

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Tuesday, 9th September, 2025, 19:00**

### **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Anna Lawton (Chair), Mark Grosskopf & George Dunstall.**

**ALSO ATTENDING: Christine Cordon (Co-Optee) and Camilla Borwick-Fox (Co-Optee)**

### **15. FILMING AT MEETINGS**

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

### **16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Abela and Cllr Amin.

### **17. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Urgent Business. The Panel agreed to vary the order of the agenda so that Item 9 on the published agenda would be taken as the first substantive item (Item 7). The minutes reflect the order the items were discussed rather the order on the published agenda

### **18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

None.

### **20. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July were agreed as a correct record.

### **21. HARINGEY YOUTH STRATEGY 2025-2030 ACTION PLAN**

The Panel considered a report on Haringey's Youth Strategy 2025-2030, which sought their views on the launch of the strategy and the associated plan for implementation. The report was introduced by Jackie Difolco, Director: Early Help and Prevention as

set out in the agenda pack at pages 7 – 62. The Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and families was present for this agenda item, along with the Director for Children's Services. As part of the introduction to Youth Strategy, Natasha Williams, Youth Voice and Participation Coordinator introduced a number of young people who supported the development of the Youth Strategy. The Young People spoke to the Panel about their experiences of engaging with their peers on the strategy. The young people were introduced to the Panel: Maximilian Malcom Gray; Jeremiah Kofi Boahene-Boakye; Selina Ait Mokhtar; and Yasin Dogar. The following was noted in summary of their comments:

- Jeremiah commented that there was a lot of young people in the borough who had unique talents, including in the arts. In areas such as: music, drama, dance, theatre, fashion. It was important, therefore, that young people were encouraged to find their talents, particularly as these could often be overlooked without a forum for expressing them. It was suggested that the London Borough of Culture was a way for people to come together and for them to develop their talents in a safe space. It was suggested that young people thought differently to adults and that finding further opportunities for the Council to engage with the voice of children was encouraged.
- Max emphasised the importance of education and tutoring support, through programmes such as Get your Grades. Max commented that these services were not evenly located across the borough and that accessing the Rising Green youth centre was a 30-40 minute journey each way from the west of the borough. It was suggested that there should be an expansion of the Get Your Grades up programme across the borough, in order that they influence more people. Max commented that a lack of youth provision could be a causal factor in young people becoming involved in crime. Max recounted his recent experience of being mugged at knifepoint and suggested that a number of his peer group has experienced something similar. In relation to Recommendation 6, the number of youth services in Haringey, at 110, was welcomed. It was commented that the number of people attending Rising Green was around 90 but that there were around 1075 pupils attending Fortismere alone. It was suggested that more needed to be done to publicise these services, especially through social media.
- Yasin commented that in relation to Recommendation 6 on engagement, Haringey had done some good work like Rising Green, but it was commented that this tended to happen in smaller groups. Haringey should be finding ways to spread awareness. The need to build relationships was highlighted as a key factor going forward. Yasin also suggested that Haringey needed to find ways to empower young people, including through more co-production and giving young people leading roles in the development of youth services.
- Selina praised the youth participation work in Haringey and commented that being involved in it had a positive impact on her confidence. It was commented that there was a lack of activities in the Bounds Green area for SEND individuals. It was also suggested that there needed to be more training and education on neuro diversity for both young people and adults in the borough. The positive impact of having young people in a room with people who made decisions in Haringey was emphasised and further opportunities to develop co-production with young people were encouraged.
- The Chair thanked the young people for coming along and speaking to the panel about their personal experiences.

The following arose during the discussion of this item:

- a. The Panel queried whether there was any benchmarking undertaken in this area against other boroughs, for instance in relation to the self-assessment forms. Officers responded that the National Youth Agency were collecting data and were planning to publish this, but at the minute there was only six-months data available. It was commented that there was no pan-London forum for youth services, but that the service did interact with other boroughs on good practice and possible areas of joint delivery.
- b. In light of the challenging funding environment faced by the VCS sector, the Panel enquired what capacity building work was being done to support the VCS. In response, officers acknowledged that the VCS sector was generally in a difficult budgetary position. The Council were able to offer buildings to VCS partners at a low cost in return for delivering services. Officers also set out that there was small grants locality fund, of up to £3k for application, to enable some capacity building for smaller organisations. It was also noted that there was a Haringey capacity building network in place with VCS providers, which looked at joint delivery and supporting joint funding applications.
- c. The Panel noted that 40% of services were free to access, it was queried whether there was any further information about the cost of the rest of the services and whether they were a nominal fee. In response, officers advised that the costs varied from nominal contributions to £15 per hour for some sporting activities. It was also commented that in relation to sporting activities there were also costs for young people in some cases with buying the relevant sporting equipment.
- d. The Panel questioned the extent to which promoting services to residents was hampered by concerns that they may be overrun. In response, officers commented that it was more do with not understanding how to properly utilise social media. The Cabinet Member used the example of the Summer Programme and, in particular, the £1 Swim offer for school children during the summer holidays at either Park Lane or Tottenham Green. It was suggested that there was a need to target better communications activity to advertise these services.
- e. The Panel questioned to what extent the service involved the voice of young people in commissioning. In response, officers advised that the service spoke to its young people often, they undertook surveys and they used case studies to learn good practice. The holiday activity fun programme was highlighted by way of an example. This was a £900k programme and the service made sure it was learning from outcomes all the time.
- f. A co-opted member of the Panel welcomed the contribution of the young people to the discussion and the fact that they had brought the voice and experiences of young people. It was commented that communicating with young people in a way that was accessible was crucial, especially given the prevalence of social media in 2025. It was queried what could be done to improve the service's social media communications. In response, officers reiterated that there was a gap and that they were keen to understand how to improve. Officers agreed to take forward the Cabinet Member's earlier suggestion about creating a small working group with young people to look at how improvements could be made in communications.

- g. In response to a query about location of services, officers acknowledged that around 50% were located in the east and 15% in the west. Officers commented that they were looking to develop a local Haringey youth network in order to ensure a consistent model of delivery across the borough. Officers commented that location of services and improving communications were two key objectives under the five-year strategy.
- h. The Cabinet Member stated that she would set up a meeting with Natasha and members of the youth council to discuss some of the points raised during the meeting, as well as discussing how libraries could be made more relevant spaces. **(Action: Natasha Williams)**.
- i. The Corporate Director advised that she would pick up the robbery incident outside of the meeting and speak to the police and the youth justice board to see what could be done to improve safety in that location.
- j. In relation to the concentration of services, the Chair queried whether there was any more detail about the services in terms of how many hours a week they were open, as this would be illustrative in understanding the level of disproportionality. In response, officers commented that there was a hyperlink in the document that brought up a map showing the location of each of the projects and the opening hours. The Director of Early Help, Prevention and SEND agreed to circulate a more accessible version of the map and the directory to the Panel. **(Action Jackie Difolco)**.
- k. The Panel commented that it would be good to see highlights of what was happening in the borough for young people on social media. In response, officers acknowledged the comments that had been made on social media as part of this item and noted that they would be setting up a task and finish group with colleagues in the communications team.

## RESOLVED

- I. That members of the Panel noted the contents of this report and directed any comments or observations to the Director for Early Help, Prevention and SEND.
- II. That the Panel agreed to receiving an annual progress report on the Haringey Youth Strategy.

## 22. 2025/26 FINANCE UPDATE Q1

The Panel received the Q1 2025/26 Budget Monitoring report, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 16 September. The report was introduced by the Corporate Director of Children's Services by exception, who gave an overview of the overall budget position in Children's Services and highlighted any significant areas of overspend, as set out in the second agenda pack at pages 1-144. Neil Sinclair, Head of Finance was also present for this item. In summary, the Director highlighted the following:

- a. The service was projecting a £4m overspend on a budget of £77.43M. The reasons for this were attributed to three key areas. The first was non-delivery of savings relating to digitalisation. This equated to 40k last year and £750k for this year and last year. The Corporate Director advised that the service was

- continuing to work with Digital Services to identify areas that could be made more cost effective through digitalisation.
- b. The second area of budget pressure was around non-delivery in full of the organisation wide 5% staffing savings. The service had achieved £530k of the £2.18m over two years. The Corporate Director advised that she had worked on getting the service to the right size for eight years and that it was currently at the lowest levels of agency staffing it had been. It was also noted that the service was ahead of target for reducing its overall headcount.
  - c. The third area contributing to the forecast pressure was the allocation of the social care prevention grant (£1.43m) in the budget process to offset placement pressures. The grant is ring fenced for implementing social care reforms which was not known at the time. It is currently being forecast as a pressure until the full financial implications of the reform are known.
  - d. The Panel commented that it was not always clear when cost savings were put in the budget as to how they would be achieved. In response it was acknowledged that this was a discussion better suited to the budget scrutiny process.
  - e. The Panel queried what didn't happen in regard to digital savings that meant that the savings wasn't achieved. In response, the Corporate Director advised that each directorate was apportioned a part of a wider savings target to be realised. The Director commented that achieving savings through digital change might be easier to achieve in some services than it is in Children's, given the people-focused nature of the work. Some savings had been made but the full savings target had not been met.
  - f. The Panel requested further information in relation to the closing of schools and whether there was a more comprehensive breakdown that could be provided that set out what the closure of a school looked like in terms of financial costs from redundancy etc, but also the costs associated with having a building that was no longer in use. In response, the Corporate Director commented that every school as unique and that every school had a different set of circumstances. It was commented that there was also a set of statutory processes that had to be gone through when closing a school. The Head of Finance advised that a more detailed breakdown on this would be provided as part of the Q2 report to the Panel. **(Action: Neil Sinclair).**
  - g. A co-opted Member of the Panel raised concerns about the closure of Pendarren House. In response, the Cabinet Member advised that there were no plans to close Pendarren and that the saving in question was a relatively small saving of £25k which related to generating more commercial income from the site. The Panel was given assurances that a lot of capital funding was being spent on Pendarren and that this was about generating additional income. The Cabinet Member commented that Pendarren was very popular amongst Councillors as well parents and school children.

## **RESOLVED**

Noted

## **23. CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN Q1 2025/26 PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Panel received the Q1 2024-26 Corporate Delivery Plan Performance Update, which was due to be considered by Cabinet on 16 September. The report was introduced by the Corporate Director of Children's Services by exception, who gave an overview of any areas of significant underperformance, as set out in the second agenda pack at pages 145-203. Richard Hutton, Performance Manager was also present for this item.

In summary, the Director highlighted that the Only indicator with an overall Red RAG rating was the rate of first time entrants into the youth justice system per 100k population. It was noted that the latest figure was 277 per 100k children in the borough and that this represented a 14% increase. The service would be undertaking a deep dive of the first time entrants cohort to better understand the increase. The Corporate Director commented that the Youth Justice Plan was an item on the agenda later in this meeting.

## **RESOLVED**

Noted.

### **24. HARINGEY YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024-2027 - YEAR 1 REVIEW**

The Panel received a report which provided an annual review of the statutory Youth Justice Plan for 2024-2027 which provided insight into the key strategic priorities, progress and activities undertaken over the past year. The report was introduced by Jackie Difolco, Director Early Help, Prevention and SEND, as set out in the agenda pack at pages 63-112. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was present for this agenda item, along with Cllr Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. The following arose during the discussion of the report:

- a. The Panel were advised that the Council received its first single inspection of the Youth Justice Service for 11 years in March 2025. The overall grade was good, with some outstanding features. As part of the inspection, there were six recommendations for improvement. The Panel were advised that these areas for improvement were incorporated as a feature of the latest version of the Youth Justice Plan.
- b. The Panel commented that to some extent, changes in the approach taken by the police could have an impact on performance in relation to some of the indicators in the Youth Justice Plan, and that this was largely out of our control. The Panel enquired about the extent to which the increase in first time entrants was linked to a change in approach by the Met, or something that was happening in the borough. In response, officers advised that they needed to do a deep dive into the data to get a better understanding. It was commented that the service worked closely with police colleagues who had a range of approaches at their disposal, depending on the severity of the offence. The service had set up an internal panel with Youth Justice and other partners including police to discuss intelligence on children at risk of offending, with the aim of bringing the Turnaround project to them so that the case didn't become a first time entrant into the criminal justice system.
- c. The Panel queried performance measures four and five, which related to children with emotional/mental health need and children with a substance

misuse need. The Panel questioned why the targets were set at 80% if performance was 65% and 46% respectively. In response, officers advised that the service wanted to be very ambitious for our children and that it was unlikely these targets would come down. In relation to substance misuse, the provider had seen a large turnaround of staff which may have contributed to performance. In relation to referrals to young people with emotional and mental health needs, staff were being encouraged to ensure that a referral to specialist services such as CAMHS was made.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the contents of the report and plan, and directed any comments and observations to the director of Early Help, Prevention and SEND.

### **25. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2024/25**

The Panel received the Children's Social Care Annual Performance Report for 2024/25. The report provided an analysis of the performance data and trends for measures relating to Children Looked After, Children on Child Protection Plans and Children in Need. The report was introduced by Dionne Thomas Director of Safeguarding & Social Care and Richard Hutton, Performance Manager as set out in the agenda pack at pages 113-140. The following arose in discussion of this report:

- a. The Panel sought clarification about the rate of Section 47 enquiries initiated per £100k and why Haringey's performance was not in line with its statistical neighbours. In response, officers advised that different local authorities made different decisions locally about when they would initiate a S47 enquiry. Haringey's performance in this area was ascribed to it making a local choice that exercising our safeguarding responsibilities was of paramount importance.
- b. In response to a follow up question, officers commented that to some extent this was about officers exercising their professional judgment. Officers clarified that Haringey had similar numbers of children on Child Protection Plans and a similar rate of referrals, but that varying performance in his area reflected at what point an individual child dropped out of the system. Some authorities had higher instances of Initial Child Protection Conferences and some had higher rates of S47 enquiries.
- c. The Panel sought clarification about the percentage of assessment completed in 45 working days and the extent to which a slight drop of in performance might be ascribed to a degree of complacency. In response, officers gave reassurance that there was no complacency in the team and that the service looked at performance in this area on a weekly basis. The Corporate Director advised that the service would always prioritise their capacity for seeing children and conducting the assessments. This could mean that paperwork needed to be caught up on later.
- d. The Panel queried what action had been taken in relation to the recommendations for improvement made in the Ofsted report. In response, officers advised that these areas for improvement had been taken very seriously and the service had in fact already began working to improve them prior to the Ofsted inspection in 2023. Ofsted conducted a focus visit in 2025 to test the effectiveness of the work done since 2023. Although it wasn't a graded

visit, officers advised that they received incredible feedback from Ofsted about the improvements made. Further work on each of these areas would continue.

**RESOLVED**

That the report was noted

**26. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

**RESOLVED**

That the Panel noted the work programme.

**27. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

N/A

**28. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025
- 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026
- 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026

CHAIR: Councillor Anna Lawton

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....