

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 4TH JULY, 2019, 10:30.**

## **PRESENT:**

**Councillors: Lucia das Neves (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Erdal Dogan, Adam Jogee, Khaled Moyeed.**

**Luci Davin and Yvonne Denny**

**Also Present: Cllr Mike Hakata**

### **30. 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'.

### **31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Chapman.

### **32. URGENT BUSINESS**

It being a special meeting under Part 4, Section B, Paragraph 17 of the Council's Constitution, no other business was considered at the meeting.

### **33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

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

None.

### **35. MTFS UPDATE - REVIEW OF INVEST TO SAVE ITEMS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Committee received a report on the proposed Invest to Save programme in Children's Services. In considering these proposals the Committee was asked to provide feedback and/or recommendations for Cabinet's consideration. We noted that there were significant pressures on the Children's Services budget and that these proposals sought to utilise flexible capital receipts to reduce demand pressures on the

Council's revenue budget. The report was introduced by Cllr Zena Brabazon, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, as set out in the second dispatch agenda pack.

### In-house Foster Care.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the In-house foster care proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. This proposal involved increasing the number of in-house foster carers and the recruitment of a new team of social workers to facilitate this. The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. The Committee sought assurances from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families about whether Haringey could realistically recruit the number and calibre of staff required. The Cabinet Member advised there were currently 424 Children in Care, some of whom required extensive, and often costly, levels of support and care. The Committee were advised that without undertaking a different approach, nothing would change and those cost pressures would increase. Aside from the financial aspect, the Cabinet Member set out that it was important to try and bring those children with placements outside of the Borough back to Haringey and that having an in-house foster team would support this. As part of proposals for developing an in-house foster care service, there would be an investment in skills and training to improve staff skillsets.
- b. In response to a question around confidence in the ability of the service to recruit foster carers, officers acknowledged that this was a challenge nationally but that, following the recruitment of 10 foster carers last year, they were confident it could be achieved. Officers advised that they were seeking to engage with a number of other groups to widen the potential pool of foster carers, such as faith groups and the voluntary sector.
- c. In response to a question around expected timescales, officers advised that it was a three year plan and work was underway to recruit a lead officer for this project. The project also required specialist social workers who would be responsible for recruiting foster carers.
- d. The Committee sought clarification about what it was that was being brought back in-house, in response officers advised that rather than using an external agency to recruit foster carers, they would be recruited internally. This would ensure greater control over who was recruited as well as significant savings.

### Additional Foster Care Rooms.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the In-house foster care proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. The proposal involved increasing foster placement capacity through the funding of housing adaptations for existing in-house foster carers who had been assessed as being suitable for taking on additional placement. A survey of 57 in-house foster carers had been undertaken and a number of carers were interested in fostering a further child if the authority was able to fund an extension to their property. The first cohort of applications to be considered would be tenants of Homes for Haringey, with foster carers who owned their own homes to be the second cohort. For each room created, it was anticipated that the cost saving would be around £20k per annum based on the cost of the Independent Fostering Agency placement. The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. The Committee sought assurances about the safeguards in place to protect the Council's investment in creating additional rooms in the houses of foster carers. Officers advised that this project would be for HfH managed properties in the first instance, and privately owned homes second. The Committee was also advised that each case would require a thorough business case and that each application would be considered on its own merit. As part of the fostering process, potential foster carers underwent a thorough assessment programme, which included assessing their motivations for fostering as well as their financial position. In addition, any investment would be safeguarded by a legal agreement protecting the Council's investment.
- b. The Committee set out that it was slightly apprehensive about providing investment to expand privately owned homes, particularly in terms of a perception that foster care was becoming a more transactional process. Concerns were raised about what would happen to the property in the event of a foster carer becoming ill and being unable to provide care. In response, officers advised that any case would be considered on its own merits, which included consideration of how long it would take to make up that investment. It was suggested that the investment could be calculated on a pro-rata basis, on say an annual basis, if necessary.
- c. In response to a question, officers set out that the estimated average cost of an extension was £30k therefore, on the basis of a saving of £20k per placement, it was anticipated that the average return on investment would be around 18 months.
- d. In response to a question around what the success levels were from a similar GLA led scheme, officers advised that it was difficult to say as the GLA scheme had only been launched around a few months ahead of this proposal and was still at an early stage.
- e. In response to a request for further information around the survey undertaken, officers advised that of the 51 people spoken to, 17 were interested. Of those 17, four people had been assessed (who were all HfH tenants) and two of those were thought to be good candidates. Overall, officers advised that they were confident that there was sufficient demand from HfH residents around this offer to make the proposal viable.
- f. The Committee enquired about what support could be offered to foster carers who lived in flats and were unable to have an extension. In response, officers advised that flexible arrangements could be put in place and that in the past foster carers had been relocated to larger properties.
- g. The Committee commented that a key consideration in the fostering process should be ensuring that the child was kept within the catchment area it was from, in order to maintain contact with wider family networks such as grandparents.

### Family Centre

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the Family Centre proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. The proposal was to establish the Family Centre at the Maya Angelou Centre to undertake necessary parenting assessments when children were subject to legal cases or to care proceedings. The provision of specialist in-house staff such as a clinical child psychologist would provide a higher standard of support and, ultimately, help ensure that the correct outcomes were

reached in court. It was highlighted that this set up was long overdue and it would save the Council a significant amount of money.

The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. The Chair enquired about the risks and challenges of this proposal, and whether resource costs were factored in. In terms of resource costs, officers advised that the Family Centre would be adding to the efficiency of the building as the Family Centre was already in use. In response to a question about some of the risks involved, officers advised that there was always an element of risk from conducting assessments within a contained environment and that it did not always reflect 'real life'. It was important to ensure that the centre was well managed with strong supervisory roles in place. Management also needed to be clear about caseloads and the management of those caseloads. The Committee were advised that Enfield had significant success with a similar model at Moorfield Road Health Centre and that the Council would be working with colleagues in Enfield to ensure best practice and build confidence in the service.
- b. In response to a question, officers advised that the total amount of in-house staff would be 12. Officers explained further that savings would come from two areas: specialist purchasing assessments and a reduction of legal costs.
- c. Officers confirmed that there would be only one Family Centre in the Borough.
- d. In response to an enquiry about language support, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care explained that there were staff within the Service that were multi-lingual and had multiple skills and degrees. It was also highlighted that the Council had a contract with a translation service.
- e. The Committee requested that relevant future budget scrutiny reports included an assessment of the ratio of social worker assistants to social workers. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families acknowledged this request.  
**(Action: Beverley Hendricks).**

### Edge of Care

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the Edge of Care service proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. It was noted that the aim of this proposal was to provide an intensive intervention service, which was targeted to young people between the ages of 13-16. It involved recruiting a team of social workers, family support workers, a CAMHS worker and an administrator. It was highlighted that the service proposal involved working in schools, in collaboration with Heads and Governors, to deliver this work.

The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. In response to concerns around the next steps for the young person after the service had ended and whether a step-down package was provided, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care clarified that the Edge of Care service involved rapid work to stabilise what triggered the young person's circumstances and to define the root cause, in order to avoid the young person returning into care. The Committee sought further assurances about the length of the three month intervention period and whether this was adequate. The Committee requested that further consideration be given around what

happened after the end of the three month period and whether a step-down package could be offered. **(Action: Beverley Hendricks).**

### The Pause Programme

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the Pause programme proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. It offered women an 18-month, individually tailored programme of support. As a condition of the programme, women it was a requirement that women did not get pregnant for the duration of the programme. The savings arose from the avoidance of going to court and other costs that would otherwise be borne by the local authority for the care of the child. Partnership underpinned the work and it included an investment in two practitioners and practice co-ordinator. The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care further explained that the programme model targeted mothers that have had a difficult life, such as rough sleeping, exploitation and substance misuse. It was noted that there were a number of other boroughs with similar programmes. It was hoped that the programme would be launched when funding was approved.

The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. The Chair suggested that the recommendation be around analysis and confidence in addressing ethical and human rights issues and suggested that this should come back to the Children's Panel for more detailed discussion. In addition, the Committee commented that this matter should be handled sensitively. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families acknowledged the concerns raised by the Committee and suggested that it would be interesting to see case studies. The Cabinet Member advised that the programme operated on the basis of informed consent and that it also had a robust evaluation process undertaken by Department of Education. The Cabinet Member agreed to share the DfE assessment and some case studies with the Committee. **(Action: Beverley Hendricks).**
- b. In response to concerns, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families acknowledged that the wording of the information could be strengthened to better articulate the positive outcomes sought by the project. The Committee requested that an appendix to the report to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> July be produced to ensure that some of these concerns were addressed. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families agreed that this was a helpful suggestion. **(Action: Peter Featherstone).**
- c. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families highlighted the scale of the issue by noting that there was a cohort of 30 women in the Borough who between them had 113 children in care.

### SEND Transport

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the SEND Transport proposal as set out in Appendix 3 of the agenda pack. The proposal involved commissioning an external resource to deliver the recommendations from a comprehensive review of SEND transport in April 2019, which had identified several areas for improvement and efficiency. The company in question had a track record of

achieving efficiencies of between 15-20% across a number of other London local authorities.

The following was noted in response to the discussion:

- a. In response to a question around whether SEND transport could be provided in-house, officers advised that the scoping review that was undertaken clearly set out that it was not feasible to conduct the service in-house, given the investment and expertise involved. Officers advised that the expectation was that the winning bidder would be able to bring in additional resources to transform the service. It was anticipated that these resources would be in place for around two years. The Committee raised concerns about the use of consultants and the Council's ability to manage contracts effectively, and requested some assurance that the Council had learnt lessons from the past.
- b. The Committee questioned whether officers and the Cabinet Member had sight of the Scrutiny Review that was underway around SEND transport, which had received significant amounts evidence from parents. The Cabinet Member agreed that she and officers would consider the review as part of this process. The Committee suggested that the proposals could be reviewed in more detail by the Panel as part of the Scrutiny Review. **(Cllr Connor to note).**
- c. The Committee sought assurances that the families of SEND users would be engaged with on the future service design. In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the views of users would be integral to any consultation process. The Cabinet Member also assured the Committee that she would be seeking a clear demonstration of the value of any consultants that were employed. The Committee requested that the families of SEND users were fully consulted on the future design of the SEND transport service. **(Action: Cllr Brabazon/Beverley Hendricks).**
- d. The Committee requested further consideration be given to building capacity within the existing SEND service. Officers agreed to include the outcome of the scoping review into the information given to Cabinet.. **(Action: Peter Featherstone).**

CHAIR: Councillor Lucia das Neves

Signed by Chair .....

Date .....