

# MINUTES OF MEETING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON MONDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 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), Yvonne Denny and Lourdes Keever (Church representatives).**

## 26. **FILMING AT MEETINGS**

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

## 27. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Buxton, Ms Bernard and Ms Jhunjhunwala.

## 28. **ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

## 29. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## 30. **DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS**

None.

## 31. **MINUTES**

### **AGREED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of 6th September 2022 be approved.

## 32. **CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES**

Councillor Zena Brabazon, the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families, outlined key developments within her portfolio. She reported that Roland Hill Nursery School had recently been inspected by Ofsted and rated as outstanding. This meant that all three maintained nursery schools in the borough were now rated as

outstanding. Bearing in mind the threats that nursery schools were under and the decline in their number nationwide, this was a fantastic achievement. In addition, three other maintained early years settings were also currently rated as outstanding. The importance of high quality early years provision in giving children a good start in life had been reinforced by demonstrated by the impact of Covid and the lockdowns associated with it. Special educational needs were a high priority in nursery schools and children were able to make excellent progress.

The Rising Green Youth Centre in Wood Green had opened in July and was proving to be very popular. It had been open throughout the summer and was now opening in the afternoons and early evenings. It was currently hosting the Wood Green Voices public consultation. The Haslemere Road children's residential centre had also recently been prepared to become operational. It is the first children's residential centre to be brought back in house so far, as part of the Council's strategy of moving from outsourcing to running its own provision and bringing children and young people back into the borough.

The social workers in schools scheme had started through the government's What Works innovation programme. The programme was making a crucial difference by bring children's social care into the forefront in schools. It was hoped to expand the programme into all secondary schools and to primary schools, subject to funding being identified. The programme had made a significant difference to schools and families.

Good progress had been made with the Safety Valve scheme, with the Department for Education (DfE) agreeing in principle to the Council's proposals. Although the Council had been obliged to participate in the scheme, she nevertheless welcomed the challenge of making progress with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision. Significant progress had also been made with the written statement of action that had been required following the Ofsted inspection of SEND. Of particular note was the fact that the SEND Parent Carer Forum now had over 100 families involved with it. The SEND local offer was also vastly improved. The newsletter was now distributed to over 2,000 families. The SEND transport policy was now out to final consultation. There had been no complaints at all regarding home to school transport in September, which was a remarkable achievement. The number of children registered with social care or child protection was stable. Numbers were constantly monitored. There was a Looked After Children event later in the month and the details of this would be shared in due course.

In answer to a question regarding falling school rolls, the Cabinet Member reported that the annual school place planning report was due shortly to go to Cabinet. This showed all of the schools that had agreed to reduce the number of their forms of entry. There was a schools master plan and she had convened a group to look at the options arising from it. She had understood that meetings had taken place with school governors but was happy to meet with them to explore the issues. The impact of falling rolls was most acute in the east of the borough. There was a need to consider the drivers behind the issue and to plan ahead.

In answer to a question regarding the Safety Valve programme, she stated that the number of children with SEND in schools had not gone down. There was a need to

think creatively regarding how the schools estate in the borough could be used to meet their needs and for SEND provision to be reconfigured so that it could be delivered in-borough. The impact of the reduction in school rolls need not necessarily all be disadvantageous as it could open up other opportunities. Schools and governors would need to be engaged in the process though.

Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services, reported that it was her view that there had been extensive engagement with schools during this and the previous year on schools rolls. The work that had been done was not something that the local authority could do in isolation. Particular efforts had been made to reach agreement with headteachers on future plans, including reductions in Planned Admission Numbers (PANs). Ms Keever stated that school governors had met with officers to provide feedback regarding the challenges that they faced as part of this process. They had stated that they wished to have more intensive involvement in the process but this had not materialised. They were willing to collaborate and were anticipating that an overall plan would be developed. Ms Graham responded that she was happy to arrange further discussions if more were required. There was still work that needed to be done to respond to reduced rolls.

Councillor Brabazon reported that there was a need to include both diocesan authorities and the local authority in discussions. There was widespread concern about the reduced school rolls. There was a need to continue with consultations. She was happy to meet with chairs of schools governing bodies in order to develop further the dialogue.

In answer to a question regarding the safety valve programme, Councillor Brabazon reported that the Department for Education would write off a portion of the overspend in the high needs funding block if agreement was reached with the Council regarding a change programme. Ms Graham stated that the Council would know whether the government were agreeable to its proposals in December so that the necessary arrangements could be put in place for the new financial year.

In answer to a question, Beverley Hendricks (Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care) reported that there was no evidence that the organisation called Mermaids had been engaged in any schools in the borough. Schools had recently been written too in order to confirm that this was the case and none had so far indicated that they had involved Mermaids. In answer to a question regarding the Think Family protocol, she stated that social workers in schools were part of leading the response in schools and could involve others, such as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) partners, if necessary. Many schools had invested in their pastoral structures and could bring access counselling support as appropriate and necessary.

In answer to a question regarding racial incidents in schools, Councillor Brabazon reported that the Ms Graham chaired the Race Equality Group, which brought together Headteachers, teachers and school governors to consider such issues. Most schools had now signed the Black Caribbean and BAME Achievement Pledge and were now putting it into action. Whilst the Council had expectations of schools, they were self-governing and held records of any racial incidents and exclusions. However, the local authority held records of any permanent exclusions, including any that were considered to have a racial element to them. She was glad to report that

there had been none of these this year. Information on any racial incidents or exclusions would be included in Headteachers reports to school governing bodies. Challenge was provided by the school governing body, although there was extraneous advisory support.

### **33. SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

Jean Taylor, Head of Policy, outlined the Council's response to the cost of living crisis and, in particular, support for children and families. Many of the key issues had been considered already by the Panel as part of its recent review on child poverty. The borough had the fifth highest rate of child poverty in London. Its level of fuel poverty was the fourth highest in London and 73% of properties were in the lowest energy efficiency bands which meant that it was particularly exposed to the impact of increased fuel prices.

The Council had a low income family tracker. This had been compiled using Council data and contained 32,000 households, two thirds of whom were families with children. Such families were in receipt of benefits and likely to be experiencing at least some level of financial hardship. 13% of such families were considered likely to be in cash shortfall.

There was concern about the impact of the cost of living crisis on residents, particularly those most vulnerable. There was a co-ordinated cross Council approach and this included housing management. It involved looking at the levers that the Council had to provide support. A Winter Resilience Risk Register was being compiled by Emergency Planning and would guide the Council's work.

Work was being undertaken to understand the level of need and monitor impact. This included mapping the nature and extent of existing poverty, debt and financial hardship. The Council's data would be used to project impacts and identify specific groups for targeted support. Existing networks and forums were also being used to gather real time information about the impact.

The key element of the process was financial support and benefit maximisation. This was aimed at maximising the amount of money that families had so that they could prioritise how it was used. A range of activities were undertaken. A financial support team was in place, with a new direct telephone line. There was targeted distribution of the Household Support Fund, a Council Tax Reduction Scheme and discretionary housing payments. All Council tenants and leaseholders had also been written to, setting out the full range of help and support available.

The Household Support Fund, funded by central government, was one of the main levers. The grant was distributed through small payments to support vulnerable households in meeting daily needs. It was now in the third round of funding, each of which had come with specific criteria. Support to children and young people had prioritised in each round. There had been a number of specific commitments by the Council to support children and young people, including:

- £1,000,000 for free school meals extension into the school holidays;
- £100 payments to families with children under 5;

- £100 payments to families with no recourse to public funds; and
- £100 payments to care leavers.

In terms of communications, the objectives had been to:

- Ensure that residents, businesses and stakeholders knew what help and support was available and how to access it;
- Maximising take up, reducing stigma and putting dignity at the heart of what was said and done; and
- Ensuring residents know what they could do to help by building on community assets, solidarity and taking a strengths based approach.

There had been a significant print run for the Haringey Here to Help Leaflet. An October half term leaflet had also been produced, which included information on free school meals. There were also plans for a cost of living podcast on help for parents and carers. Work was currently taking place to establish warm banks. In addition, the expanded discretionary free school meal scheme had been continued as well as school holiday provision during the October half term.

The next steps would involve ongoing internal co-ordination, with a cross Council officer working group co-ordinating delivery. There would also be partner outreach and engagement, including statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector. In addition, further Cabinet in the Community sessions would be arranged, including one with schools. Impact would be monitored using a wide range of data and engagement with communities and include a strong focus on understanding the impact on children and young people.

The Panel highlighted the following matters:

- Strategic work was being undertaken by other boroughs, such as Camden, Enfield and Tower Hamlets. In particular, Enfield had used the landlord licensing scheme to bring about improvements in living conditions for tenants; and
- Severe challenges were currently being faced by food banks. In addition to providing food, they were also providing advice and support for those using them. This was provided by volunteers. The people who were being given advice would not necessarily otherwise seek help. Food banks would benefit from some assistance from relevant Council finance support teams.

Ms Taylor stated that it was recognised that there was a need for long term strategic support. There was a risk of treating the current crisis as short term as the causes and trends showed that it was likely to be long term. Work was therefore taking place on what the long term approach should be. This was looking at the levers that the Council had to mitigate the impact and how to reduce stigma. She liked the approach that was being followed in Tower Hamlets and Haringey's emerging strategy was developing along similar lines. The example of Enfield's work was also useful.

There were plans to engage with food banks to understand the pressures that they were under and how work could be undertaken with them on a long term basis. The need for advice and support in community settings had become apparent in recent engagement. The role of the community and voluntary sector was key to this. It was

recognised that they were often better placed to reach some communities than Council provided services. It would be addressed in the emerging strategy.

In answer to another question, she stated that the leaflet regarding help that was available had already been circulated to a range of settings including welcome hubs, libraries and food banks. It was also available on the Haringey Here to Help webpage. It had been translated into all of the main community languages. Consideration was being given to circulating it too all homes in the borough. The Panel welcomed the translation of the leaflet and felt that community centres should be targeted for circulation so that all communities were aware of the support available.

#### **34. SUMMER PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Daniel Ball (Leisure Client Contract Manager) and Erica Owusu-Boateng (Holiday Activities and Food Programme Manager) reported on the outcome of the Community Summer and the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programmes.

Ms Owusu-Boateng reported that the HAF programme was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and this had been extended for a further two years. It was targeted at children and young people who were eligible for free school meals with the aim of addressing holiday hunger. Food and food education were provided. Amongst the achievements of the programme for this year was an increase in the numbers of children with SEND, early years and 11 to 16 year olds. There was increased awareness of the programme amongst providers, which had resulted in more delivering sessions. There had also been an increase in the number of volunteers.

Mr Ball reported that the Community Summer Programme aimed to provide positive activities for children and young people. Efforts has been undertaken to link it with the HAF programme. The Summer Programme had provided a range of activities including tennis, swimming, football and ice skating. Some provision was provided on a drop-in basis and aimed at older children whilst some was targeted at specific families. The majority of the delivery of both programmes was in the east of the borough, where deprivation and eligibility for free school meals was the greatest. There was more targeted and strategic work in the west of the borough.

25,000 hard copies of the Summer Programme booklet had been printed, which was 4,000 more than last year. The majority of these had been circulated to schools and community centres. There had also been on-line engagement with a 34% increase in the downloads of the programme. The vast majority of those who attended were from the N17 postcode. The majority of those who attended for single sessions were male, whilst more females attended regularly. They were looking at how males could be attracted to attend more frequently as well as what activities and venues might attract more females. There had also been specific activities for disabled children, including cycling. Measures had also been taken to make all provision as inclusive as possible so that disabled and non-disabled children could take part together.

Ms Owusu-Boateng reported that the monitoring data showed that the majority of those attending both schemes were from the black African community. In addition, targeted work had been undertaken with the Somali community. There had been an increase in early years attendees, who had been specifically targeted. The HAF

programme attracted younger children than the community scheme. It was more structured in nature and therefore more attractive to parents of children of primary school age.

In terms of future plans, there would be a further three years of funding for the HAF scheme but funding only covered the longer school holidays. More work would be done with schools and in respect of food provision. There would also be engagement with young people to determine how more females could be attracted and how males could be encouraged to attend more often. There would also be work to maximise inclusion and streamline data collection.

In answer to a question, Ms Owuse-Boateng stated that the HAF programme attracted more primary school children due to the structure of the programme. In particular, it had an earlier start time and the presence of younger children could make it less attractive for older children. Mr Ball added that drop ins and less structured sessions were more attractive for older children, some of which were specifically targeted at them. Young men were not all just attending single sessions but attending slightly less frequently than females. In addition, it was not always possible to distinguish gender from monitoring data. This was particularly true for swimming, which was nevertheless known to be popular with females. Work was taking place with Fusion to address this.

The Panel raised the following stated that there were pockets of deprivation in the west of the borough, including areas with a high proportion of people living in private rented accommodation. There was often a lack of community space in such areas. They also raised the role of schools in holiday programmes. Ms Owusu-Boateng stated that more provision would be provided in the west of the borough. It was known that there were pockets of deprivation there. It could nevertheless be difficult finding providers who were able to deliver there, although more were now becoming available. More schools had engaged in the programmes this year and it was hoped that more would participate as the benefits became more apparent. Data relating to deprivation in the private rented sector would be sought from the Council's performance to see if this could be factored in as part of future planning.

A Panel Member reported that a football scheme in Chestnuts Park had not taken place as advertised as the provider had not turned up, leaving children disappointed. Mr Ball stated that he had not been aware of this incident but would follow it up. Efforts were made to ensure that providers knew what was expected of them beforehand, including a providers meeting. The need for timeliness and providing a friendly and inclusive environment were emphasised. Unannounced monitoring visits were also undertaken.

### **35. HASLEMERE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOME**

Ms Hendricks reported on the opening of Haslemere Children's Residential Home. It was part of the Council's new strategy of owning and delivering its own residential provision. It had originally been a respite centre for children with disabilities but this had closed in 2015. It had recently undergone extensive refurbishment to become a new residential children's home. Support would be provided for children using the Ambit approach. Recruitment of staff was in process and it was planned to open the

home on 9th January. A clear indication had already been given by Ofsted that they would register the home for operational delivery. The home was predicated on close working with another borough. The objective was to be able to rehabilitate children into local community living through foster care and, as appropriate, with connected persons.

In answer to a question, Ms Hendricks stated that there were six bedrooms at the home. It catered for children between the ages of 11 and 16 with social, emotional and mental health needs. Following the Ambit delivery model, intensive work would be undertaken to support children with their local professional network and, where safe, the family. Experiences with care leavers had shown that often children wished to return home and this would be facilitated where safe. If this was not possible, the in-house foster care provision would be utilised. It was intended that young people would stay at the facility from six to nine months. There would be a clear indication of the sort of placement required within three months. In answer to another question, she stated that each child would have their own room. This was a non-negotiable requirement from Ofsted and it was not possible for the home to exceed its prescribed capacity of six. As part of the commissioning strategy, work was taking place to develop additional options to reduce the reliance on external provision and to bring as many young people as possible back into the borough.

**AGREED:**

That a further report on progress with the new residential home be made after it has been open for six to nine months.

**36. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2022-24**

The Panel noted that the Scrutiny Café had taken place since the last Panel meeting. This had been very well attended, including by a number of young people. The feedback from it had been incorporated with the outcomes from the Scrutiny Survey and matters that had been raised at previous meetings of the Panel. There were a number of different ways in which items identified could be addressed, including in-depth reviews, reports to scheduled Panel meetings or questions to the relevant Cabinet Member. The finalised work plan would cover both the current year and the one afterwards.

The top current priority was to identify suitable issues for in-depth reviews. It was important that the review on whichever issue was selected to take place first was completed by the end of the year to ensure continuity. The Panel had met informally and selected the following items for in-depth review:

- Leisure and recreation for young people;
- Housing and children; and
- Listening to children and young people.

Each of these reviews would be subject to detailed scoping. It had been agreed by the informal meeting that the review on leisure and recreation would begin first.



In reference to the planned review on listening to young people, it was noted that Haringey Youth Council was no longer operational. Youth councils had been very successful elsewhere and it was agreed that this matter would be considered as part of the review.

**AGREED:**

1. That in-depth scrutiny reviews be undertaken by the Panel take on the following issues:
  - Leisure and recreation for young people;
  - Housing and children; and
  - Listening to children and young people.
2. That the proposed review on leisure and recreation be programmed to begin first.
3. That the proposed review on listening to children and young people considers the role of youth councils.
4. That the Panel meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 be moved back to 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

**37. VOTE OF THANKS**

The Chair reported that it was Kanupriya Jhunjhunwala and Anita Jakhu's last meeting as Parent Governor representatives on the Panel before their term of office ended. The Panel thanked them for their contribution to the Panel's work during the past two years.

CHAIR: Councillor Makbule Gunes

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....

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