

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL
TUESDAY, 16 JULY 2013**

Councillors: Browne, Bull, Christophides, Engert and Newton (Chair)

Co-opted Members: Ms Y Denny (Church representative), Ms M Ezeji (parent governor representative) and Mr. E Reid (parent governor representative)

LC46. WEBCASTING

The Chair welcomed all present and informed them that the meeting was being webcast.

LC47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brabazon. The Panel noted that Councillor Browne was attending the meeting as a substitute Member in her place.

LC48. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

LC49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC50. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

LC51. TERMS OF REFERENCE

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

LC52. MINUTES

In respect of the item concerning the Youth Offer, the Chair stated that responses to the recommendations were still awaited. The Deputy Director of the Children and Young People's reported that there had been agreement to provide the budgetary information requested and arrangements would be made to circulate this shortly. The Cabinet Member for youth had also circulated two documents regarding the future model for services for young people – "Hunch – A Vision for Youth in Post Austerity Britain" and "Youth Services in England". It was felt that, rather than focussing on the past, it would be a better use of resources to consider instead future plans for the offer. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in September on these. This would include a response to issues raised in the "Misspent Youth" document, plans for the future arrangements for the offer as well as relevant performance targets.

The Chair stated that he felt that a response was still needed to the issues that had been raised by the authors of the Misspent Youth in recognition of their efforts and enthusiasm for youth services. The Deputy Director stated that the report was anonymous and it had therefore been difficult to engage with the authors. She would nevertheless raise the issue with the Cabinet Member.

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In respect of the item on Children's Centres, Cllr Engert requested that a report come to a future meeting of the Panel on future provision for health visiting. In particular, she wished to know when it would revert to being a universal service. The Director of Children's Service stated that the Children's Public Health Commissioner had put together a report on such services. She noted that school nurses were now able to provide a wider service as capacity was now 30% higher due to less resources being required for safeguarding. It was hoped that, when health visiting switched to Council control, similar progress could be made in this area.

AGREED:

That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel regarding health visiting services and their future development.

LC53. CABINET MEMBERS QUESTIONS - CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN

The Panel received an update from Councillor Anne Waters, the Cabinet Member for Children, on the main areas of work that were currently taking place within her portfolio.

She reported that the schools adjudicator had supported Haringey's recommendation regarding the closure of the John Loughborough School. The Children and Young People's Service was now working with the school to address the needs of children and young people affected by the closure. The Council's admissions team would assist any of them who wished to transfer to another Haringey school, although many students had come from outside of the borough. The school was scheduled to close at the end of term.

The schools adjudicator had commented that the Council had managed the consultation very well, particularly the formal element. He/she had nevertheless felt that informal engagement could have been improved. The school had been critical of the consultation. However, the Council had endeavoured to work closely with them. The decision to close the school had come after a long period of poor results and should not therefore have been a surprise to them. It had hoped to find a sponsor but the only one that they had found had not been acceptable to the Department for Education (DfE). The Council's view had been that it could not wait any longer for improvements to be made. All other secondary schools within the borough were now rated as either good or outstanding.

In response to a question regarding the setting up of free schools, Cllr Waters reported that the Council had worked effectively with proprietors and they had all so far been located in areas where they were of benefit to the Council. There were currently proposals for a third free school to be set up within the borough but no site had as yet been identified for it. It was noted that officers were currently working on a response to the government's recent consultation of children's homes.

The Cabinet Member stated that whilst most of the focus had been on addressing the needs of children and young people who were at risk of under achieving, consideration also needed to be given to ensuring that gifted and talented children met their potential and agreed to submit a paper to a future meeting of the Panel on this issue.

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The Chair requested an update on proposals to expand St James' and St Mary's schools. He also raised the issue of the possible adoption of revised admission procedures for faith schools which became academies and the possible impact of this on the availability of school places. The Cabinet Member stated that the development of the two schools was still at an early stage and a report was likely to go to Cabinet in the autumn. She reported that five church schools had recently converted to academy status but none had so far changed their admission arrangements, although they had nevertheless retained their faith element. It was clearly in the Council's interests to keep the criterion open and was an important part of the expansion discussion. She agreed to report back to the Panel on this issue in due course.

The Panel noted that Haringey 6th Form Centre had recently only been rated as satisfactory. The Cabinet Member reported that the Centre had decided to become an academy and there was therefore less scope to influence its future direction. It was nevertheless important that there was a good 6th form centre in the borough. Jon Abbey, Assistant Director (School Improvement) stated that data regarding the Centre had been looked at. Overall achievement was good but there was challenge with particular subjects. The Centre also needed to address the aspirations of students more effectively. In addition, consideration needed to be given to marketing so that it was an attractive option to prospective students.

The Panel noted that all schools in the west of the borough had their own 6th forms and it was therefore unlikely that young people from them would decide to go to the 6th form centre. Its catchment area therefore tended to be Wood Green and Tottenham. The Assistant Director agreed to provide data on where students attending the Centre came from. It was also noted that the number of admissions was slowly dropping, including a 5% reduction in those attending from out of borough.

Concern was expressed by Panel Members that parents had not been informed of the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection on the Centre. The Cabinet Member stated that it was the responsibility of the Centre to provide the necessary information and expressed surprise that this might not be the case. She had no doubt that it would be available on the Centre's website. She pledged that the Council would work with the Centre to make improvements. There was faith in the capacity of its leadership to bring about the necessary changes.

The Deputy Director of C&YPS reported that the inspection had been undertaken under the previous inspection framework and, under this, the Centre would have been obliged to make the report available. It had been allowed to convert to academy status without the need for an external sponsor, which was a clear indicator that it not considered to be failing. The Panel noted that the Centre was not failing but were nevertheless of the view that parents should be made aware of the outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection.

AGREED:

1. That an update be made to a future meeting of the Panel on plans to expand St James and St Mary's schools; and
2. That the Assistant Director (School Improvement) be requested to circulate admission data on where students of Haringey 6th Form Centre come from.

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3. That a paper on ensuring gifted and talented children met their potential be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

LC54. PROGRESS REPORT - RESPONSE TO THE OUTSTANDING FOR ALL COMMISSION'S FINAL REPORT

The Chair reported that there had been discussion of this issue at the recent Council meeting and, in particular, recommendations 1 to 4. However, the other recommendations were also important. He requested further information regarding how the issue of ineffectual governing body Chairs was to be addressed as well as the introduction of the pupil passport.

The Assistant Director (School Improvement) reported that, in respect of governance, parent governors had been invited to meet with the interim Head of Governor. Role profiles had been developed in order to ensure clarity in terms of expectations. Two prototypes had also been developed for pupil passports. One of these had now been agreed for trialling. In respect of recommendation 10, three dates had now been agreed for open public meetings. It was hoped to attract as many parents as possible to these. In response to the suggestion that area forums could be used for this purpose, the Cabinet Member stated that the audience would not necessarily be the same. They could nevertheless be used to get people interested in relevant educational issues.

Lisa Redfern, Deputy Director (Commissioning) reported that one of the 12 recommendations for Outstanding for All was to commission an advocacy service for parents who may require advice on appealing when their choice of school had been turned down and on school exclusions and similar.

The Panel noted that the government aimed to promote a mixed economy of schools. The government's ultimate aim was to remove the authority of local Councils in respect of schools and this was acknowledged as the direction of travel. Schools could now choose which services they bought back from local authorities. Haringey currently went above and beyond what some other Councils offered and did not currently bill schools for services, although this approach might need to be reconsidered. The Council's role was now more one of influence rather than command and control.

The Panel requested information on the 29% of borough schools that were not good or outstanding and how many were Council maintained. It was agreed that the service would respond in writing to this.

The Panel noted that, in respect of additional recommendation 1, Christine Gilbert, the former Head of OFSTED, had been appointed as schools champion. Her role would be to scrutinise and challenge and provide an expert perspective. It was also noted that the role was now paid rather than voluntary.

The Cabinet Member stated that academies were not obliged to collaborate with the Council in the work that was being done but the converted schools were still very committed to working with the borough and had stated that they wished to remain as part of the borough's family of schools.

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That the Panel be provided with further information on the 29% of schools within the borough that are currently not classified as good or outstanding by OFSTED and, in particular, whether they are maintained schools.

LC55. HARINGEY 54000 PROGRAMME UPDATE

Kostas Androulakis, Programme Manager for Haringey 54000, reported on the further development of the project. He stated that work to inform the project was still being undertaken with other local authorities in order to learn from their experience. In addition, meetings had been taking place with external providers who had relevant experience. There were various different models that could be used. For example, it was possible for providers to be remunerated according to the outcomes that they achieved and this could be targeted around particular services. There was also the social enterprise model where local authorities put resources into an organisation to deliver particular services. Savings above a certain threshold could be shared between the provider and the Council. Alternatively, the local authority could opt to set up a social enterprise organisation to undertake this work and not benefit directly from any of the savings made.

It was noted that an external provider had undertaken a needs analysis using some software which the Council did not have and had been able to show where the blockages with referrals occurred. They had also been able to give the Council the benefit of their expertise on areas such as unit costs and benchmarking, as well as best practice from elsewhere. The Director of C&YPS commented that the Police were the majority referrer. Although the aspiration was to deal with referrals quickly, if too many cases were referred, delay could be caused. Work was being undertaken to identify the source of the most effective referrals. It was agreed that the outline brief for the external provider would be shared with the Panel.

The Panel requested further information on how the contract and the work undertaken by the external provider would be monitored and scrutinised. It was agreed that the service would raise this with the Council's procurement team. It was noted that this role was undertaken in Birmingham by the Council's Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

AGREED:

1. That the brief for the outline strategic partner be shared with the Panel; and
2. That it be recommended that clarity in respect of responsibility for the monitoring and scrutiny of the strategic partner be sought and included within the procurement process.

LC56. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2013-15 DELIVERY PLAN

The Chair suggested that, in addition to minimising the number of children living in temporary accommodation, the Council should also aspire as part of the strategy to reduce the time that they spent there. It was noted that the Delivery Plan had not yet been signed off by the Children's Trust.

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The Panel noted that an analysis of how the pupil premium was being spent was to be produced and that OFSTED were interested in this particular issue. The Director of C&YPS reported that this would have to be commissioned in due course as the service did not currently have the capacity to do this. It was agreed that the analysis would be submitted to the Panel when it was available.

In respect of ensuring that sufficient high quality provision for the September Guarantee, the Deputy Director reported that the indications were that there were enough places. The service was trying to ensure that these were well matched to what young people wished to do. This was a developing offer

In response to a question, the Director of C&YPS reported on the troubled families initiative. The Council was currently working with 337 families but needed to identify a number more. 20% of the funding was payable by results and the first claim had now been made. The programme provided the opportunity to explore new ways of working with families. Outcomes to date had been promising. These included better attendance at school and less anti social behaviour. However, employment initiatives had been less successful so far.

The Panel expressed concern at the numbers of children living in overcrowded households. It was noted that the Strategy was Council-wide and included housing services. There was a continuing need for engagement between C&YPS and housing services. It was possible to undertake some actions to mitigate the effects of overcrowding on children through, for instance, the provision of quiet study areas.

The Panel noted that the target for the provision of nursery places for two year olds was 882 places as opposed to the number quoted in the delivery plan. It was felt that the target for take up should be higher. The Director of C&YPS commented that she felt that the 85% target was not aspirational enough and stated that the target would be reviewed. The government expectation was a take up of 90%.

The Panel noted that a Big Lottery fund bid had been made to fund work with families in four wards in the east of the borough. The bid had successfully got past the first stage of the bidding process.

AGREED:

1. That the comments made by the Panel be incorporated into the updated Delivery Plan and a further report made to the Panel in due course; and
2. That an analysis of how the pupil premium is being spent be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

LC57. UPDATE ON AB AND CD JUDGEMENT

The Chair queried why, in respect of Section 47 enquires, reviews were only taking place on samples constituting 30% of cases, as well as 10% of these on whether parental consent to share information had been obtained. The Director responded that this was due to the large volume of such cases. Another separate review regarding the issue of consent was also being undertaken alongside the review on Section 47 cases.

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The Panel noted that the volume of Section 47 enquiries was comparatively high due to local thresholds sometimes being low. This was a legacy of past issues that had affected the borough. The consent review would look at what had become custom and practice and report back to the MASH Board.

In respect of the specific case that had led to the judgement, the Director of C&YPS stated that the issue of whether it had crossed thresholds had been a matter of judgement for the social worker concerned. It had been in response to an anonymous tip off which had needed investigation. The IT system at that time did not provide for the recording of parental consent.

The Panel noted that Section 47 required a judgement on whether a child was at risk from serious harm. The Director reported that, in the case in question, a judgement was made that a child was at risk. Such a judgement might not have been made in other boroughs where thresholds for intervention were not normally as low. The vast majority of referrals came from the Police and the general expectation was that any concerns would be raised with parents in the first instance. There were currently 10-15 Section 47 referrals per week.

The Director reported that the case and the judgement had been subject to detailed discussion at the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee. There were aspects of the judgement that had surprised professionals and it had been the subject of debate internally. Several reports had been made to Members and, in addition, a letter had been sent to them all explaining what had happened.

The judgement had included consideration of the circumstances where it might be possible to dispense with the need for parental consent before sharing information with partners. The pattern of working had now changed in response to the judgement and referrers were now regularly being advised to go back and engage with parents before proceeding further. The quality of engagement was also being improved. The average number of MASH meetings per week had declined from 20 to 2. Record keeping had also been improved. This included a record of why any decision not to obtain parental consent had been made.

AGREED:

That a further report be submitted to the Panel in due course on the outcome of the external reviews arising from the judgement.

LC58. UPDATE ON SOCIAL WORK TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

The Panel noted 33.5 staff had resigned in the last year from their social work roles with the Council. The Assistant Director (Children and Families) reported that this represented 14.9% of the total which was not cause for concern although figures in recent years had been slightly better. In response to this, exit interviews were now being promoted so that a clearer understanding of how staff regarded working for the service could be obtained. Large investment had been made by the government in work with troubled families and this had created new posts and opportunities for qualified staff. It had therefore become a more competitive market. In such circumstances, Haringey needed to be seen as an attractive place to work.

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The Panel commented that that the number of staff that had undertaken to have an exit interview was very low and, in view of the increase in the number of staff leaving, increasing this needed to be made a priority. The Assistant Director stated that a plan was in place to offer an exit interview for all leavers. This was driven by a genuine desire to gain an understanding of their motivation. 29 new staff had also been recruited meaning that the service was only currently 3 posts down.

AGREED:

1. That the Children and Young People's Service be recommended to prioritise increasing the number of social workers undertaking exit interviews after resigning from their posts; and
2. That a further update on social work training and recruitment be made to the Panel in three months time.

LC59. WORK PLAN

Panel Members were of the view that there needed to be an in-depth discussion on the future of services for young people and that a special meeting of the Panel should be arranged for this purpose.

AGREED:

1. That the draft work place be approved; and
2. That a special meeting of the Panel be arranged to consider the future development of the youth offer.

**Cllr Martin Newton
Chair**