Members commented that they would nevertheless be interested in looking at the outcome of the assessments and any disproportionate impact that they may have had. They also felt that it would be useful to continue to monitor the impact of the lockdown on children and how they were being supported in catching up on lost learning.

AGREED:

That the draft work plan for the remainder of 2020-21 be approved.

54. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 9 November 2020;
- 14 December 2020 (budget); and
- 8 March 2021.

CHAIR: Councillor Erdal Dogan

Signed by Chair

Date

