

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL
MONDAY, 21 JANUARY 2013**

Councillors: Allison, Brabazon, Christophides and Newton (Chair)

Co-opted Members: Ms Y. Denny (Church of England representative), Mr E. Reid (Parent Governor) and Mrs M. Ezeji (Parent Governor).

LC22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

LC23. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

LC24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC25. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

LC26. MINUTES

The Chair stated that further consideration should be given in the future to the expansion of Muswell Hill Primary School with a full feasibility study as it was likely that land nearby to the school would be subject to redevelopment that would increase demand for places at the school. He noted that St James' Primary School could potentially be expanded but demand for places at it was lower than for Muswell Hill. The Head of Admissions reported that this issue was currently being looked at.

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 11 December be approved.

LC27. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN

The Cabinet Member for Children reported on recent developments within her portfolio as follows:

- Formal consultation was taking place on the proposed closure of the John Loughborough School. As part of this process, two public consultation meetings were planned.
- There had been a number of recent OFSTED inspections using their new framework for inspections. Fears that the new system would lead to poorer results had proven to be unfounded as very good results had been obtained. 6 schools had improved their rating whilst two others had retained their previous status.
- 65 schools in Haringey had been open and 15 shut on the day of the meeting due to adverse weather conditions. Reasons were being sought as to why some schools closed.

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Councillor Brabazon requested details of the outcome of discussions with the Schools Forum regarding trade union facilities, The Cabinet Member agreed to report back on this issue to the next meeting. The Panel noted that the authority was not currently aware of any plans by OFSTED to inspect it in the near future.

The Panel agreed that further questions to the Cabinet Member would be taken during the consideration of individual items on the agenda for the meeting. The Panel thanked Cllr Waters for her kind assistance.

LC28. BUDGET UPDATE 2012-13

Wendy Sagar, the Interim Head of Finance for the Children and Young People's Service, updated the Panel on relevant budgetary issues.

In respect of the John Loughborough School, she reported that the land that the school was on belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist church and therefore it was unlikely to be possible to recover any of the capital that had been invested in buildings on the site. It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) had indicated that, even if an agreement had been reached with the church, any clawback agreement would not have been legally enforceable. There had been an application to open a free school in Tottenham and it was possible that the site could be used for this. In such circumstances it would be up to the DfE to determine what happened to the site and bidders would need to negotiate directly with it. There was no direct role for the local authority in this process.

The Director of Children and Young People's Services, reported that DfE policy set out the possibility of schools closing down as part of its policy to promote competition so this was unlikely to be the first instance. The application process to set up free schools in 2014 had now closed and there had been some applications for new schools in Haringey, including one for a secondary school.

The Panel noted that, based on a re-calculation applying data for October 2012, there were currently four schools at risk of being adversely affected by the revised formula for delegation for school budgets. These were:

- Campsbourne
- St Michaels CE, N6
- St Thomas More
- John Loughborough

The reductions were all due to falls in school rolls. Work was continuing to finalise school budgets, including allocation of additional resources through the minimum funding guarantee, SEN contingency and new delegation which would improve the budget for each school.

In respect of falling rolls for some schools, it was noted that these were due to students in upper year groups leaving. Demand for reception places was nevertheless still very high.

Ms Sagar reported that there continued to be budgetary pressures arising from legal costs and clients with no recourse to public funds. The claim against parties involved in the contract for expansion of Rhodes Avenue School was proceeding. The Panel noted that the delays had not directly affected admissions to the school.

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AGREED:

1. That the recommendations on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) made by the Panel at its meeting on 11 December to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be amended by;
 - The deletion of the recommendation regarding John Loughborough School and the protection of public money invested in the site; and
 - The updating of the list of schools so far identified as at risk of being adversely affected by changes to the funding formula for delegation of school budgets;
2. That the report and the projected outturn position against the approved 2012-13 revenue and capital budget be noted.

LC29. SCHOOL STANDARDS

Avi Becker, Business Intelligence Manager from the Chief Executive's Service, reported on current statistics on school standards. He reported that although Haringey's performance in the early years foundation stage had improved, authorities elsewhere had improved more with the result that Haringey's relative position had deteriorated.

John Abbey, the Assistant Director for School Improvement, stated that performance needed to be improved so that it was at least in line with local counterparts. Panel Members were of the view that the relatively good performance of primary schools in the west of the borough disguised the true extent of the challenges faced by schools in the east. It was noted that the contrast in performance within stages above key stage 1 was not as marked. The Director of Children and Young People's Services stated that she was not complacent about the west of the borough. The authority was aware that it needed to focus its attention on early years and key stage 1 and attention was being given to early intervention. One action that was being taken was to ensure that all those children who were eligible to a free nursery place were actually receiving one. In addition, using the relevant data, a number of schools had been challenged to improve their performance.

The Panel were of the view that there was a need for the authority to encourage schools to be more ambitious. Many of the performance issues that had been raised had been known for some time and there was now a need for effective action to be taken in response. They questioned why more action had not been taken when staffing resources had been greater.

The Panel felt that young people could be encouraged and inspired to achieve and that this ambition for them should apply right through from Early Years to Higher education and beyond.

The Panel noted that the final report of the Education Commission was due in February and it was hoped that it would make recommendations that would challenge the authority and facilitate improvement.

The Panel felt that the quality of teaching and non teaching staff in early years settings was very important. In addition, newly qualified teachers needed to be well supported.

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Teamwork was especially important. It was acknowledged that schools in the east of the borough faced considerable challenges and these were likely to intensify. It was noted that there were limits to how the local authority could intervene. The Panel requested to see plans for how improvements would be targeted when they were available.

Mr Becker reported that trends within the test results had generally remained static. However, there had been good progress in the percentage of students that had progressed by two levels for English and Maths, where Haringey was 12th and 56th nationally. The provisional results for GCSEs had shown figures of 57.9% of students had attained 5+ A*-C grades, including English and Maths. This was only marginally below the English average of 58.6%.

The Panel noted that the government would be implementing changes so that from 2014 a BTEC was no longer equivalent to 4 GCSEs at A* to C as part of the introduction of the English baccalaureate. However, schools across the country were currently still using this particular pathway. Schools had been responding to a national programme for BTEC. There had been some encouraging progress in closing the gaps in GCSE performance between the east and west of the borough. For example, performance for 5 GCSEs at A* to C without English and Maths was better in the east than the west. It was also possible that Haringey's performance for 5 A* to C GCSEs would be above the national average when the figures were confirmed.

In respect of post 16, the Panel noted that the average point score reflected the fact that a number of young people were only entered for two rather than three 'A' levels. Performance on average point score per entry was significantly better.

The Panel had requested information regarding the number of young people going onto further education and to where and what they would study. However, it was noted that the local authority did not have access to such information, which was held by schools. Preparing such information was also likely to have workload implications for schools and could possibly conflict with data protection provisions.

AGREED:

1. That plans by the local authority for the targeting of improvements within early years and key stage 1 be shared with the Panel when available;
2. That data for GCSE performance showing the borough's performance compared to statistical and geographic neighbours be circulated to the Panel; and
3. That in future data for geographic and statistical neighbours would be provided for all levels of education including early years.

LC30. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Director of Children and Young People's Services reported that school improvement needed to provide a sufficiently sharp challenge to schools. In the past, there had perhaps been an over emphasis on maintaining good relationships with schools. A recent report to Cabinet had defined what the relationship between

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schools and the local authority should now be in the light of recent changes. There was now a specific and defined role for the local authority in providing challenge.

The Panel noted that a school improvement strategy and plan was now being drafted. This would include the role of the local authority as well as school to school support. The work would need to be undertaken with fewer resources than previously as there was now only a small team. The work of the authority would be based on precise evidence gathering. Each school would be categorised within the plan based on OFSTED rating and intelligence and interventions would be led by this. The school improvement team would be able to implement support and to broker it as well if need be. Where appropriate and based on secure evidence, formal warning notices could be served on schools that were not performing up to standard. Intelligence was currently being gathered on all schools and consideration given to vulnerabilities. There was also self evaluation by schools built into the overall process. The strategy would be shared and consulted upon when completed.

The Panel were of the view that strong and effective governing bodies were very important and it was noted that there was provision to take action where weaknesses in specific ones were identified. The Panel felt that there should be some mechanism or fixed term to avoid ineffectual Chairs becoming sitting fixtures. They also felt that information and intelligence from parents needed to be gathered effectively and used. Parents could be reluctant to comment due to fear of victimisation. It was noted that there was the opportunity for parents to make comments via school websites or through parent questionnaires.

The Panel felt that it was important that there were appropriate checks and balances within the management of schools. There was a need to persuade all schools of the benefits of scrutiny and accountability as it had been eroded in recent years. In particular, the position of Headteacher could become very powerful and school governing bodies needed to provide a counter balance to this. It was suggested that successful governing body Chairs could be used as mentors to others.

The Deputy Director of C&YPS (Prevention and Early Intervention) reported that schools now had more autonomy and the local authority role had changed accordingly. Schools sometimes did not like challenge but there was now an opportunity and a duty on the local authority to fulfil this role. There was a need to strengthen governor support. It was accepted that there was also a need to listen to parents' views and the service would wish to report back to the Panel in due course on this issue.

AGREED:

1. That the school improvement strategy be submitted to the Panel for comment when available;
2. That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel on how parents' views are sought and incorporated in improvement plans; and
3. That the terms of governing bodies and Chairs be looked at to ensure that school governing bodies are refreshed and kept up to the highest quality.

LC31. SOCIAL WORK LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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The Head of Organisational Development and Learning reported on the training and development of social workers. The Panel noted that there was a rigorous process for ensuring that staff were appropriately trained. There were currently approximately 360 social work staff employed by the Council. 80-85% of staff were now permanent staff.

The Panel noted the following:

- Training was open to all and some parts of it were compulsory, such as supervision for managers.
- 12 days training per year was allocated to each member of staff.
- Retention rates for staff were improving.
- Sickness absence rates were currently 8.5 days per member of staff per year. The service was aiming to improve this by reducing the average by one day.
- Staff who benefitted from training were obliged to remain at the Council for two years or repay the money spent on their training.

The Panel felt that it was important that social workers visited provision used by the Council for children as part of their induction so they had an awareness of where children are likely to be placed. Visits would also ensure that they knew of the good quality of services that were provided. It was noted that staff visited the court. Induction programmes were arranged by line managers and at their discretion.

The Panel noted that case loads were now, on average, 15 per social worker. The position had improved in the last three years and there were now fewer unallocated cases. There were various mentoring schemes in place to assist social work staff. It was recognised that staff could be put under a lot of stress and reflective supervision was important to ensure that it would be contained effectively.

AGREED:

That the Children and Young People's Service be requested to include, within the learning and development framework, a requirement for social workers to visit provision used by the Council for children as part of their induction programme.

LC32. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MUNRO REPORT

Rachel Oakley, Head of Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Practice Development, reported on the response by the government and the Council to recommendations within the Munro report.

The Panel requested further information regarding the two SCRs that were currently being undertaken and the development of universal health visiting services. It noted that the outcomes of the SCRs would be available in approximately six months time. The health visiting service was now funded by Public Health. The government wished to see an increase in the number of health visitors but it was not clear yet how this would be achieved. The Council was currently looking at how it could develop the service.

It was also noted that it was planned that the principal child and family social worker for the borough would be appointed in April. The government would also be appointing a chief social worker to oversee children and adults services nationally.

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The Panel expressed concern at the possible implications of the benefits cap on families within the borough. The Director of Children and Young People's Services reported that preliminary work on the issue had been undertaken by the Community Housing Service. This included the setting up of a process to assess vulnerability and a joint vulnerability panel with other agencies. The changes would place an additional burden on the Council and a co-ordinated approach was essential.

The Panel were of the view that there needed to be clarity regarding the possible consequences of the changes and systems put in place to deal with its effects. They wished to be reassured that the necessary preparatory work by the Council and its partners was taking place. In particular, it was important that schools were fully involved in any process. It was noted that schools were likely to be affected by churn within the school population but the numbers within them were unlikely to reduce.

AGREED:

1. That lessons learnt from the two SCRs be shared with the Panel;
2. That an update be provided to the Panel on health visitors and the development of a universal service; and
3. That an update be provided to a future meeting of the Panel on arrangements being taken by the Council to address the possible effects of the benefits cap within the borough on children and young people.

LC33. WORK PLAN

The current work plan for the Panel was noted and it was agreed that the final list of items for the next meeting of the Panel would be determined outside of the meeting after consultation with Panel Members.

**Cllr Martin Newton
Chair**