

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 1-Town Hall - Town Hall
14 January 2016 (7.00 - 9.35 pm)**

Present: Councillors Carol Smith (Vice-Chair), Jason Frost, Nic Dodin, John Glanville, Joshua Chapman, Philippa Crowder, John Wood and Keith Roberts

Co-opted Members: 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

Officers present:

Mary Phillips, Assistant Director, Learning and Achievement

Tim Aldridge, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Susan Sutton, Quality Assurance Manager, Learning and Achievement

Craig Benning, Policy and Performance Business Partner

Brian Boxall, Chair, Local Safeguarding Children's Board

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gillian Ford. The Chair was therefore taken by Councillor Carol Smith.

Apologies were also received from co-opted Members Lynne Bennett (Church of England) and Julie Lamb (Special Schools).

Apologies were also received from Bev Markham, Healthwatch Havering.

21 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor John Glanville declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) for Hacton primary School) as his grandchildren attended the school.

22 **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.

23 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 9 September 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 **SCHOOLS STANDARDS REPORT**

The Quality Assurance Manager gave an overview of the main features of the School Standards Report 2015. One Havering Primary Academy was below the Department for Education (DfE) floor standard and one Secondary in the borough was not reaching the national meridian.

It was noted that with the exception of London Borough of Bexley, Havering's statistical neighbours were from areas outside of London. Havering was also the only London borough that had decreasing wealth and growing deprivation among its cohort of pupils.

Havering had improved performance at the Early Years Foundation stage compared to the two previous years but performance nationally had also risen on this measure.

At Key Stage One, Havering had improved performance on the phonics and spelling tests by 2%. Havering was ranked second among its statistical neighbours which was a positive result. Performance had also improved for Key Stage One tests in reading, writing and maths.

Results at Key Stage Two had been excellent with attainment reaching the target level 4+ in each of reading, writing and maths. Havering was ranked seventh nationally on this measure. Results for grammar, spelling and punctuation at this stage had also improved with Havering now ranked 10th nationally.

Progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 had improved slightly although it was noted that Havering had high scores on this measure and was ranked top among its statistical neighbours.

Following changes in the criteria from 2013-14, attainment at Key Stage 4 had dropped by some 3% although lower levels had also been seen across London and nationally. Measures of progress at this stage had seen Havering drop from 35th to 61st in terms of national ranking. It was clarified that progress was measured from year 6 to year 11 and that pupils who moved into the borough were also counted for this measure. Progress in maths for Havering had fallen by 3% and meant Havering was now ranked 29th of 31 London boroughs. New measures would be introduced for this area from summer 2016.

The attainment gap encountered by disadvantaged children had now reduced in Havering and the school performance of children entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Officers added that they encouraged parents to register children for free school meals where appropriate as this allowed the receipt of pupil premium funding.

Performance at Key Stage 5 (post 16) had been broadly static. Any fall may have been due to pupils undertaking fewer qualifications but this would allow studies to be more focussed towards obtaining jobs or university places.

OFSTED grading for early years providers had exceeded targets and Havering was now above the national average. This was due to more robust monitoring of early years settings and providers. On the Good and Better Schools ratings however, Havering was on a downward trajectory and was now ranked 147th of 152 Local Authorities nationally. The reasons for this were unclear and officers added that good outcomes for Havering primaries were often not reflected in OFSTED inspections. Three schools had been downgraded by OFSTED to 'requires improvement' level and other schools rated as 'good' were first inspections and so could not improve the overall ranking for Havering. Havering was also ranked near the bottom for the proportion of schools graded Good or Better.

Some 37% of Havering schools were listed as priority schools for the Local Authority (LA) although it was pointed out that this was because the Local Authority was generally risk averse in this area. The LA was trying to manage OFSTED inspections better and recent inspections of primaries had seen better outcomes. There remained however problems with inspection of secondary schools. It was clarified that Academies were not the responsibility of the LA and it was suggested that the Regional Schools Commissioner could be invited to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee to discuss Academy performance in Havering. Officers added that the Leader of the Council had also expressed concern regarding the performance of secondary Academies.

It was noted that OFSTED criteria had changed with three different frameworks having been used in recent years. This was not however an excuse for poor performance.

Performance data for each school was also available and officers could provide a link to where this could be accessed. There were plans to improve progress from Key Stages Two to Four but it was often very difficult for the Council to get into low progress schools as these were mainly Academies.

All OFSTED reports for Havering schools over the last four years had been analysed but there were no obvious reasons for the low OFSTED appraisals. Officers therefore felt that leaders and managers in schools had not been adequately prepared for OFSTED inspections. Preparation for OFSTED inspections was now being targeted. Officers would supply to

each meeting of the Sub-Committee a short written update on the outcomes of recent OFSTED inspections. The schedule and frequency of OFSTED inspections was the responsibility of OFSTED and outside of the LA's control.

Officers felt that some heads in Havering needed to sell their schools to OFSTED better. There was however no discernible pattern in the inspection experiences of different head teachers.

New comparators would be developed by the Government as part of the new appraisal system and it was anticipated that the Council would follow these. Further Education Colleges were not directly the responsibility of the Council but were also included in the published national figures.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report and thanked officers for their compiling of the information.

25 **SELF-EVALUATION FORM (SEF) FOR HACTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Sub-Committee reviewed a self-evaluation form for Hacton Primary School which had received an 'outstanding' rating in a recent OFSTED inspection. There was no longer a statutory requirement on schools to produce a self-evaluation form although most schools continued to do so, using various formats.

Forms would be presented to Governors of schools who were due to be inspected to feed into the final version and also shown to the Local Authority. Forms were expected to be factual in nature with a lot of evidence presented in support of statements.

The sub-Committee **NOTED** the example of a self-evaluation form.

26 **BUDGET CHALLENGES**

Children's Services officers explained that a further 3,000 children were expected to arrive into Havering's primary schools. These projections were based on known housing developments in the borough, once the scale of these developments was known. A rise in secondary school children was also now being projected.

Havering was the only London borough with a rising birth rate and had London's largest net inflow of children into the borough. Havering was also the only London borough with rising levels of deprivation. The main reason for the population growth was the availability of relatively cheap housing in Havering. The numbers of child protection plans and looked after children were also increasing, putting a lot of demand on services.

The Council used to receive a range of specific grants for important projects such as the Early Intervention Grant but these had been significantly reduced. This had also been seen in reductions to the Dedicated Schools Grant.

There were currently 21,000 children in Havering primary schools, 15,000 in secondaries and 6,000 in Early Years settings. There were also around 250 children in secondary schools although officers explained that the vast majority of Special Educational Needs (SEN) children were in mainstream schools. Eight mainstream schools had additional provision for SEN children e.g. facilities for deaf pupils at Hacton Primary.

There were approximately 320 Early Years providers in Havering. Very few nurseries were attached to mainstream schools as there was not the capital funding available to build these.

Statutory services such as the provision of new education places and school quality assurance functions were funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant and core Council funding. As more schools became Academies, this had resulted in cuts to the Education Support Grant and the total grant reduction for Children's Services in 2015 had totalled £1.8 million.

Some non-statutory services had been converted into traded services and schools were able to purchase services such as finance support, catering and education HR. Trade was also undertaken with schools across South East England and it was suggested that officers could report on this in more detail at a future meeting.

Saving proposals included £100,000 from discontinuing the meals on wheels service and £400,000 from services for children and adults with disabilities. The method for achieving the latter saving was currently being discussed.

Budget pressures included a review of transport for SEN children (which could be reported to the Sub-Committee) and Havering not receiving the full funding required for school expansions.

The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) covered areas including Children in Need, Child Protection Plans, Children in Care, Adoption and Early Help. A rise of 25% in referrals into Social Care was expected this year with large rises also being seen in the number of children with Child Protection Plans and the number of social worker assessments completed. The number of Looked after Children in Havering had however decreased slightly. The number of families using the Early Help service had increased by 22%.

Budget pressures in CYPS included the cost of using agency workers and the cost of placements for Children in Care. There were currently 70 agency social workers in Havering (29% of the total workforce) which cost £4.3 million annually. If 25 social workers could be converted to permanent

status, this would save the Council £1 million. Officers recognised however that this was both a national and London-wide problem.

A reorganisation of the Early Help service would save £900,000 over three years. £1.8 million had been allocated for cost pressures arising from Looked After Children and £1.1 million for staffing establishment costs. Officers wanted the Early Help service to offer more sophisticated support to families which would reduce the need for support from social workers.

The service's staffing structure would be reviewed over the next year and it was confirmed that Havering was on target to recruit 25 new foster carers by the next financial year.

27 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Officers explained that of the thirteen performance indicators covering the remit of the Sub-Committee, nine were classified as Green and three as Red. It was noted however that the demand pressures on the service should be taken into account when considering performance. It was also noted that, with effect from April 2016, the indicators would be presented first to the Sub-Committee prior to going to Cabinet.

Two indicators covering Looked After Children in foster care and children leaving care for adoption were expected to improve. It was noted that the percentage of long-term Looked After Children placements was exceeding the target and that there were no current long-term Child Protection Plans which was also a positive indicator.

Areas for improvement included the time children took to reach adoption but there were low numbers of children involved. In terms of children leaving care but not in education, employment or training, Havering was behind its target but continued to perform better than its statistical neighbours. It was also felt that Havering's target for this issue should be reduced to a more realistic level.

The number of foster carers in Havering had risen and officers explained that this was due to having staff with the right skill set, persistent recruitment campaigns and improved support for foster carers.

28 HAVERING SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair of the Safeguarding Children's Board explained that the Board looked at issues at a multi-agency level and that there was increased pressure on partners such as the Police, health visitors etc. Police resources were also often focussed on historic child abuse rather than current investigations. It was positive that better multi-agency safeguarding hub assessments were taking place but this required more support and intervention.

Multi-agency work on Child Sexual Exploitation was now much better in Havering. More cases were being identified but this also meant more pressure on services. There were also pressures from people moving into the borough although the Board was in a good position to understand the issues.

The Board Chair explained that a section 17 investigation related to a Child in Need and that a section 47 investigation focussed on suspected child abuse or neglect. A section 47 investigation was at the highest level and required a multi-agency conference.

It was confirmed that statutory reporting on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was now required. Adults who had undergone FGM could also be reported and offered support in hospitals. The Board Chair added that there were not a large number of FGM cases in Havering but the demographic profile of the borough was changing.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the situation and thanked the Board Chairman for the update.

29 **UPDATED SCHOOLS WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY**

It was agreed that officers would circulate the updated policy and management guidance on whistle blowing. Officers agreed that it could be difficult for junior members of staff to raise concerns about senior managers. This had led to the whistle blowing policy being revised and reissued and training being made available.

The policy had been developed in close cooperation with unions and publicity for the policy had been displayed in school staff rooms and other appropriate locations.

An escalation policy had also been developed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

30 **SOCIAL WORKERS UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Children's Services reported that work would take place over the next year on social worker recruitment and retention. This would be part of wider changes due to be made to the service.

Staff turnover was measured by the number of cases which had seen three or more social workers allocated to it in the last year. This was just under a third of cases in Havering as at November 2015.

The current figure of 70 agency social workers (29% of the total) was just over the London average and it was noted that each agency worker cost around twice the amount of a permanent employee.

Officers felt that it was important to be clear about the vision and culture of the service and to establish a working environment that allowed better recruitment and retention. Officers added that they felt that too many families were being drawn into statutory services and that many of these could be diverted to community services. Some 60% of assessments undertaken were found to require no further action.

The service was therefore piloting a new way of working and also funding a small transformation team. A new approach to permanent recruitment was also being taken with the use of a commercial partner to recruit more permanent social workers via social media. It was also hoped to use the Frontline organisation to fast track four graduates into social work positions from September 2016. The Assistant Director felt that this initiative would improve the Council's reputation if it went ahead.

The service wished to allow social workers to work in a more creative way with families. Systemic family therapists would therefore be brought in to help social workers work differently with families and continuing professional development for social workers would also be introduced, focussing on systemic family therapy. The aim of the service was to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

The pilot scheme would be reviewed at the end of March and a reduction in the use of agency staff would follow gradually in a planned way. It was hoped an improvement in the overall situation would be seen by the end of the next financial year.

Some local social work students were already recruited but officers accepted that more could be done on this issue. There were already work placements available for Havering College students in social work.

The Step Up To Social Work programme encouraged the gaining of social work qualifications and staff on the Frontline programme would be guaranteed for two years. If staff could have a good experience via a revised structure and roles within the organisation, this would improve recruitment and retention.

Officers added that a normal contract of employment meant people could not be tied down for more than one year but felt that a better environment would keep staff in the organisation.

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

31 **CHAIRMAN'S FEEDBACK**

It was **AGREED** that this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

32 FUTURE AGENDAS

The following items were suggested as items for future meetings of the Sub-Committee:

An update on social worker recruitment and retention.

A presentation from the service manager of the Youth Offending Service once the Early Help Service had been restructured.

33 URGENT BUSINESS

The Sub-Committee expressed its regret that Philip Grundy had ceased his role as co-opted member representing the Church of England and noted that Lynne Bennett had recently been appointed as a replacement co-opted member.

Chairman

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