

MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 4TH JULY 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors: Makbule Gunes (Chair), Anna Abela, Lotte Collett, Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Sue Jameson and Mary Mason

Co-opted Members: Anita Jakhu (Parent Governor representative) and Yvonne Denny (Church representative)

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Buxton, Ms Jhunhunwala and Ms Keever.

3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

6. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 15th March 2022 be approved.

7. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Panel were of the view that all Panel Members, including co-optees, should feel included and not subject to any limitation on the areas of discussion that they were able to contribute to. The Chair stated that the contribution of the statutory co-opted Members was valued and there was no restriction on the areas that they were able to contribute to at Panel meetings.

AGREED:

That the following be noted:

- The terms of reference and protocols for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Panels and non-voting co-opted Members on Scrutiny Panels; and
- The policy areas/remits and membership for each Scrutiny Panel for 2022/23.

8. APPOINTMENT OF NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBER

The Panel noted that there was a distinction between voting and non-voting co-opted Members. There was a requirement that all scrutiny bodies concerned with education included church and parent governor representatives and these had a statutory right to vote on education issues. Church representatives were appointed by the relevant diocesan authorities whilst parent governor representatives were appointed through a separate and prescribed election process that was administered by Haringey Education Partnership.

All scrutiny bodies could also appoint up to three non-voting co-opted Members and it was the appointment of such a co-opted Member that the report concerned. The Panel had previously indicated its wish to appoint an individual to provide specific input on matters relating to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). To this end, Haringey SEND Parent Carers Forum had been contacted and invited to nominate a suitable person to be co-opted onto the Panel.

It was noted that, in practice, voting was very rarely an issue at Panel meetings as decisions were generally reached by consensus.

AGREED:

That a representative from Haringey SEND Parent Carer Forum be appointed as a non-voting co-opted Member of the Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

9. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS: CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Councillor Zena Brabazon, the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families, reported that the statutory guidance on the respective roles of the Director and of the relevant Cabinet Member for Children's Services had not changed since 2004. They were accountable for a range of services including corporate parenting, safeguarding of children and children in need. In addition, there was also accountability for the quality and provision of education. The overall framework was governed by the Children Act of 2004.

There had been great changes to the education landscape in recent years, with the advent of free schools and acceleration in the growth of academies. These had resulted in fragmentation and the development of a "two tier" system, which had impacted on maintenance of Council maintained schools. There was now a £90 million capital programme in Haringey to refurbish them. In addition, a working group had been set up with schools to explore closer collaboration. Schools had autonomy but were not

islands and there were strategic issues that needed to be explored with them. Children's social care would nevertheless always be the Council's top priority though.

Keeping abreast of legislation was another important priority. There was currently a consultation on the government's Green Paper on SEND and this was due to finish on 22 July. Concerns had been expressed by the SEND Parent Carer Forum at what is being proposed. The proposed changes were likely to take many years to be implemented, if they proceeded. She felt that the Council's provision for SEND had made considerable progress recently. The recent OFSTED inspection of SEND had identified three areas of weakness and, whilst these were significant, this was less than had been identified in inspections in other areas.

She had particular concerns regarding youth justice and anti-social behaviour. An extensive summer activity programme was planned for children and young people and was available to view on the Council's website.

The Panel raised the issue of the Domestic Abuse Act, which required children and young people to be identified as victims and appropriate provision made for them. They requested information on the preparations that had been made in Haringey. It was noted that the Children and Young People's Service worked closely with the Violence Against Women and Girls team and agreed that a full report would be made to a future meeting of the Panel on this issue.

In answer to a question regarding how schools addressed the needs of children before a formal diagnosis of SEND, the Cabinet Member stated that she would like children to be diagnosed as soon as possible. However, sometimes it was felt better to wait if children were in early years settings. The lack of a diagnosis did not necessarily mean that there was no support plan. Some of the timescales for diagnosis had reduced but sometimes the needs of children were very complex. The resources required to support children were also not always available. She felt that there was a need to identify needs at an early stage and that as much should be done in early years as was possible. There was also a need for parents and carers to be heard as they normally had the best knowledge of children. There was a clear role for professionals and a need for collaboration.

Ann Graham, the Director of Children's Services, commented that there was currently not enough money in the system. Waiting times for diagnosis had nevertheless come down. The improvements to SEND services would take time to take effect. The Council worked very closely with NHS colleagues and additional provision had been made for speech and language therapies. It was important that these were accessible at an early stage so that needs did not become chronic. Work was taking place with partners to ensure that their strategies were in line with each other. A systemic approach was also being adopted.

Jackie Difolco, Assistant Director for Early Help and Prevention, reported that there were a number of programmes of work within the Council that impacted on SEND. There is a new SEND strategy for 2022-2025 that had been widely consulted on. In addition, the Written Statement of Action required as a consequence of the OFSTED and CQC inspection was being implemented over the next two years and that there had also been significant investment. The SEND service was subject to robust scrutiny from

the Panel, the Department for Education and OFSTED. Consideration was being given to the Council entering the Safety Valve programme, which would look at how the overspend in the DSG High Needs Block could be best managed without compromising service quality. There was a programme of work with schools that was aimed at promoting early intervention as well as a project that was focussing on demand management. Feedback from the Department for Education on the operation of the SEND Executive Board was that progress was being made with partnership working but there also needed to be more shared ownership.

The Panel thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their response and requested that timelines for these plans be shared with the Panel as well as details of contingency plans.

In answer to a question regarding transitions, the Cabinet Member stated that this was a massive issue and there was a large programme of work taking place in response to it. The main area of transition was from children's to adult services. However, there was also transition from nursery to reception, primary to secondary school and secondary school to post 16. Ms Difolco reported that transition was a key area of work across the Children, Adults and Health directorate. There was a particular focus on preparing young people with SEND for adulthood. There was an action plan and a timeline to deliver improvements within the next two years. The delivery of the plan would begin during the autumn, although work was already underway. It was agreed that a joint meeting with the Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel would be arranged early next year to consider progress. This should include transitions from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services into adult services and transitional safeguarding.

In answer to a question regarding speech and language therapy, the Cabinet Member reported that some additional funding had been obtained to improve provision in the short term. Some of this had come from NHS partners and, in addition, it was planned to use an underspend in the Early Years block. The latter still had to be formally approved by the Schools Forum. It would be delivered through Children's Centres. The Cabinet Member reported that much progress had been made in developing the infrastructure to deliver inclusive support, particularly through Children's Centres. Speech and language therapy was a very important part of support.

AGREED:

1. That a full report would be made to a future meeting of the Panel on the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act of 2021 and the implications of this for children and young people;
2. That timelines for the range of programmes of work within the Council to improve SEND services be shared with the Panel; and
3. That a joint meeting be arranged with the Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel be arranged early next year to consider the issue of transitions in detail and that this include transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services into adult services.

10. HARINGEY TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY (CONSULTATION UPDATE)

Ms Difolco reported that, following a challenging start to the previous school year, an informal learning review was set up to look at SEND transport. This had identified some areas of learning, which resulted in the development of proposals to improve the service. A new Travel Assistance policy had been drafted in response and was currently subject to consultation. It contained separate policies for pre and post 16 children and young people.

There were a number of changes contained in the new policy. These included:

- Consideration of sustainability;
- Introduction of behavioural standards;
- A detailed explanation of the decision making process for transport;
- Standardisation of disputes and appeals processes, in accordance with Statutory Guidance;
- Cut off dates for applications to reduce disruption to the service and inform effective planning;
- Personal travel budgets had been developed further and rates increased so they were in line with those offered by other boroughs; and
- Clarity around breakfast and after school clubs and times when transport could be provided.

A comprehensive programme of opportunities for people to respond to the consultation had been provided and 69 formal responses had been received so far. The majority of these had come from parents and carers. The top priority from those who had responded was to improve communication with parents.

Procurement for was currently underway. Preliminary routes would be shared with schools by 1 July and trial runs conducted with new providers by mid-August. Additional investment had been provided for the SEND Transport Team and this included a Parent Liaison Officer. In addition, software was being developed to support communication and tracking through an app for parents and carers.

In answer to a question, Ms Difolco reported that Personal Travel Budgets were separate from Direct Payments. There were eligibility criteria for travel assistance and consultation took place with parents and carers to determine the most appropriate mode of transport. Children and young people with complex needs would not normally be given a Personal Travel Budget. They were generally provided when a parent or carer had indicated they would be interested in having one. A flat rate was paid which was comparable to amounts offered by other London boroughs but did not provide an incentive for parents and carers and had a low take up. This is in the process of being reviewed. It was agreed that a link to the draft policy and the page relating to Personal Travel Budgets would be circulated to Panel Members.

In answer to another question, she stated that approximately 630 children and young people received travel assistance. The consultation had specifically targeted parents and carers of children with SEND but details had also been sent to every household in the borough through Haringey People. In addition, it had also been publicised via the SEND newsletter, which had over 2,000 subscribers.

The Panel commented that the response rate had so far been comparatively low, although the consultation still had some time to run. Ms Difolco stated that she was open to suggestions on how the level of responses could be increased. She commented that the number of those who had responded formally did not include feedback that had been obtained through specific in-person and virtual consultation events, which had not yet been collated. The number who had responded via these was approximately double the number who had responded formally. The new policy would be reviewed annually.

AGREED:

That a link to the draft Travel Assistance Policy and the page relating to Personal Travel Budgets be circulated to the Panel.

11. SUPPORT TO REFUGEE CHILDREN

Beverley Hendricks, Assistant Director for Social Care, reported on the support provided for refugee children from Afghanistan and the Ukraine. Provision for these had been merged and was provided by Children's Social Care and by Connected Communities. It was focussed on providing for the basic needs of children and young people, including food, shelter and healthcare. 15 refugees from Afghanistan had so far been assisted. 530 had come from the Ukraine and there were currently 265 sponsors, involving 259 properties. 147 of those from the Ukraine were children and 63 of these now had visas. Safeguarding checks were undertaken on all sponsors and they were matched to refugees following their completion. Work was also being undertaken to register refugees with GPs and with education services.

In answer to a question regarding safeguarding checks, Ms Hendricks reported that there had been some concerns expressed when refugees had started to arrive. A series of checks were now undertaken. A suitability of accommodation was undertaken by housing colleagues prior to the arrival of individuals. Following this, DBS and health checks were undertaken. There were two dedicated social workers who were responsible for these issues. Safeguarding guidelines were also shared with all partners.

Cllr Mason raised the issue of a family who had originally been placed in Haringey but had needed to move. They had been resettled in south London rather than remaining in the borough with another host family. Ms Hendricks agreed to look into this case and respond separately to Cllr Mason. In response to a question regarding promotion of psycho/social needs, Ms Hendricks agreed to ensure that the Welcome Packs supplied to refugees referred to the full range of services provided by food banks.

In answer to another question, Ms Hendricks stated that the Welcome Hub was part of a strategic group that was led by Council officers and also involved the Migrant Trust. She agreed to circulate details of it to the Panel. She reported that there had not been any significant increase in unaccompanied minors. One had arrived from the Ukraine though. Revised government guidance had stated that they should be dealt with in the same way as other unaccompanied minors.

AGREED:

1. That the Assistant Director (Social Care) be requested to look into the specific case raised by Councillor Mason regarding the resettlement of a refugee family in south London following an unsuccessful placement in Haringey;
2. That Welcome Packs given to new arrived refugees include reference to psycho/social needs and the full range of services provided by food banks; and
3. That details of the Welcome Hub be circulated to the Panel.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted that a comprehensive work planning process would be taking place for overview and scrutiny and that this would include the Children and Young People's Panel. Consultation with stakeholders, including residents, on priorities would be an integral part of this. There would be on-line survey and an in-person Scrutiny Café event, which was scheduled to take place on 9 September.

The next meeting of the Panel was scheduled to take place before the work planning process had been completed so it was necessary for the Panel to identify potential items ahead of it. Some items had already been identified by the Panel at previous meetings, as outlined in the report.

The Panel made the following suggestions for potential items for the next meeting:

- Domestic abuse and safeguarding; and
- Stop and Search.

In addition, it was noted that the Annual Youth Justice Plan and an update on the financial position of the budget for Children and Young People's Services were due to be considered at the meeting. The report Youth Justice report would include information on the effectiveness of interventions. The following suggestions were made as items for future consideration by the Panel:

- Housing and children; and
- Tracking racial incidents in schools.

AGREED:

That the agenda items for the next meeting of the Panel be finalised by the Chair in consultation with officers from the Children and Young People's Service/

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 6 September 2022;
- 7 November 2022;
- 3 January 2023; and
- 20 March 2023.

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair

Date