

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 1-Town Hall - Town Hall
15 March 2016 (7.00 - 8.45 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Joshua Chapman, John Wood, Dilip Patel and Linda Trew

Co-opted Members: Jack How, Julie Lamb and Lynne Bennett

Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of an emergency evacuation of the building becoming necessary

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Philippa Crowder (Councillor Dilip Patel substituting), Councillor Keith Roberts and Councillor Carol Smith (Councillor Linda Trew substituting).

35 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Jack How declared an interest on matters relating to schools. His wife was a teacher at Marshalls Park School.

36 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman gave details of action to be taken in the case of fire or other event that should require the evacuation of the meeting room.

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38 ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSION DATA

The Alternative Provision & Looked After Children Education Manager presented to the Sub-Committee a report on school attendance and exclusion in the borough.

It was noted that good school attendance was important because poor attendance was linked to poorer educational outcomes which also resulted in a safeguarding concern where a child was not in school during term time.

The Sub-Committee noted that in Havering, the issue of taking children out of school for holidays in term time continued to be a concern and from the latest data available, it outlined that Havering schools were still authorising more absence than schools in London and England averages.

The report indicated that unauthorised absence had fallen, as had persistent absence (PA) over the past few years. This had been reflected in a higher figure for penalty notices/fines over the past two years and showed the importance of keeping focussed on reducing these two factors in particular. The Government had changed the threshold for PA from below 85% to below 90% attendance from September 2015, which would translate to an increase in the numbers/percentage of pupils falling within the definition of PA from this academic year.

The Sub-Committee noted that in relation to exclusions, head teachers had the power to exclude pupils for any breaches of the school behaviour policy. Concerns around educational outcomes and safeguarding for pupils who were excluded meant that the Local Authority had a legal duty to provide alternative education for such pupils who were permanently excluded.

The Alternative Provision & Looked After Children Education Manager added that permanent exclusion from a school could have a long lasting (sometime lifelong) impact on a young person. The rate of permanent exclusion in Havering in previous years had been higher than the London and England average in secondary schools and there had been increased pressures on primary schools to use permanent exclusion as a way to deal with challenging behaviour. An additional concern in Havering was that the Pupil Referral Service was currently in Special Measures.

There had been work over the past year that had focussed on improving support, challenge and protocols with schools. Measures included improving alternative provision offer for schools, strengthening the In Year Fair Access Panel (IYFAP) for young people at risk of exclusion or without a school place, and supporting the Havering Pupil Referral Service towards academisation and improving the quality of the education offered in the interim.

In response to a question from the Sub-Committee on how much importance schools needed to consider the data, the Interim Assistant Director Learning & Achievement commented that it was important that Members received aggregated data on attendance and exclusions and that it was equally important that the service drilled down to understand whether

the data for any specific groups of young people were respectively lower or higher than their peers.

The Sub-Committee accepted that schools had different tolerance levels whilst also recognising that the value of service provided by the IYFAP to children in Year 7 to Year 10. Officers were of the view that the use of fixed term exclusion could work positively to reduce permanent exclusion. The Sub-Committee was advised of the production of a threshold document on exclusions with 3 different levels, support and examples of intervention. If one level fails it was escalated up to the next level.

The Sub-Committee was also informed that 85% of young people in the Youth Offending System were likely to have been excluded from a school.

The Chairman requested for data collection and feedback for special schools be circulated to the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

39 **OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL ADMISSIONS AND EXPANSION PLANS, NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (NEET) AND THE RAISING OF PARTICIPATION AGE.**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the progress relating to the School Admissions Procedures and Schools Expansion Programme.

The report stated that in Havering, an additional 2,700 permanent Primary school places had been created in all year groups from 2011/12 - 2015/16. The borough had experienced the largest netflow across all London boroughs.

The School Admissions Code was the statutory guidance for Admission Authorities, Governing bodies, Local Authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeals panels. The purpose of the Code was to ensure that all school places for schools including Academies were allocated and offered in an open and fair way. The Code had the force of law and imposed mandatory requirements on Local Authorities.

All schools had admission arrangements that clearly outlined how children would be admitted, including the criteria that would be applied if there were more applications than places at the school.

Admission Authorities were to set ('determine') admission arrangements annually. Where changes were proposed to admission arrangements, the admission authority must have first publicly consulted on those arrangements. The consultation period allowed parents, other schools, religious authorities and the local community to raise any concerns about the proposed admission arrangements.

Once all arrangements have been determined, arrangements can be objected to and referred to the Schools Adjudicator. Any decision of the Adjudicator must be acted on by the Admission Authority and admission arrangements amended accordingly. The Local Authority collated and published all the admission arrangements in the area in a single composite prospectus.

In the normal admissions round, parents applied to the Local Authority in which they lived for places at their preferred schools, parents were able to express a preference for at least three schools and up to six.

A National offer day for notification this year for secondary transfer was the 1 March while the 16 April would be for primary school offers.

The Sub-Committee questioned the appropriateness of the mail out time for notifications. Currently the time was 17:00, whereas some authorities mailed out at 12:00.

The Sub-Committee noted that a draft Commissioning Plan for Education Provision approved by Cabinet in March 2015 was consulted on across the borough between April and June 2015 to gather the views from education providers, residents, parents and other stakeholders on proposals that would help address the needs identified. There were a total of 824 completed questionnaires, of which over 700 were completed online.

The consultation survey responses had helped to inform the approach to expand existing schools where possible with the options to also explore free school.

The report highlighted that overall 80% of all respondents agreed with the principles that guided the commissioning proposals, based on the consultation the final Commissioning Plan for Education Provision was approved in August 2015 and this had formed the basis of the recommendations in the November 2015 Cabinet Report.

The Sub-Committee was informed that each expansion proposal would need to answer positively to the following statements before the statutory processes could commence:

- The school could be expanded as there was scope to create additional accommodation on site
- The school was located accessibly to where there was an increased pressure on places
- The school was educationally secure and resilient with the capacity to manage a significant increase in size without adverse impacts on standards

- There was a clear aspiration on the part of the school to manage the expansion
- The expansion would provide good value for money.

Once decided, the Statutory Consultation process would run parallel to any planning applications. The Statutory Notice would then be published following a successful planning permission was obtained.

The School Provision & Commissioning Manager informed that Sub-Committee that in 2015, the Government increased the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training; requiring them to continue until their 18th birthday from 2015.

Young people had a choice about how they continued in education or training post-16, which could be through full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider; or full-time work or volunteering (20 hours) combined with part-time education or training; or an apprenticeship or traineeship scheme.

It was noted that most young people continued in education or training after they finish Year 11, because it gave them the best chance to get the skills and qualifications that employers and universities required. The report however mentioned that the small group of young people not participating included some of the most vulnerable.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Local Authority had an existing duty that encouraged, enabled and assisted young people to participate in education or training which still applied.

It was mentioned that tracking young people's participation was a key element of these duties. Local Authorities were required to collect information about all young people so that those who were not participating, or are NEET, could be identified and given support to re-engage.

Local Authorities were required to have arrangements in place that provided information on all young people's current activity at regular intervals. This may be through the exchange of information with education and training providers, and other services within the local authority area such as Youth Offending teams and Jobcentre Plus, as well as through direct contact with young people.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the strategic priorities for post-16 were

- The continued support in the growth in participation of 16 year olds staying in education, monitoring participation rates and trends.
- The increase in the number of 17 year olds participating in education and training, that made a positive transition from year 12 to 13.

- The increase in the range and quality of Traineeships and Apprenticeships opportunities available across all levels.
- To promote participation of all 14-19 year olds particularly those most vulnerable and ensure that appropriate mix and balance of provision was available for all Havering residents, particularly those in vulnerable groups.

The partnership in Havering between colleges and schools, where the colleges guaranteed places for suitably qualified applicants had proved to be valuable in ensuring places for young people in Havering.

However, the number of Year 11 leavers was projected to decline slightly until 2017/18, and then followed by a significant rise in 2018/19 and years beyond as Havering was a high net importer of learners and the combination of increased future residents and school population would impact on the provision required.

The issue for providers was therefore more about responding to changes in demand, including managing changes in the balance of the types of provision required by the group of young people.

Officers stated that the Local 14+ Progression and Transition Partnership was critical for the successful delivery of RPA and it needed to be inclusive and robust, with a clear understanding of the requirements of young people and a commitment to put their needs at the heart of its decision-making processes.

The Partnership's guiding principles were for increased participation in education or training, in a personalised model that entailed provision of an inclusive and engaging experience for all young people. The principles also included Performance; to improved standards and increased levels of achievements and progression; that ensured every young person has meaningful access to employment, training or further or higher education.

The operational arm of the Havering Learning Partnership was the collegiate group that was constituted by its various sub-groups, such as the 16/18 Performance Group, Apprenticeship Provider Forum, NEET Partnership and North East London Cluster.

In response to an enquiry on the planned changes to the over subscriptions criteria, the Sub-Committee was informed that the Government was about to consult on amendments to the current School Admissions code. It was expected that the consultation would include proposal to change the arrangements for summer born children, and how siblings and pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium were dealt with within the code and over-subscription criteria.

It was stated that some Local Authorities had already made changes to their sibling criteria and added in a sibling plus distance criteria to ensure that

only siblings still living within a pre-determined area still receive a higher priority.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

40 **CHAIRMAN TO FEEDBACK ON THE OPEN FORUM MEETING**

It was agreed that the latest forward plan be circulated to members of the Sub-Committee.

41 **STARTERS AND LEAVERS**

The Sub-Committee noted the following changes to the membership:

Lynne Bennett – Church of England Representative (replaced Philip Grundy)

Linda Beck – National Association of Head Teachers (replaced Margaret Cameron)

Chairman