

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON THURSDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2019

PRESENT:

Councillors: Erdal Dogan (Chair), Dana Carlin, Julie Davies, Mike Hakata, Tammy Palmer, Luci Davin and Yvonne Denny

Co-opted Members: Luci Davin (Parent Governor representative) and Yvonne Denny (Church representative)

6. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred Members present to item 1 on the agenda in respect of filming at the meeting and Members noted the information contained therein.

7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chiriyankandath and Dixon, Mr Chapman and Ms Davin.

8. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

10. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/PRESENTATIONS/QUESTIONS

None.

11. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of 13th June 2019 be approved.

12. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Councillor Zena Brabazon, reported on recent developments within her portfolio:

- Good progress had been made in setting the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for the borough, which were due to be launched next week. The

arrangements made the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Police equal partners;

- She had recently attended a conference on Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) achievement in education. This was an issue of particular relevance to Haringey and she was proposing to hold an all Member event to consider the issue further once the data on summer exam results had been finalised;
- In response to the Youth at Risk strategy, a review was taking place of Alternative Provision (AP);
- There had been publicity recently regarding unregulated children's homes. She was aware that there were some of these within the borough. This was an important issue and she felt that the government should be lobbied to take action regarding it. In the meantime, she had asked the Children and Young People's Service to find out the location of any such homes in Haringey;
- The implementation of the Invest to Save programme that had been approved recently by Cabinet was proceeding. This included action to improve Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) transport which she acknowledged required improvement;
- She was undertaking a programme of visits to schools and had recently visited Gladesmore School with Councillor Mark Blake as part of this.

The Panel noted that exam data from the summer was still being validated. Eveleen Riordan, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning, reported that schools would be contacted regarding their results, especially where there had been under performance.

In answer to a question, Councillor Brabazon reported that she would report back to the Panel on proposals for capital expenditure on schools, including clarification of the position regarding Fortismere School. In answer to another question, she said that she was not aware of any proposals to close schools in the borough due to declining levels of intake. She nevertheless felt that there needed to be discussion about the decline in pupil numbers, which was being experienced across the whole of London. The borough now had additional school places that had been provided by free schools and these had taken pupils from community schools. There were issues arising from churn and, in addition, housing also had a major impact. She reported that there had been a useful meeting recently with schools and they would get some budgetary uplift as a result of the recent government announcement. Haringey nevertheless already funded its schools well. There would also be an increase of £4 million to the high needs block of funding. In addition, an increase of 10p per hour had been agreed by the government for providers of the two-year-old early nursery care offer. She noted the concerns that had been raised about the disproportionately large salaries that had been paid to senior executives of the Tri Borough Alternative Provision (TBAP) Multi Academy Trust, who were commissioned to run the Octagon Pupil Referral Unit and felt that this was something that should be looked at further.

In answer to a question regarding concerns about SEND transport, she agreed that there were problems that needed addressing. The Panel noted that a report had been submitted to Cabinet regarding the transformation of the service. Changes had been made to the service in 2013 which included the setting up of pick up points but these had not proven popular with parents. There had also been concerns expressed about the application process. In addition, there had also been issues regarding service

providers which had caused disruption. Work was proceeding to implement improvements. Consideration was being given to how communication with parents could be improved as part of this. The Cabinet Member stated that improving SEND transport was a high priority for the Council.

In answer to a question regarding the waiting time for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, Ms Riordan reported that it was acknowledged that these were too long. During the last six months, action had been taken to reduce them and compliance with the 20 week time limit had improved. The majority of cases were now dealt with within this and it was expected to hit 100% later in the year. Support could be provided ahead of receipt of the formal plan though, if necessary. The Cabinet Member commented that the funding for SEN was complex. Schools were responsible for paying the first £6,000 of support and there was a disincentive for them to take pupils with SEN. Schools were facing funding challenges and staff who provided support for pupils with SEN had been let go in some cases. In addition, the high needs funding block was currently overspent by £4 million.

Panel Members expressed concern regarding the future of Blanche Neville School due to the decline in pupil numbers. Ms Riordan reported that the Children and Young People's Service was aware of the falling numbers and she had met with the Interim Head Teacher to discuss planning for the future.

In answer to a question, Ann Graham – the Director of Children's Services - reported that the views of parents had been listened to in developing the Invest to Save transformation programme, which would provide additional support and capacity so improvements could be made. The proposals had been subject to challenge at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the comments made had helped to inform the subsequent Cabinet decision. The programme included improvements to SEND services and, in particular, SEND transport. In answer to a question regarding outsourcing and insourcing, she reported that a hybrid model had been adopted. Services were commissioned externally if there was not the necessary expertise in-house.

In answer to a question regarding the proposed amalgamation of Stamford Hill and Tiverton schools, Ms Riordan reported that the final decision would take place in January. She was not aware of any school years at Stamford Hill school with only two pupils but they would still have a class teacher should this be the case.

13. FINANCE UPDATE - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Paul Durrant, Head of Finance and Business Partnering, reported that the budget for Children and Young, reported that there was predicted to be an underspend in the budget for children and young people of £246k. This included provision for the £1.6m savings that had been agreed, which were currently mostly on track. Safeguarding and Social Care showed an underspend of £72k whilst the figure of Prevention and Early was £131k. In the event of an underspend, all Directors were able to make bids for the unused funds.

Ms Graham commented that the current projected underspend contrasted markedly with the overspend that took place last year. There were a list of priority items within

Children and Young People's Services on which the underspend could potentially be used. The intention was that the funding was kept within the service.

The Cabinet Member commented that placements and staff provided the biggest pressures on funding. Part of the Invest to Save programme included action to try and reduce the cost of placements. In terms of social worker staffing, it was critical that more permanent staff were recruited as this could save a lot of money.

14. NEW MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Fatmir Deda, Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager, reported on the development in Haringey of new arrangements for multi-agency safeguarding following the abolition of local safeguarding children committees (LSCBs). These were now the joint responsibility of the Director Children and Young People's Services, the Police Borough Commander and the Chief Operation Officer of Haringey Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The new arrangements were to be implemented on 29 September and transition was currently under way. Funding had so far been the biggest challenge as there was no standard formula for how the costs would be shared.

In answer to a question regarding early intervention, Ms Graham stated that multi-agency safeguarding might provide an area for further Invest to Save proposals. In particular, the Cabinet Member was of the view that there would be benefit in focussing on the needs of those children in early years who were on the edge of care. There was also a need to look at the top-up of the rate paid to providers of the two-year-old early entitlement offer. In respect of the Youth at Risk strategy, alternative additional sources of funding were being sought. In particular, it was hoped that health colleagues would be able to contribute.

The Cabinet Member commented that there was a need to pay providers of the two-year-old offer sufficient amounts to make it viable for them. In addition, creative bids to provide young children on the edge of care with further support would also be welcome. Schools would be central to any such scheme.

In answer to a question, Ms Riordan reported that there were about 250 children in the borough who were home schooled and numbers were growing. Such arrangements were monitored regularly to ensure that they were adequate.

15. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) AND ANNUAL REPORT

Sunita Khattrra, Head of Service for Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Improvement, reported that the recent OFSTED report on the Children and Young People's Service had commented that the LADO service was effective and credible and that parents and professionals had confidence in it. Sarah Roberts, the borough's LADO, was considered to be a national expert in her field.

In answer to a question, Ms Khattrra reported that there was no national benchmarking for performance but Haringey was receiving considerably more contacts than some neighbouring boroughs. The largest number of contacts concerned those working in

the education sector, followed by foster parents. The response to reports was intended to be proportionate. All allegations were subject to a risk assessment. The service did not only seek to safeguard children but to also protect professionals against malicious allegations.

Panel Members welcome the more measured approach to allegations against professionals as people's careers could be damaged severely ones that were malicious.

16. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OFFICER (IRO) - ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

The Panel noted that the role of the IRO involved testing plans for children that had been put together by social workers and team managers. They also monitored implementation of plans and they had been encouraged to be challenging.

Ms Khattra reported that the recent OFSTED inspection had highlighted some areas where it was felt that the IRO service needed to be improved and these were currently being addressed. Greater rigour and challenge were being developed in its approach, particularly in addressing drift and delay and ensuring that placements were appropriate. Improvements were also being made to the MOSAIC IT system.

17. UPDATE ON THE ALTERNATIVE PROVISION REVIEW

Charlotte Pomery, Assistant Director for Commissioning, reported on the review of Alternative Provision (AP) that was currently taking place. AP was used for pupils who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons would not otherwise receive suitable education. It could play an important role in enabling children and young people to remain in mainstream schools. Schools and AP providers had been visited as part of the review. Processes and interventions had also been looked at as well as the reasons why school pupils might come to be excluded from school.

She reported that the borough currently had 16 AP providers, some of which were within Haringey and some that were elsewhere. In 2018/19, there had been 19 pupils who were placed in AP. In addition, there were 50 pupils who attended the Octagon Pupil Referral Unit and the Council's Tuition Service also provided for 55 pupils.

The review had been timely as the National Review of Exclusions, led by Sir Edward Timpson, had recently been published. In addition, the Council had also recently agreed its "Young People at Risk" strategy, which adopted a Public Health approach to improving outcomes. Disproportionality was a particular concern and it had been noted that all of the young people currently at the Octagon Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) were from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. Best practice from London and elsewhere had been looked at as part of the review. The aspiration was for fewer children and young people to go through to the PRU. A set of principles were being worked on and these would focus on needs rather than behaviour, although this was still important. AP needed to be part of an overall support system.

There was a long list of findings from the review to date. Amongst these were the following:

- Schools could move pupils to other schools to avoid exclusions. There was nevertheless more that schools to do to avoid exclusions, such as reviewing behaviour policies and the use of restorative justice. Inequalities also needed further consideration, including how unconscious bias could be avoided;
- Some schools had adopted whole school approaches to autism, mental health and wellbeing and disability, but this was not consistent;
- It was noted that a grant of £1m had been receded from NHS England to develop and test mental health support. In addition, action had been taken to address waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
- The primary outreach service was very well regarded and provided good advice and support to schools and staff teams. However, there was no outreach service for secondary schools;
- Gaps had been identified in AP for primary school children but the number of children requiring it was small; and
- More could be done to obtain and listen to the voices of parents and carers.

Information and data on the numbers and circumstances of managed moves or activities which could be seen as “off rolling” in the borough were not available although it was understood that both might occur. The Timson review had recommended that the practice be discouraged.

Ms Pomery reported that the recommendations of the review were currently being worked upon and a report would be submitted to Cabinet before the end of the year, including an action plan.

Panel Members suggested that Councillors would benefit from receiving a presentation on school exclusions, including their impact on BAME communities and the influence of social class. Officers indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to share the information to date with all Councillors.

Ms Graham commented that school governors had an important role as they were involved in decisions to exclude. It was important that they were well informed and were able to provide effective challenge to Headteachers. Parents also needed to be supported effectively and consideration could be given to funding additional amounts.

AGREED:

That a briefing be arranged for all Councillors on school exclusions and that this include equalities issues, such as their impact on BAME communities and social class.

18. OFSTED ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS

Ms Graham reported that significant progress had been made and nearly all items had either been completed or were on track to be completed. There were only two items that were not progressing as anticipated and both of these were national issues that were beyond the Council’s control.

The Panel congratulated officers on the progress that had been made. Ms Graham stated that the challenge now was to ensure that progress was maintained and there was no slippage.

19. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Panel discussed its work plan and, in particular, potential issues for future scrutiny reviews. The following suggestions were made:

- Looked after children;
- The High Needs Block;
- School structures;
- SEND transport;
- Engagement with parents; and
- County lines.

It was agreed that Panel Members would meet separately to discuss further the work plan.

AGREED:

That an informal meeting of the Panel be arranged to discuss further the work plan.

CHAIR: Councillor Erdal Dogan

Signed by Chair

Date