

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
10 September 2014 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present: Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Jason Frost (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, Julie Wilkes, Joshua Chapman, Carol Smith, Phil Martin and John Crowder

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy, Julie Lamb, Margaret Cameron, Emma Adams and Lynda Rice

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Reg Whitney, co-opted member Jack How and non-voting member Ian Rusha

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Philippa Crowder (John Crowder substituting) and John Glanville (Phil Martin substituting).

19 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

21 MINUTES

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014 as an accurate record and authorised the Chairman to sign them.

22 HAVERING YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTATION

A member of Havering's Youth Parliament, Tolu Akindayi spoke on behalf of her members to the Committee. The Youth Parliament had a vision to

eliminate child poverty in Havering and break the third generation cycle by encouraging students to stay in education or become an apprentice.

The Youth Parliament felt there was a lack of support and information from schools in regards to students' options when they leave school. In particular, there were concerns among Youth Parliament members that schools did not offer sufficient work experience opportunities. In response officers advised they had only limited influence over secondary schools' policies as most Havering secondary schools were now Academies. It was however suggested officers meet with Youth Parliament Members on a regular basis. The Chairman suggested the Youth Member spokesperson propose this idea to the other Youth Parliament Members. It was also felt it would be beneficial for Committee Members to attend a session of the Youth Parliament and efforts would be made to arrange this.

23 SEN SCHOOL TRANSPORT ISSUES

A Co-opted Member submitted to the committee a list of transport issues compiled by the Positive Parents group. Parents were extremely concerned about how early their children were being picked up and having to remain on buses leading to the children often being unsettled when they reached school. The Member also raised concerns over safety issues with inadequately trained staff.

The Head of Asset Management confirmed that all staff working on SEN transport received appropriate induction and training, both for drivers and welfare officers. New SEN transport arrangements would need to be introduced as part of the Children & Families Act and meetings were planned with head teachers to discuss this further, to take place by the end of September. School transport routes had been rationalised but this had been undertaken in conjunction with Learning and Achievement officers. Officers were keen to improve SEN transport, bearing in mind existing budgets and future savings required.

Officers felt there were most pressures in getting children to school at Dycorts as well as one route to Corbets Tey. The routes to Ravensbourne generally performed better.

The Chairman would seek to discuss these areas further with the Lead Member. The Head of Asset Management would discuss the whole area of SEN transport further with the Head of Learning and Achievement.

The Committee **NOTED** the position with SEN transport.

24 **HEALTHWATCH HAVERING ANNUAL REPORT**

A director of Healthwatch Havering presented the organisation's annual report and informed the committee that Healthwatch were now working closely with the Positive Parents group concentrating on the welfare of children with disabilities. It was planned to concentrate on incremental changes for the better rather than promising huge changes that may be unable to be sustained.

It had been discovered that a large number of people with learning disabilities were not getting their annual healthchecks to which they were entitled. A recent Healthwatch Havering survey found only 23 out of 796 people entitled to these checks had received them. Officers would check if the healthchecks carried out in schools by community paediatricians covered the required healthchecks for children with learning disabilities. Officers confirmed that annual healthchecks were also required for all children in care.

The Committee requested that Healthwatch Havering look at how annual healthchecks could be made more meaningful and robust.

The Committee **NOTED** the annual report of Healthwatch Havering.

25 **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS - FIRST CHOICE DATA**

Officers reported that 40 children had presented without school places on the first day of term but all had now been successfully placed. The statistics for first choice school placements were:

Primary school – 89% of children offered first choice school

Secondary school – 80% of children offered first choice school

The Chairman felt that these figures represented a positive outcome for Havering children and their parents.

26 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 4 2013/14 AND ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

A Member questioned whether a target of 4% for the percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan was putting too much pressure on agencies. The Chairman commented that a target is set to be

challenging but must also be realistic. Officers would check how a comparison could be made for the number of schools below the floor standard where fewer than 40% of pupils achieve 5 or more A* - C grades at KS4.

With reference to looked after children, the data indicated that performance was below target. This was partly due to the fact that recruiting foster carers for teenagers was proving more difficult. A campaign to encourage carers to foster teenagers would continue through to 2015.

Officers would also confirm the benchmark area for Havering in addition to Bexley, Medway and Solihull.

27 **REPORTS PACK**

The Chairman advised the committee that a summary of recent meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel, Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub had been requested for Members' information. Any questions relating to the information in the reports pack would need to be raised between publication of the agenda and the meeting itself. The Committee noted the summary reports.

28 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

It was suggested that the use of Education Healthcare Plans be added to the agenda for the forthcoming meeting concerning children's health issues. The Committee also wished to consider the implications for Havering of the Rotherham inquiry and asked that representatives of the Children's Society be invited to join the discussions.

Officers would also feed back to the Committee on how often schools' child protection policies were reviewed.

29 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Committee noted the Local Ombudsman's Annual Letter and that there had been a problem of statistical inaccuracy with the report.

The Committee also expressed concern at the broadening of use of the term 'maladministration' and the likely impact this would have on public confidence.

Chairman