

## **MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL THURSDAY, 14 MARCH 2013**

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

Co-opted Members: Ms Y Denny (Church representative) and Mr E Reid (Parent Governor representative)

### **LC34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Ms Ezeji (parent governor representative).

### **LC35. URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

### **LC36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

### **LC37. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS**

None.

### **LC38. MINUTES**

In respect of the reference to 15 Haringey schools being closed on the day of the last meeting due to adverse weather conditions, it was noted that this had been due to staff not being able to get to their workplace.

In respect of school budgets (page 2, paragraph 6), it was noted that these had now been finalised and circulated to individual schools. It was agreed that the details would also be circulated to the Panel for information.

In reference to the item on social work learning and development (page 5), it was noted that the recommendation of the Panel that social workers visit provision used by the Council as part of their induction would be taken up. It was agreed that a timetable for this would be produced.

#### **AGREED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2013 be approved.

### **LC39. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND CARBON REDUCTION/YOUTH OFFER**

The Panel agreed that Cabinet Member questions and the item on the Youth Offer would be combined.

The Chair reported that he had received a publication entitled "Misspent Youth" from a group of local residents regarding youth services as well as some questions that they had suggested that Panel Members may wish to ask as part of the item on the Youth Offer. At his request, these been circulated to Members of the Panel as well as relevant officers and the Cabinet Member. He thanked the organisation for sharing their report with the Panel and requested that a written response be provided to the

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issues and recommendations raised in the "Misspent Youth" publication together with answer to the questions that had been submitted.. The Cabinet Member stated that this had only very recently come to his attention.

The Cabinet Member stated that the budget for youth services had been subject to large reductions in recent years and circulated details of these. In the light of this, a new delivery model had been developed which was based on having a joined up approach and moving away from providing a universal service. The cuts that had been made were in addition to those that had been necessary as a result of cuts to Area Based Grant (ABG), which had been used to fund some core services. Further cuts had been necessary in subsequent years. As a result of the changes, all of the services relating to young people had been integrated.

He had nevertheless been concerned that there were not the resources in place to deliver the Youth Strategy and, as a result of this, a three year virement of £400,000 per annum had been made. One key target had involved addressing involvement in gangs. Services had also focused upon expanding their remit down to 8 year olds and working with NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). In addition, it had also recently been possible to provide the service with an additional £200,000 per annum to fund action to prevent children coming into care. It was nevertheless difficult to make comparisons of the service as it existed now and as it was before the budget reductions as they were not the same.

In response to a question, he reported that he shared concerns about the effectiveness of the Youth Service. It was very important that services reflected what young people wanted and adapted to current trends. The challenges faced by the service were the same as those in other local authority areas. The service was in competition with gang culture and needed to provide a viable alternative. A combination of hard work and different skills were required for improvement in the service.

A range of activities had been provided for young people as part of the summer programme in 2012. These had been very popular with young people, with 1500 attending. The Panel commented that the majority of the activities appeared to be male orientated. Panel Members requested further details of levels of participation in the summer scheme as well as evaluations and outcomes. They also asked whether a requirement to provide evaluation was part of the contract for bodies that were commissioned to deliver programmes.

The Director of Children's Services stated that the service had not currently got the quality of information that it should have and agreed that a framework would be developed. The summer programme had needed to be developed quickly but had been very successful in attracting young people. She reported that plans were currently being made for the extension of the age range that was catered for, including ensuring that staff had the necessary skills. The service was currently looking at children who had been excluded in order to target effectively.

The Panel were of the view that it was essential for there to be rigorous monitoring of provision to ensure that it was value for money. In particular, a baseline needed to be established so it was possible to identify the value of programmes. They requested details of the specific targets within the Youth Strategy and how they would be monitored.

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The Cabinet Member stated that, as the offer for the summer programme had been universal, the number of attendees was therefore an appropriate measure. Data collected needed to be of real value. The vision for the service was important and it was essential to be clear how many children and young people were potentially at risk from behavioural issues. The Director of Children's Services reported that proper registers of attendance were kept but these were paper ones. Analysis of data had a cost but the service was nevertheless addressing this issue.

In respect of the Bruce Grove Youth Centre, it was noted that it was currently open four times per week with one of these sessions open to all. Other activities were targeted at particular groups. Activities were also offered at Muswell Hill and Wood Green. In Wood Green, the majority of these were provided by Tottenham Hotspur and the Boxing Academy.

In response to a question from the Panel regarding publicity, the Cabinet Member reported that he was not yet confident that all young people knew about available activities. There was currently a Facebook page but it was acknowledged that sometimes the information was outdated. Whilst it could be a challenge, publicity nevertheless needed to be improved. In particular, work needed to be undertaken with schools. However, one of the key characteristics of youth services was that it was separate from school.

He acknowledged that Bruce Grove Youth Centre was no longer open for five days per week. However, it had not closed but was being run on a different basis to how it had before the budget reductions. The Council was not always best placed to deliver activities and it was important to ensure that all partners were effectively engaged. Extension of provision would have cost implications but officers had been asked to explore this. However, consideration would have to be given to how many additional young people the centre was likely to be able to serve and how cost effective provision it would be.

The Panel noted that the Youth Offending Service saw approximately 300 clients in a year. It was a multi disciplinary service that provided a range of interventions. There were currently 64 staff, including secondees and attachments. The Panel noted that small numbers of young people could be the source of significant cost pressures. The next set of savings were being developed based on the assumption of better services targeted at early intervention and prevention. This was consistent with Ministry of Justice guidance.

The Chair reported that Exposure had been commissioned to make a film about gangs in 2012. He requested information on whether this had been shared with schools yet as a learning resource. The Director of Children's Services agreed to check to see if this was happening.

### **AGREED:**

1. That the Cabinet Member for Finance and Carbon Reduction be requested to provide a written response to the questions submitted to Panel Members by local residents regarding the youth offer;

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2. That a written response be provided to the issues and recommendations raised in the publication "Misspent Youth";
3. That the following further information be requested from the Children and Young People's Service:
  - A breakdown of the budget for youth services for the last two years; and
  - Key targets, monitoring details and performance data;
4. That the Children and Young People's Service be recommended to develop a more rigorous system of monitoring the effectiveness of services provided as part of the youth offer;
5. That the film regarding gangs commissioned from Exposure in 2012 be taken forward and developed as a learning resource for use in schools etc.; and
6. That the Children Young People's Service provide further details to Panel Members of the "offer" at Muswell Hill.

### **LC40. CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Panel welcomed Peter Catling and Renata Bailey from Woodlands Park Children's Centre Noel Park and Woodside Children' Centre who had been invited along to the meeting give their views. Cllr Brabazon declared that she was Chair of the cluster of Children's Centres in the south of the borough but did not consider this to be prejudicial to the item.

In response to a question, the Deputy Director of Children's Service reported that the contractors responsible for undertaking the review of Children's Centres had been asked to invite any interested parties to contribute to their work. She agreed to ensure that Councillors were included within this.

In respect of the review, Mr Catling felt that it was useful to have an external view on how provision was progressing. The current model had only been operational for a year though. It was now in its second year and it was possible to see its impact. He also felt that a more participatory approach could have been adopted for the review. Ms Bailey also felt that the external perspective was welcome in helping to refocus the service.

The Deputy Director reported that significant sums of money had been taken out of the service two years ago and the review would look at the impact of these. Efforts had been made to re-balance service provision in favour of early intervention. The review would look at how effective current provision for Children's Centres was. Even if it confirmed that the service was the best that could currently be aspired to, this would nevertheless be of value.

Mr Catling felt that the provision of effective leadership should be added to the principles underpinning the service. It was noted that delivering child care was an expensive element. The Head of Early Years reported that comparisons would be made with other local authorities and consideration given to how services could be delivered in the most cost effective way. Good quality childcare needed to be provided but was expensive. The service wished to ensure that it was delivered to those that needed it most.

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Mr Catling stated that childcare was part of an effective early intervention strategy. Children's Centres were one stop shops and were able to support families very well. Childcare needed to be seen as part of a bigger picture and not separate.

It was noted that discussions were taking place with NHS colleagues about the provision of a health visiting service at the Highgate Family Centre. Places for two year olds were available at the Centre. Such places were not exclusively provided in Children's Centres and any centre providing good quality care could be considered. Plans were being made for the forthcoming changes in public health. The school nurse service would be switching to the Council in April whilst health visiting would transfer in 2014. The Director of Children's Services agreed to report back on any plans that there might be for using public health funding for Children's Centres.

In respect of the Haringey 54000 project, the Panel noted the importance of having good preventative services in order to avoid issues escalating. The vast majority of the resources within C&YPS were currently focussed on either looked after children (LAC) or safeguarding. The service was probably intervening in cases which other local authorities would not act upon. 80% of resources were currently spent on either LAC or safeguarding. The service would be aiming to reduce this to 60% through delivering further savings in future years. The budget was being re-profiled to see how resources might best be re-invested in areas which would deliver the most impact. Early years services delivered a particularly major impact. Decisions on the future development of Children's Centres would be for Members to take and it was hoped that a range of options would be presented. It was hoped that the review would give the service a strong platform to progress from.

In respect of provision for 2 year olds, it was noted that the service would only develop such services within provision that was rated as either good or outstanding. There were currently set staffing ratios but these could be subject to change as a result of proposals by the government. The new ratios were discretionary but had the potential to seriously impact on the quality of work undertaken as the new ratios were nearly double the current ones.

Mr Catling stated that a lot of children who attended Children's Centres had higher levels of need. Services currently aimed to support families at the highest levels of risk but the current changes were more focussed on getting people into work. The Council would need to take a position on the future direction of the service. It was also important that services knitted together well at a strategic level. Ms Bailey stated that not all services currently appeared to be working to the same outcomes and further work was needed to remedy this. The Director of Children's Services reported that there was a need to consider shared outcomes and how services could work more smartly together and this would also be considered as part of the review process.

### **AGREED:**

1. That the final report of the review of Children's Centres be submitted to the Panel when available; and
2. That further information be provided to the Panel on the potential use of public health funding for Children's Centres.

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**LC41. "OUTSTANDING FOR ALL" - REPORT OF THE HARINGEY EDUCATION COMMISSION**

The Director of Children's Services reported that work of the Education Commission had constituted a very helpful intervention. The report had focused on how the service could regain the progress that it had previously made. A positive meeting on the report had taken place with secondary Head teachers, who had wanted to add their own suggestions into the process. The Leader of the Council had also contributed to the feedback. These contributions would be reported back to the Commission. Plans were currently being formulated on taking forward the outcomes of the review. Stakeholders would be kept informed of progress. Recommendations would be produced by July which would include various options. Improved support for governors would be included in improvements as well as better information flows.

It was acknowledged that work would have to be undertaken quickly so that discussions could take place before the school summer holidays and consideration would be given to bringing forward decisions to June. In particular, the service wished to re-launch the governors support unit in the autumn.

Work would be undertaken to improve links to universities including those within the Russell Group and a partnership group was looking at this. In response to a question, it was agreed that further work would be done on the number of "A" levels that individual pupils were taking and whether there was scope to work with schools to encourage them to take a greater number.

A voluntary sector partner was being commissioned to look at the role of parents. It was accepted that the service had not always been good at asking parents for their views but the service was now committed to address this. A parents reference group was being set up and co-opted Members of the Panel would be very welcome to become involved in this.

It was noted that criticism within the report was not of governors but of the support that had been offered to them. A new head of governors had been recruited and would be looking at making the improvements required.

In respect of the future of the Teachers Negotiating Group, this would be reviewed and advice was being sought from London Councils on this. It was nevertheless necessary to have somewhere for discussions to take place. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services stated that the quality of teaching in schools was of paramount importance. The Council nevertheless wished to be a good employer and a balance needed to be achieved. Head teachers were responsible for managing schools and it was only fair that they were able to have an input into the discussions.

The Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member confirmed that all the recommendations of the Commission's report had been agreed. The Panel also endorsed the recommendations. However, Councillor Brabazon stated that she was unable to support the recommendations concerning school governing bodies (recommendation 5) and the abolition of the Teachers' Negotiating Group and wished her dissent to be recorded.

**AGREED:**

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1. That the Panel noted that the recommendations in the report of the Education Commission had been agreed and wished to add their endorsement of the report and its recommendations; and
2. That a further report be made to the Panel on the proposed action plan for implementing the recommendations of the report.

**LC42. CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PRACTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE/CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Chair reported that the current arrangements involving the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee seemed to be operating well. However, in the case of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee, he thought the work of this body could now be undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services reported that discussions had taken place as part of the governance review regarding the possibility of scrutiny undertaking elements of the challenge role that was currently provided by these bodies. Whilst the Cabinet was happy for this to happen, they would need reassurance that the in-depth work that these bodies currently undertook would continue and the independent member on the Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee would also be maintained. The Director of Children's Services reported that the service valued the work of both bodies and would not wish to lose its contribution.

The Cabinet Member reported that this was an issue for the whole of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

**AGREED:**

That, in order to clarify the input that would be required by overview and scrutiny, the Director of Children and Young People's Services be requested to circulate a note of the responsibilities and role of both the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee to the Panel.

**LC43. SCHOOL PLACES**

It was noted that a final report outlining the conclusions and recommendations of the Panel's work on school places was currently being drafted and would be circulated to the Panel for comment before submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 April.

**LC44. WORK PLAN**

The current work plan for the Panel was noted and it was agreed that the review of Children's Centres be added to it.

**LC45. VOTE OF THANKS**

It being the last meeting of the Panel for the current Municipal Year, the Chair was thanked by the Panel for his work as Chair. The Chair thanked Members and officers for their kind assistance and co-operation.

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**Cllr Martin Newton  
Chair**