

MINUTES OF MEETING Cabinet HELD ON Tuesday, 18th October, 2022, 6.30 - 6.55 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Peray Ahmet (Chair), Mike Hakata, Zena Brabazon, Dana Carlin, Seema Chandwani, Lucia das Neves, Julie Davies, Ruth Gordon, Adam Jogee and Sarah Williams

ALSO ATTENDING ONLINE: Cllr Cawley- Harrison, Cllr Gunes

54. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and attendees noted this information.

55. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

56. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

58. NOTICE OF INTENTION TO CONDUCT BUSINESS IN PRIVATE, ANY REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED AND THE RESPONSE TO ANY SUCH REPRESENTATIONS

There were no representations received on the exempt items.

59. MINUTES

RESOLVED

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2022 as a correct record.

60. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/QUESTIONS

There were no deputations, petitions, or questions.

61. MATTERS REFERRED TO CABINET BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair advised that the scrutiny report on Child Poverty would be considered as part of item 9.

62. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEW ON CHILD POVERTY

Cllr Gunes, Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel, introduced the Scrutiny Review on Child Poverty, and thanked fellow Panel members and Co-opted members and all of those who participated in the review. It was noted that child poverty was increasing, both nationally and within Haringey. It was explained that the scrutiny panel had considered how child poverty could be addressed strategically within the Borough Plan which was currently being updated. It was stated that there were 11 recommendations from the review and noted that Cabinet had accepted 10 recommendations and partially accepted one recommendation. In relation to the partially accepted recommendation, Cllr Gunes stated that the scrutiny panel had felt strongly that Free Schools Meals (FSMs) should be made universal but thanked Cabinet for accepting the recommendations.

Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, and Families, welcomed the report and noted that this was an increasingly important issue in the challenging economic situation. It was stated that the recommendations of the scrutiny panel were helpful and that Cabinet was recommended to accept all of the recommendations. The Cabinet Member was grateful that the Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel recognised the caveat on the recommendation about universal Free School Meals. It was highlighted that the Council would want to provide universal Free SMs but that, like most authorities, it was not financially possible. It was highlighted that the Council did have an extended Free School Meals programme in place which provided Free School Meals for an additional 500-600 children, including throughout school holidays. It was added that the Council supported the principle of universal Free School Meals and, alongside others, had lobbied national government on the issue.

RESOLVED

1. To note the review and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) attached at Appendix A.
2. To agree to the proposed response to each of the proposed recommendations, as set out in Appendix B.
3. To note the letter to the secretary of State for Education attached at Appendix C.

Reasons for decision

On the 17th March 2022 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the report and its recommendations and agreed that it be submitted to Cabinet for response.

Alternative options considered

The Cabinet is committed to considering and responding to Scrutiny reviews. No alternative options were considered.

63. HARINGEY SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools, and Families introduced the report which, following public consultation, sought Cabinet approval to implement the Haringey School Travel Assistance Policy for home to school transport for children and young people with SEND.

The Cabinet Member outlined that the suite of final draft policies set the framework and underpinned the Home to School travel for children and young people including those 16- 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These had been developed over a significant period, following a review process which was initiated in 2019 but then delayed and suspended due to the pandemic. As soon as was possible, post-pandemic, an initial policy review was held with a group of key stakeholders, including special school representatives, a member of the Haringey Parent/Carer Forum and SEND officers.

The Cabinet Member reminded Cabinet that the review had led to a set of draft policies and policy changes that were brought to Cabinet on March 8, 2022, where it was agreed to proceed to a full public consultation. This ran from 9th May 2022- 31st July 2022. The proposed changes were now set out in para 4.3 of the report.

It was noted that the consultation was very extensive using as many avenues as possible to engage and communicate with partners, families and stakeholders.

In response to questions from Cllr Cawley-Harrison, the following information was provided:

- The policies put forward to Cabinet were lawful and in keeping with statutory duties. A point of clarification would be sought from legal services on the Dudley Legal case 2012 referred to which had successfully challenged eligibility criteria relating to the parental preferential choice for school and access to travel assistance. The Head of Legal and Governance further confirmed that a written response would be provided and if there was any issue this would be flagged but this report had been subject to legal advice.
- The impact of inflation was an evolving issue and would be part of the wider consideration of costs across Children's services. This would be alongside the service considering competing demands and budgetary pressures. A more specific response would be provided, in writing, on the consideration of personal budgets as part of this policy.
- Regarding the sharing of consultation responses with parents, it was necessary to publish these in October instead of September to coincide with the publication of the report. Parents had made the service aware of the previous message on publishing consultation responses in September and an immediate

notification was provided on in the SEND local offer that this would occur in October.

- There was a commitment in the SEND newsletter and SEND local offer to take forward a Q&A session on the changes to the policies . The session would also be responding to the fact that there had not been as many consultation responses then would have been liked, despite extensive promotion. The SEND service recognised that the polices were also detailed and wanted to provide an easy to read document to parents and carers. Assurance was provided that invites to this session would be sent to Special schools, schools, and all households accessing the travel assistance service.
- The Q&A session would further be promoted on the local offer newsletter which would take place as soon as possible, likely in November.

The Cabinet Member praised the turnaround in the service, over the last year, and the changes that had been implemented by the Director , Assistant Director and Head of service reflected by the fact that there had not been any complaints this September about the service.

RESOLVED

1. To note the response to the consultation and findings of the equality impact assessment as set out in Appendix One: School Travel Assistance Policies Consultation process and full responses.
2. To note the Equality Impact Assessment School Travel Assistance Policies set out at Appendix Five.
3. To approve the final draft policies: School Travel Assistance Policy (CYP Children and Young People up to 16 years of age in compulsory education and Haringey School Travel Assistance Policy Post 16 for implementation as set out at Appendix Two and Three respectively.
4. To delegate authority to the Director for Children's services to make any required non material and minor amendments required to the Policy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible for Children.

Reasons for decision

Haringey Council has a statutory duty for the provision of home to school transport for children and young people up to 16 years and post 16 years and adults learners in accordance with the Education Act 1996, not just children and young people with SEND (although the vast majority of learners do have SEND).

Local policies must have due regard to The Home to School Travel and Transport Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities July 2014 and Post 16 Transport and Travel Support to Education and Training Statutory Guidance 2019. Under the Act and the Guidance, the Council must consult widely with interested parties on any proposed

changes to their home to school travel arrangements policy statements for children, young people and adult learners.

Proposed changes within the policies were as follows:

- a) creating a specific policy for young people aged 16-25, including information about external travel support.
- b) renaming the current policies to be clearer on their purpose and remit to 'School Travel Assistance Policy (Children & Young People up to 16 years of Age)' and 'Post-16 School Travel Assistance Policy'.
- c) Consideration of sustainability, focusing on the environment, emissions reduction, and promotion of independent travel options.
- d) Introduction of behavioural standards for children and young people using transport commissioned by the Local Authority.
- e) detailed explanation of the transport decision making process.
- f) standardisation of disputes and appeals process in accordance with statutory guidance.
- g) clarification regarding 'personal travel budgets' and how they are calculated.
- h) comprehensive application procedure and guidance.
- i) clarity around breakfast/ after school clubs and times when Haringey Council will provide transport.
- j) cut off deadlines for applications with exceptional circumstances included
- k) COVID-19 information in relation to home-school transport.

These policy changes were subject to a full public consultation from 9th May 2022- 31st July 2022. A summary of consultation responses can be found at: Appendix One: School Travel Assistance Policies Consultation process and full responses.

The consultation was promoted extensively via the SEND Local Offer and through a number of mechanisms including the Council's website, hard copies in libraries, social media, including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Engagement events were also provided within Special Schools with parents and carers. An 'in person' engagement event was held with the Markfield Project alongside four online consultation sessions.

Despite the extensive promotion, there was a low uptake for the in person and online consultation sessions, organised, with 98 formal responses to the consultation form. The SEND service is planning to have an event for young people, parents, and partners to highlight the key changes in the policy and respond to any questions. It is acknowledged that the responses were not as high as the Council would have liked, therefore officers will take the opportunity at this event to discuss suggestions of how the Council can engage with the local community and partners more effectively.

Consultation responses were mainly received from parents and carers of children and young people using home to school transport (approximately 15% of the total cohort). A summary of the key responses are outlined below. Refer to: Appendix Four: Consultation feedback and responses which provides a response where relevant, highlighting changes to be made in the policies.

- a) Overall, respondents indicated that whilst it was understood how decisions were made, the considerations informing these processes are, by their nature lengthy

and can present a barrier in having a full and comprehensive understanding of the home-school transport system. Most of the changes to the final draft policies provide clarification.

- b) Many of the responses were in relation to individual circumstances and as such were out of the scope of the wider consultation. However, responses did suggest that the length of the documents could create a barrier to understanding the decision making processes. As a result, 'easy-read' guides to both policies will be developed to ensure that parents and carers can find information easily and that the documents are succinct and easily translated into other languages.
- c) Consultation responses indicated that parents and carers understood and were sympathetic towards the need for both 'cut-off dates' for applications and behaviour standards and expectations when using transport.
- d) Parents and carers also recognised and supported the shift within the policy to more environmentally friendly transport arrangements.
- e) Respondents also highlighted operational service issues, particularly in relation to communication with the SEND Transport team. The service is aware of these issues and as a result has increased the capacity to support improved and timely communication through the recruitment of a Transport Liaison Officer.

The consultation was also informed by an equality impact assessment which resulted in some clarifications made within the policies. Refer to: Appendix Five: Equality Impact Assessment School Travel Assistance Policies.

The two policies have resulted from this improvement work and are designed to clarify the duties of the council, the responsibilities of schools and families and to create a fair, open, and transparent set of criteria and expectations regarding the provision of home-school transport. Changes to the policies post consultation are highlighted in yellow.

Once the policies are approved, a follow up session will be offered to parents and carers to go through the key changes in the policies with easy read guides published.

Alternative options considered

Not applicable.

64. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

RESOLVED

To note the minutes of other bodies.

65. SIGNIFICANT AND DELEGATED ACTIONS

RESOLVED

To note the significant and delegated actions.

66. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

67. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of agenda items 15 to 16 as they contained exempt information as defined in Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972; Paragraph 3 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information; Paragraph 5 – information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

68. EXEMPT - MINUTES

RESOLVED

To confirm and sign the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 as a correct record.

69. NEW ITEMS OF EXEMPT URGENT BUSINESS

There were no new items of exempt urgent business.

CHAIR: Councillor Peray Ahmet

Signed by Chair

Date