

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Town Hall
8 November 2016 (7.00 - 9.15 pm)**

Present: Councillors Gillian Ford (Chairman), Meg Davis (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, Viddy Persaud, Carol Smith, Keith Roberts, Roger Westwood and John Wood

Co-opted Members: Julie Lamb and Suzanne Summers

Church Representatives:
Lynne Bennett and Jack How
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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Glanville, co-opted member Steven McCarthy and Linda Beck

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 6 September 2016 were amended to take account that Lynne Bennett was present, then agreed and signed by the Chairman.

2 HEALTHWATCH ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Bev Markham from Healthwatch Havering presented the Healthwatch Annual Report. She explained that she was responsible for recruiting volunteers and had shadowed the Head of Learning Disabilities to understand the issues faced. They had attended Ravensbourne School to meet with parents to understand the challenges they faced. The main area was that there was no contact with NELFT.

Work in this area had been centred on parents and carers in the community. Healthwatch continued to chair the quarterly meetings that bring together NELFT, the CCG, BHRUT, CAMHS, the local authority and Positive Parents, a representative group of parents of children who had learning disabilities.

These meetings have been very successful and meet on the three-monthly basis. An action plan has been produced of what was expected from the group. There were 60 action points that were agreed at the start in 2014,

and only 20 of these had been cleared as this was a very involved and complex subject.

It was noted that there was also a Learning Disability work group with Queens Hospital which included a Learning Disability Paediatric Nurse. This group had worked hard in getting children with learning disabilities accommodated in each specialist area, and there was a specialist Phlebotomy Nurse.

Members asked if there were other therapists that delivered services to children and adults with disabilities and whether this information was also provided to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Members were advised that there was a shortage of therapists in this area and this was a concern. The Chair advised this would be fed back to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Members asked how the action plan was prioritised; officers explained that this was simply a list of actions which informed the meeting. It was felt that it needed to be kept informal for parents, however if an action was on an agenda for more than two meetings then this was made the priority. The Chair suggested RAG rating the list would make it easier to deal with the priority areas.

The Sub-Committee were advised around how children fed into the governance of the report, and where children were segmented by age for analysis. The promotion of “green prescription” for children with mental health conditions should be considered as there was evidence that physical activity and outside time was essential for the wellbeing of all.

The Sub-Committee thanked the officer for the report.

3 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES COMPLAINT AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub-Committee considered the Children and Young People’s Services Annual Complaints Report 2015/16. It was noted that there had been an increase in complaints of 6% in 2015/16 from 70 in 2014/15 to 74. Ombudsman enquiries had increased in 2015/16 from 5 compared to 3 in 2014/15. Of the total number of complaints received, 10 (14%) were made by children directly or via an advocate.

The Service were taking steps towards retention of staff through their “Face to Face” vision and an app for children to express their wishes/ views and concerns called MOMO (Mind of My Own) which will be monitored through 2016/17 in relation to concerns/ complaints raised by children.

Members agreed that MOMO was welcomed by the Children in Care Council as they had spoken highly of the app. Other improvements needed

included more links on the “landing pages” to Children in Care. It was noted that developments of an app for care leavers was in its early stages.

Complaints were now more complex which impacted upon response times, this was being monitored closely. It was noted that the increase in compliments could be attributed to a recent Family Interventions Survey which had included lots of compliments about the services received.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

4 LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT COMPLAINT AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Sub-Committee received the Learning and Achievement Complaint and Compliments Annual Report. It was noted that the increase in complaints had doubled, with the majority resulting from school expansions and the new Children and Families Act.

Enquiries, which were complaints about school related matters that were referred to the school/academy or college dropped by 27%. For enquiries that were referred back to either the school/ academy or college the main reason for complaint was “level of service” relating to bullying and how this had been dealt with. Some of the complaints were also linked to safeguarding however it was stated that this was perceived risk to either an individual child or children’s safety within the school/ academy or college rather than actual risk.

Response times were still at a high rate within Learning and Achievement with 97% corporate complaints being responded to within timescales. Responses to Members enquiries was 93% within timescales.

Members commented that the school expansion plans communications had been mismanaged. Schools were not being fully briefed and therefore once the information was reaching parents it was incorrect. Officers explained that the Lead Member was keen that communication was extended to local residents too. Members wished that information about any changes or why the expansions were necessary was also communicated.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

5 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED TRANSPORT

The Sub-Committee received a report with an update on the SEND Transport provision within the borough. The demand was still increasing as was the budget for this provision. The service was exploring alternative ways to help deliver the SEND Transport provision, to children that needed it. It was agreed that the policy was not being used robustly and different

options were being discussed to encourage independent travel of high functioning children.

The demand on the service for 2016/17 was 389 young people needing travel assistance with, 319 on buses and 70 in taxis. The Passenger Travel Service operates 34 buses on a daily basis which was the same number as the previous year. There was an overall decrease of 3% on the number of young people being transported compared to 2015/16. However there had been an increase to the number of taxis being provided compared to September 2015, and a 31% increase in cost. The increase in budget was due to the slight increase in demand for taxi's additional escorts as well as an increase in the number of young people accessing provision out of borough. The creation of new provision in Havering (Avelon Centre) and a change in the timetables for some young people at Havering College could help in reducing overall costs.

It was noted that the total budget for 2016/17 was £2,248,610 for Home to School Transport, this included Post 16. It was forecast that there would be an overspend against the allocated budget of £303,976, equating to 13.5% over budget. The bulk of the overspend was in the post 16 transport provision

Other areas that had seen an improvement were the cluster points where young people were collected from. It was noted that there were 12 pick-up points across the borough with 78 young people using them, 51 of which were under 16 years old. This had reduced journey times and demonstrated a more proactive approach to alternative options. The feedback from parents had been positive and had acknowledged the change, however, there were some that had concerns and were unable to commit to the change.

The service agreed that there could not be a "one size fits all" provision as every young person was different, and some had complex needs that needed one to one support. Engagement with TfL was being developed to acquire Oyster cards that could make a difference to independent travel.

The Sub-Committee noted that a contract for travel training had been awarded to DABD for training across Havering, Barking and Dagenham and Redbridge. This would promote more independent travel for young people. Officers informed the Sub-Committee that there had been 98 young people identified as able to do travel training, of which 58 had agreed to work with DABD.

Officers stated that meetings had taken place with the three Heads of the Special Schools, and the Deputy Principal of the College regarding the implementation of the transport policy. They were broadly supportive and had actively been identifying students that they believed could both travel independently and would benefit from this approach. They had also supported the move to an on-line application form and had supported families to complete and return the form within the stated deadlines.

The special school representative suggested families did not fully support the online system, and felt that there had been no choice but to complete the form, the majority of families at Ravensbourne were not computer literate.

A member tabled details of the arrival times of the school bus at Corbets Tey School. This showed that the bus was consistently late arriving at the school which disrupted the first hour of the day. It was noted that young people needed assistance to alight from the bus and time was needed to settle into school, this could take up to an hour, which was exacerbated if the young person was on the transport in excess of an hour.

It was agreed that officers would look into this issue and feedback the findings to the Sub-Committee prior to the next meeting. It was also suggested that Officers review arrival times at the other special schools in the borough.

The Sub-Committee suggested that young people were encouraged to celebrate their successes once they become independent travellers as this was also welcomed by the families and the young person. Other areas to be discussed would be the success rates and trends of secondary pupils at pick up points, as well as peer work in independent travel as the encouragement of others may increase the likelihood of others becoming independent.

The Sub-Committee noted the report.

6 PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT AND RECONFIGURATION

The Sub-Committee received a report outlining the reconfiguration of the former Pupil Referral Service. It was noted that all local authorities had a statutory duty to provide alternative education for pupils who have been permanently excluded from school, or who could not attend school due to long term medical illness. Until 1 September 2016, the provision for such pupils within the London Borough of Havering was via the Manor Green College, Havering Pupil Referral Services (PRS). The College was composed of four elements, which dealt with 134 young people:

- Primary provision (James Oglethorpe campus)
- Green Vale Medical Needs Provision (based at the previous Birnam Wood site in Hornchurch)
- Birnam Wood key stage 3 site (based at the previous Birnam Wood site in Hornchurch)
- Manor Campus key stage 4 site (based at Albert Road, Romford)

In February 2015 Havering PRS was inspected and placed into Special Measures. The OFSTED judgement meant that the PRS needed to either

close or be converted to an Alternative Provision (AP) Academy. The local authority had initiated discussions with the Department of Education (DfE) about potential academisation but subsequent to this inspection judgement, only one sponsor was identified by DfE, Olive Academies Trust.

Following complex negotiations and attempts to identify suitable premises for a new AP Academy provision, the Olive AP Academy Havering officially launched on 1 September 2016, based at the former Birnam Wood site in Hornchurch. There were still challenges as the staff had remained but progress was already being seen.

It was agreed that the Primary PRU was closed as it was not felt relevant for young children be institutionalised and that this could be effectively dealt with within the mainstream school. The greatest number of exclusions was from Secondary schools, with persistent disruptive behaviour being the main reason.

It was noted that the Robert Beard PRU would be for Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) and Albert Road would be for Key Stage 3. The Albert Road building would have an annex to assist with vulnerable young people. Schools were supportive of the new PRU, and incentives were given to try to keep young people in mainstream education rather than to the PRU as this had a cost implication and a better outcome for the child. It was noted that to educate a child in mainstream school would be £4,500 whereas through the PRS it would cost £19,000.

The Sub-Committee noted that there had been 39 permanent exclusions in the last year, and the service was looking to reduce this figure.

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that she had signed off the waiver over the summer so that the PRS could open in September, and that plans were in the pipeline for the developments. Officers stated that it was anticipated that the new building would be open by September 2018, and tenders for the new buildings would be commencing soon.

Members asked why the PRU had been academised and why this could not be delivered internally. Officers stated that the only alternative to academisation would be to seek to commission places from outside the Borough. This would require all staff to be redeployed or offered redundancy and would lead to significantly increased costs, as costs of commissioning out of Borough placements, including transport, would be in excess of existing costs and would not necessarily be in the best interests of the young people. In addition, the closure of a failing PRS would mean significant reputational damage to the Borough.

7 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 2)

The Sub-Committee considered the Corporate Performance report for Quarter 2.

The report identified where the Council was performing well (Green rating) and not so well (Amber and Red rating). It was noted that where RAG rating was Red, "Corrective Action" was included in the report, highlighting the actions the Council would take to address poor performance.

There were 16 Corporate Indicators that fell under the remit of the Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee. 10 indicators related to the Safe goal and 6 related to the Proud goal. Information was available for 14 of these 16 indicators

It was noted that there were 50% rated as Red/Amber and 50% were rated Green. The improvements required under the Safe goal were:

- number of in-house foster carers being below target and fewer than the last quarter
- the percentage of care proceedings concluding within 26 weeks was below target tolerance.

Officers explained that they were taking steps to engage with foster carers, as recruitment was difficult for young people aged 11-15 years old. A more targeted approach was being taken to deal with the change in cohorts and demographics. Investing in enhanced existing foster carers training would reduce costs in other areas.

Members asked that the recruitment campaign for new foster carers due to be launched, be circulated to members of the Sub-Committee.

There were 39 (66%) care proceedings cases that had been less than 26 weeks, the longest case had been 49 weeks. There was a new manager in the service who would be addressing this issue and a tracking meeting with the manager and head of service would take place weekly. Staffing was also stabilising.

The highlights under the Proud goal were:

- The percentage of young people leaving care who were in education, employment or training at ages 18 to 21 was at 64%, against a target of 60%.
- The percentage of Early Years providers judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted was above target and had been steadily improving for the past 2 years.
- The number of free early years education offers extended to disadvantaged 2 year olds was significantly above target and better than at the same point last year.

It was noted that of the 71 inspections of Early Year providers carried out, 20 had increased from good to outstanding, 16 had improved to good and 4 had improved from inadequate to satisfactory.

The Sub-Committee noted the Demand pressure dashboard.

The Sub-Committee NOTED the presentation.

8 FUTURE AGENDAS

The work programme would be revised to take account of the recent Ofsted inspection together with other items that needed to be scrutinised. Once agreed this would be circulated to all members of the Sub-Committee.

9 URGENT BUSINESS

A brief update was given on the recent Ofsted inspection. It was noted that this had involved 12 inspectors over a 4 week period, where they have looked at over 200 cases and met with staff and external partners and parents to gain a complete overview of the service.

The overall rating was “requiring improvement” which was what the service had expected. An action plan was being produced to deal with the areas that needed improvements.

It was felt by the inspectors that the vision for the future was good, but improvements needed to be made on the day to day work. Safeguarding was also considered to be strength, as was CSE/ Missing Service, Early Help and Female Genital Mutilation.

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that due to the recent restructure of Committee Administration, the current Committee Officer would be moving into an alternative position within the Council. The Sub-Committee thanked the officer for her dedication and support, wishing her well for the future.

Chairman