MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY 17TH DECEMBER, 2020, 6.30 - 8.40 PM

PRESENT:

Councillors: Erdal Dogan (Chair), Dana Carlin, James Chiriyankandath, Josh Dixon, Tammy Palmer, Anne Stennett and Elin Weston

Co-opted Members: Anita Jakhu and KanuPriya Jhunjhunwala (Parent Governor representatives), Lourdes Keever and Yvonne Denny (Church Representatives)

7. FILMING AT MEETINGS

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

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Amin, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

9. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

11. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

12. MINUTES

Ann Graham, the Director of Children's Services, confirmed that the actions arising from the minutes of the last meeting had been brought to her attention and were being responded to.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 9 November 2020 be approved.

13. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - COMMUNITIES AND EQUALITIES

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

- Bruce Grove Youth Centre was currently undergoing a £400k refurbishment. In addition, it had also been given £10k of music equipment from the Sony Records Social Justice Fund;
- Work to develop a Wood Green youth hub was progressing. A site had been identified and a lease for it was currently being negotiated. The Youth Service would be supporting the co-design of the new centre and architects were being appointed. Regular updates would be provided for Wood Green Councillors;
- Recruitment was taking place to the two new teams that had been created to slot into the new Youth Service model. These were the Contextual Safeguarding Team and the Prevention Team. There would also be 11 new youth workers in total;
- Haringey was no longer in the lowest quartile for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and "not knowns". Serious youth violence had gone down by 20% and drugs offences by 10%. However, robbery had gone up by 90% and there had been serious problems amongst school children. There had been targeted Police operations in response to this and levels were now coming down. There had also been discussions at the Community Safety Partnership and there was a specific need for focussed preventative work; and
- Operation Alliance had taken place. This had been a joint initiative between the Police and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and had involved youth workers being located in Police custody suites. The aim of this was to engage with young people and attempt to divert them away from criminality.

In answer to a question regarding a recent incident in West Green Road involving the Police and some young people, the Cabinet Member stated that he was unable to say much about this as there was an ongoing Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) investigation taking place. There had been a march by members of the local community. He had spoken to the mother of the young man involved and the family had legal representation. The Council had passed a motion supporting Black Lives Matter and there had been particular concern expressed regarding the use of Stop and Search and its implications for safeguarding. There was a need for discussion and engagement with the Metropolitan Police, especially in view of the need to address serious youth violence in the borough.

In answer to another question, he reported the Haringey Community Gold was still operating in the community and through the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS). Dialogue was currently taking place with the Mayor's Office regarding the possible extension of the initiative for a further two years. It had been evaluated and he would be happy to report this back to the Panel in due course.

He reported that the Council had a Young People at Risk strategy that was aimed at prevention. This focussed on providing effective pathways for those who were considered to be at greater risk of underachieving at school or coming into contact with the youth justice system. In respect of Alternative Provision, the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) had been taken back in-house and a new Headteacher appointed. The reputation of the PRU had not been good and much work that was required but good progress was already being made, including enabling pupils to re-enter mainstream

schools. Funding for preventative work was crucial but sources were depleted. This had been exacerbated by the fact that preventative work was not statutory, unlike acute services.

In answer to a question, he stated that there would still be activities for young people during the school holidays and this would include work by Haringey Community Gold. He had asked officers to put together a suitable programme. He had put out a joint statement with Cllr Amin, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, in response to the incident that had taken place in West Green Road. The incident had been consistent with anecdotal information regarding tensions between the Police and young black men. He had asked for the work undertaken by Haringey Independent Stop and Search Group to brief Police officers new to the borough to be re-started and for the group to also be formally recognised by the Police, as was the case in other boroughs. There was a strong but robust relationship between the Council and the Police and they had been challenged on matter such as Stop and Search and its safeguarding implications. There was nevertheless a commitment to work with them to obtain the change required.

Panel Members reported that incidents of disorder had diminished in some areas of the borough. Concern was expressed at the what was felt to be a heavy handed response by the Police to some incidents and that this appeared to be influenced by the ethnicity of the young people involved. There was also felt to be a need for access to diversionary activities, such as football and basketball. Resident caretakers could also play an important role in promoting community safety.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the positive impact that resident caretakers were having. He felt that a confrontational approach made the job of the Police more challenging and that it was necessary to build greater trust. He also stated that many Police officers still came from areas outside London and had limited experience of living in a diverse community.

Panel Members commented that it was not possible to track progress of children transitioning to secondary school from primary school. Some primary schools had been particularly successful in enabling good progress by Black Caribbean children and those with English as a second language but it was unclear if this was maintained after secondary transfer. Ms Graham reported that children were not tracked but it was reasonable for primary schools to ask receiving secondary school for details of how children were progressing. Transition was very important and there was a comprehensive process for supporting children through this. There were a number of factors that could impact on educational performance. Early Help could assist where necessary through early intervention.

AGREED:

That an evaluation of the Haringey Community Gold initiative be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

14. SCRUTINY OF THE 2021/22 DRAFT BUDGET/5 YEAR MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2021/22-2025/26)

Ann Graham, the Director of Children's Services, reported that the financial position of her service had seen a recent improvement. Whilst savings had been identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), there were no proposed reductions in services or personnel. There were two savings proposals. A mother and baby residential centre would be established with an external provider. However, Council social work staff would be based in the centre and undertake assessments. The intention was to ensure that assessments that were consistently of a high quality were produced. Weekend places at the centre would be sold through the private law sector.

There were also growth proposals in the MTFS. This included £1.5 million to respond to the increase in demand for residential places. In addition, £300k had been provided to fund free school meals in the next two years. This had been a manifesto commitment and would ensure that no child went to school hungry. There would also be additional staff to complete Education, Health and Care plans and a Leader's bursary of £120k to assist ten young people from low income families through higher education.

Brian Smith, Head of Finance (People), reported that the budget gap for 2021-22 was now £1.9m and these had been included as unidentified savings. Due to the pandemic, there were budget pressures of £17m across the Council and a vigorous recovery and renewal process had been put in place to address this. This had looked at what services should be expanded, end or be re-started as well as what was still deliverable. Consideration was being given to which of the savings that had been agreed last year and subject to slippage could be delivered next year. The further savings proposals were intended to improve services as well as reducing expenditure. In addition, there were also growth proposals to relieve existing pressures and some new initiatives, as well as significant capital investment.

The Panel queried the amount quoted in the budget papers for investment in the Wood Green Youth Hub, which was quoted as £1m and £790k. It was noted that overall investment was £1m. Some of the spend would be in the current financial year with the majority of spend in 2021/22.

In answer to a question, Ms Graham reported that the overspend had been accrued due to spending on Covid and budgetary pressures related to cost and demand. In particular, there were now more children in residential care than four years ago and costs had gone up significantly. The service was working hard to ensure that value for money was achieved. Beverly Hendricks, Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care, reported that 39 assessments had been undertaken since April and none of them had been subject to challenge. They were being undertaken in a professional way that allowed little scope for challenge. In terms of budgeting, it only took a small number of additional young people requiring support to add significant additional pressures.

In answer to a question, Ms Graham reported that savings from last year that had not been achieved would be rolled forward to next year. It was not yet know how much this would be as the year had not yet ended. Savings continued to be made. Only £600k had been achieved by the time of the first lockdown but this had now gone up to £1m. The pandemic had prevented some savings being made and work had needed to be put on hold. Work to achieve the savings would continue, subject to there being no further lockdowns. One proposal had involved the extension of the homes of foster

parents. This had not happened as quickly as had been hoped but it was hoped that progress would be made shortly.

15. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SEND

Ann Marie Dodds, Interim Assistant Director of SEND, Early Help and Prevention, presented a detailed report on progress with the implementation of the recommendations of the review of SEND that the Panel had undertaken earlier in the year.

Panel Members welcomed the progress that had been made but reported that this was not always yet being reflected in the feedback that they were receiving from parents and carers. In particular, issues relating to Travel Buddies had been brought to the attention of Members by parents and carers and these had persisted after Members had been informed that they had been resolved. Information and data to provide reassurance would therefore be very welcome. Ms Dodds reported that hard data on SEND was considered on a regular basis with the Cabinet Member and could be more widely shared. She acknowledged that there had been difficulties relating to some Travel Buddies and their contracts but these had now been resolved. They were very highly valued and consideration was currently being given to bringing them in-house.

In answer to a question, Ms Dodds acknowledged that the pressures on schools arising from SEND was not evenly spread. The location of schools that children with SEND attended was known and work was taking place to get a better understanding of what was offered by individual schools and patterns. The SEND Code of Practice gave parents with the right to express a preference regarding the school that their children attended, although the service could not always support their choice if it was felt to not be appropriate. There were a wide range of factors that influenced SEND and these were not just related to deprivation or geography and it was necessary to obtain a systematic understanding of them all. Work to address this was in progress. The role of all partners was particularly important and especially health services.

In answer to another question regarding co-production, she stated that co-production could be evidenced by asking the right questions. These would include who was in attendance at meetings, how decisions had been reached and whether they had involved parents and carers. She was not aware if the information that had been provided on transitions had been made available in different languages and whether interpretation had been offered and agreed to find out and share this information with the Panel.

Ms Graham reported that there were multiple issues that influenced the differences between school educational standards in the east and west of the borough. One current issue was access to digital devices. The issues arising from this had been outlined in the report on Lost Learning during the first Covid lockdown that had been circulated to the Panel as part of the agenda for the last meeting.

Panel Members noted that SEND took up a significant amount of school budgets and that schools in east of the borough were less able to raise additional funding for it than those in the west. They requested comparative information on the amount of

expenditure by schools per child for SEND. Ms Graham agreed to circulate such information that was available.

Panel Members raised the issue of communication with school governing bodies regarding the SEND Executive Board and the Start Well Board. In addition, it was felt that more information was required for schools on the educational psychology service, including costings. Ms Dodds agreed to establish how school governing bodies were communicated with and to ensure that they were included in future updates. Engagement with parents was currently undertaken directly with parents rather than through schools but it would be possible it would be possible to involve them as well. She agreed to report back on educational psychology services and their cost.

AGREED:

1. That the Assistant Director for SEND, Early Help and Prevention be requested to provide further information of whether information provided on transitions had been made available in different languages and if interpretation had been offered; and

2. That comparative information on the amount of expenditure by schools per child for SEND be circulated to the Panel.

16. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel noted that further evidence sessions were currently being arranged for the review on schools. These were due to take place in January and February, subject to the availability of witnesses. The next regular meeting of the Panel was due to take place on 8 March 2021. There were a number of reports that the Panel had previously requested that could be added to the agenda for this meeting. It was agreed that the agenda for the meeting be finalised at one of the forthcoming evidence sessions of the Panel.

AGREED:

1. That the work plan for the Panel be noted;

2. That the Panel meet informally to finalise the agenda items for the meeting on 8 March 2021 following one of the forthcoming evidence sessions for the review on schools.

CHAIR: Councillor Erdal Dogan

Signed by Chair ……..

Date ……