MINUTES OF THE Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel HELD ON Thursday, 1st October, 2026, 6.30 - 8.45 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Marc Jenner (Chair), Beverley Berrick, Mike Hodges, Marie Kristensen, Anna Lawton, Daniela Parry and Bernard

ALSO ATTENDING:

65. 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'.

66. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Orford Williams.

67. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

69. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

70. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February were agreed as a correct record.

71. 2026/27 FINANCE UPDATE QUARTER 1 (PERIOD 3)

The Panel received a report which provided details of the Council's financial position at Quarter 1 of the 2026/27 financial year including the General Fund (GF) Revenue and Capital budgets. The report was originally published as part of the agenda papers

for Cabinet on 15th September 2026. Overview and Scrutiny considered the report at its meeting on 17th September. The Panel was asked to scrutinise the elements of the budget that were relevant to its remit. The report was set out in the agenda pack at pages 9-82. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was present for this item, along with; the Director of Safeguarding and Social Care, the Director of Schools and Learning. The Cabinet Member for Children, schools and Families was also present for this item. The Head of Finance for CYPS was also present. The following arose in discussion of the report:

a. The Panel noted that the projected position for Children's Services in the General Fund at Q1 was an overspend of £3.12M. This position had been managed down through management actions from a position of circa £4.5m. Of the £3.12M projected overspend, this was made up of £2.986M of base budget pressures and £137k of non-delivery of savings (from an overall savings target of £857K). Some of the main pressures on the base budget included Home to School transport (£356k), Placements (£821k), Digital Savings (£772k), and a corporate 5% staffing reduction (£2.1M). Within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), the High Needs Block was projecting an overspend position of £8.4m.
b. In response to a question, officers advised that they did undertake benchmarking, using DfE data to understand how effective a school was at managing its budget.
c. In response to a further question, officers set out that they were working with schools to have joint procurement arrangements and that the Council was encouraging schools to work more collectively around the common problems that schools faced. It was acknowledged that there was more work to be don't in this area.
d. In response to a questions about the cost to the Council from academisation, officers advised that there were set guidelines by the DfE on what happened with a school deficit or surplus and that there was a reconciliation process between the DfE and the academy partner. There should not be a net cost to the Council arising from a school with a deficit becoming academised but, officers commented, that sometimes this did happen.
e. In response to a question, the Corporate Director advised that the level of children in care remained fairly stable at around 300, but what had changed was the complexity of need in the placements that were being made and that this created a cost pressure. The Corporate Director commented that her job was to make sure that children were in the right placement at any particular time, and that placement gave them the best life chances. The service was looking to maximise in-house provision where it could, as this was better and cheaper. There were also regional care cooperatives where local authorities worked together to manage the market better. Officers highlighted the importance of ensuring that there was wraparound support in place for young people when they had to cope with periods of their lives with physical, emotional, or mental support needs.
f. The Panel queried the £14.8M underspend identified at paragraph 8.3 of the report relating to six projects that were in pre-procurement. In response, officers commented that this related to the capital programme and that underspends would be re-profiled where appropriate. Officers set out that as with any capital

project, extensive work went into minimising the amount of borrowing that was needed.

g. In response to a follow-up question, officers advised that one of those six projects related to development properties for foster carers and the provision of larger accommodation so that foster carers could take more children. Another one of the projects related to provision of dedicated care leaver flats in Hornsey Town Hall.
h. The Chair asked the Cabinet Member to provide her reflections on the overspend. In response, the Cabinet Member set out that some of the areas of overspend were quite challenging and that some of the causes of those pressures were national issues, such as rising fuel costs. In relation to staffing numbers, it was suggested that Childrens Services was heavily reliant on face-to-face interactions and that there was a danger of increased risk to young people from reducing the numbers of staff and reducing the quality of service provided. The digital saving for Childrens Services had been requested corporately. The Cabinet Member questioned how appropriate these were in relation to Childrens Services, given the importance of relationships and the need to interact face-to-face. The Cabinet Member provided assurances that she believed everything that could be done was being done around efficiency.
i. In response to a question, officers set out that this was a progress report and that the full three year report would contain more detail. Officers responded that the pilot scheme was set up to work with families who were in debt and the offending behaviour was robbery and theft type offences. Officers commented that it was difficult to get some families to engage with the pilot as people were often reluctant to take about debt or personal finances. However, the scheme did help some families, usually with either rent arrears or Council Tax debt, through either introducing a cap or else paying off the debt all together. Officers advised that they were keen to try again with this scheme, in recognition of it having some positive results.

RESOLVED

That the Panel gave consideration to the contents of the report and, following questions to the Corporate Director of Childrens Services, submitted any recommendations that arose to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

72. HARINGEY YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2024 - 2027 - YEAR 2 REVIEW

The panel received a report which provided an update to members of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel on the second annual review of the statutory Youth Justice Plan for 2024-2027. The annual review provided insight into the key strategic priorities, progress and activities undertaken over the past year. The update was introduced by Matthew Knights, Head of Service – Youth at Risk, as set out in the published agenda pack at pages 83-138. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was present for this item, along with; the Director of Safeguarding and Social Care, the Director of Schools and Learning. The Cabinet Member for Children,

schools and Families was also present for this item. The following arose during the discussion of this report.

a. The Panel sought assurances around Priority 3 and questioned what was being done about speech and language therapy and the correlation between people who ended up in the criminal justice system who had undiagnosed SEND, including speech and language needs. The Panel commented that the number of people with speech and language needs had increased in the report. In response, officers advised that the reason the Board set this priority was because the data showed that more needed to be done by partners to focus resources in this area. It was highlighted that previously the service did not have a speech and language therapist. Now every child that came into the criminal justice system was screened for speech and language needs as part of the assessment process. Officers advised that the uptake in children being diagnosed was as a result of more children being screened and that that it also reflected in an increase in the number of children willing to sit down with the Health and Wellbeing team and undertake an assessment. Officers commented that this was a positive outcome.
b. The Chair of SEND Power commented that the Panel had received similar assurances two or three years ago, and she questioned whether the service having a speech and language therapist had just been put in place. In response, officers acknowledged that this may have been referenced previously in an annual report. The Corporate Director advised that, as the Chair of the Partnership Board, the reason she made it a priority was because there was a national issue around children not getting support or diagnosis in this area. The criminal justice system then became the last opportunity to diagnose them. The Corporate Director advised that speech and language needs tended to manifest through children with challenging behaviour in school and that this led to exclusions. It was commented that, in an ideal world, all children would have access to speech and language assessments through their primary school. The Cabinet Member echoed these comments and acknowledged that there was a significant amount of evidence that showed the importance of early childhood interventions for speech and language therapy. The Panel was advised that one of the proposals in the SEND reform white paper was the introduction of a reading test at age eight. The Corporate Director commented that she would like to see an accompanying speech and language assessment for children.
c. The Panel commented on an apparent increase in South American children entering the system and questioned the extent to which officers were cross-pollinating data to identify trends in terms of particular demographic groups. In response, officers confirmed that these conversations took place across the partnership and that they had noticed an increase in the number of Latin American children within the youth justice system. It was commented that a number of these families had been moved into the borough from elsewhere and that the service was undertaking analysis around how they ended up in the criminal justice system. Officers provided assurances that there was some bespoke work being done, but that this work was ongoing and there was more to do to cross check different data sets and identify trends.
d. The Panel commented on a seeming trend which showed an increase in young people feeling like they were not being listened to or asked their opinions, when completing the exit questionnaires as they left the service. In response, officers

acknowledged that they had reflected on this as a service. It was set out that the cohort which had completed a lot of the questionnaires were pre-court disposals, who tended to only be with the service for a short amount of time. It was suggested that the fact that they were only with the service a short time, probably meant that they didn't have much time to build a relationship with their caseworker.

e. The Panel queried what support was being offered to schools to help them maintain pupils in mainstream schools, rather than excluding them. The Panel also sought assurances around what was being done to monitor schools to ensure they were not excluding pupils from the classroom internally. In response, officers set out that there was an education worker in the service who spoke to every safeguarding lead in schools and colleges, to try and maintain young people in mainstream provision. When a person came in contact with the Youth Justice service the educational worker would make contact with that school and advocate for them to remain in school where possible. Officers set out that there were also robust monitoring processes in place in order keep on top of the data. Exclusions were monitored by the Board every three months. The Panel was advised that the service had a joint protocol in place with the SEND department to look at every single child with an EHCP in order to make sure that they were being completed and reviewed within the relevant timescales.
f. The Director of Schools and Learning commented that there was a real partnership approach in Haringey to reducing exclusions, because everyone understood that an increase in exclusions would increase the youth justice cohort. Assurances were provided to the Panel that officers did not think that schools were deliberately hiding exclusions by doing it internally. The Corporate Director commented that exclusions were something that could have a huge impact on a child's life and so the service worked hard to reduce permanent exclusions. The Panel was advised that in 2027/18 the number of Black boys who were being excluded every year was around 30 plus. This figure was down to about 15 pre-Covid and the year before last, that figure was two children. It was commented that this reflected a whole systems change, which involved the Haringey Learning Partnership and the Pupil Referral Unit.
g. The Panel sought clarification on what support services were offered to young people on remand. In response, officers clarified that there were a number of different pathways into being held on remand. A young person could be remanded into local authority care and at that point become a Child in Care and would be placed by the LA, potentially into a children's home. The second possibility was that the young person could be remanded into a youth detention facility on a secure estate. Thirdly, a young person could also be remanded into a secure estate on welfare grounds. In instances where a young person was remanded into a youth detention facility, they would be allocated a Youth Justice case manager and there was a statutory requirement for the service to visit that child whilst in custody. This included monthly remand meetings with both Youth Justice and Children's Social Care. The child would automatically become a Child in Care whilst on remand. Officers advised the same level of support would offered to every child regardless the route they took to be remanded in custody.
h. In response to a question about exclusions within the Latin American community, officers set out that the spike was a bit of a surprise. There was no

outlying figure within this cohort and it seemed to be as a result of an increase in Latin American families being placed in Haringey from out of borough. Officers gave assurances that they would continue to monitor the data for trends.

i. The Chair of SEND Power emphasised the importance of working in partnership with schools and characterised difficult behaviour as stemming from an unmet need. It was suggested that when children wanted attention they didn't necessarily distinguish between good or bad attention. It was queried whether those young people were brought into the conversations about exclusion, particularly if they were being triggered by the educational setting itself. In response the Corporate Director advised that the service had carried out an auditing exercise too understand if there were common issues. The Corporate Director had spoken to schools and agreed with them that they would call the LA if they were thinking about excluding a pupil so that the organisation could do everything it could to support them.

RESOLVED

That members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny panel noted the contents of the report and plan, and directed any comments and observations to the Assistant Director: Early Help, Prevention and SEND.

73. HARINGEY SEND AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2026 - 2029

The Panel received a report on the Haringey SEND & Alternative Provision Strategy Consultation 2026-29. Attached to the report was a copy of the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy. The report provided the Panel with an update on the outcome of the formal public consultation in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy for Haringey 2026-2029, as well as the changes that have been made to the strategy as a result of the feedback, and the next steps. The report was introduced by Jack Newton, Director: Schools & Learning, as set out in the published agenda pack at pages 139-185. The Corporate Director of Children's Services was present for this item, along with the Director of Safeguarding and Social Care, and the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. The following arose during the discussion of this report.

a. In reference to co-production and the emphasis that the strategy put on the inclusion of the voice of the child, the Chair questioned how the voice of the child was being considered for children with an EHCP, but who were homeschooled or otherwise not in a school setting and therefore may be subject to reduced provision. In response, officers advised that they were not aware of the extent to which these children were consulted as part of the strategy, but that it was recognised that those children should be involved. Officers agreed to come back with a written response to the Panel. **(Action: Jack Newton).**
b. The Panel sought clarification about how the Council supported children with SEND who didn't want to attend school. In response, officers advised that there were a variety of reasons why a child might not want to be in an educational setting, and that it was important that they were a welcoming place for all children. For a child with an EHCP, they would have a coordinator for that plan

and they would be responsible for working with the partnership in order to meet the needs of that child, as set out in that plan and to look at how they could support the family to access an educational setting. The Cabinet Member emphasised that there was also a range of alternative provision and online tutoring. The Cabinet Member also set out that it was crucial to understand why a school maybe unwelcoming and to listen to the young people about why they did not want to attend school.

c. The Chair of SEND Power commented that for a child with ADHD, the reasons that they did not want to go to school were primarily sensory i.e. noises, smells, a feeling of not being safe. It was suggested that additional funding arising from the Pupil Premium should be used to help support a child to learn at home.
d. In response to a question, officers advised that timeliness in relation to completing an assessment under the Care Act 2014 was 20 weeks and that this was a national benchmarking indicator.
e. The Panel questioned what work was being done in schools to support children to understand the needs of their peers with SEND. In response, officers advise that this was done through the Haringey Education Partnership who worked with schools directly to provide clusters around training needs. There was also an inclusionary team within Children's Service who could work with individual schools.
f. The Chair of SEND Power advised that the partnership had been visiting schools and doing coffee mornings with relevant staff including the SENCO, in order to have those conversations about how to support students with SEND. The Panel were also advised that the partnership had created a Haringey SEND Working Together Charter which set out how co-production arrangements would operate to ensure equal partnership between families, carers, and education, health, and social care practitioners for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

RESOLVED

That members of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny panel noted the contents of the report and strategy, and directed any comments and observations to the Director for Schools and Learning.

74. UPDATE ON THE GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON SCHOOLS

The Panel received a verbal update from the Corporate Director of Children's Services around the schools white paper titled "Every Child Achieving and Thriving". The Director of Schools and Learning was present for this item, along with the Director of Safeguarding and Social Care, and the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families. The following arose during the discussion of this report.

a. The Panel noted that in February the government released the long awaited white paper on schools. As an appendix to the white paper they also published their SEND strategy. It was speculated that this was to make a point around SEND inclusion within schools. The Council had previously agreed its Education Strategy, which was largely in line with the government's strategy, as it was based on inclusion.
b. The Panel was advised that the Council had submitted a local SEND reform plan over the summer, which they were waiting to hear back on. If successful, it

would come with additional grant funding of around £8.4m towards reducing the budget pressure in the High Needs Block.

c. Officers commented that that there were three reforms in this area that had links; Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, Every Child Achieving & Thriving, and the SEND reforms. It was commented that although the white paper was not legislation, the government had started to release funding to start the SEND reforms but had not yet agreed LBH's local SEND reform plan.
d. Officers set out that the SEND reforms included fundamental changes to the system, which included moving away from EHCPs as the basis for accessing services. Instead, support plans would be offered to every child who needed it and only those children who it was necessary for would have an EHCP.
e. The Panel was advised that there would be further updates to the Panel as and when appropriate.
f. The Cabinet Member gave assurances that she wanted officers to look at the physical environment of schools to ensure they were inclusive; so that there were windows that opened, the spaces were comfortable, the spaces had suitable lighting and acoustics.

RESOLVED
Noted

75. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

RESOLVED

Noted.

76. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

N/A

77. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 26 November
- 14 January
- 25 March

CHAIR: Councillor Marc Jenner

Signed by Chair ……..

Date ……