

Public Document Pack

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall
9 May 2013 (7.30 - 9.30 pm)**

Present: Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Nic Dodin, Robby Misir, Pat Murray, Garry Pain, Frederick Thompson, Melvin Wallace, Keith Wells and Clarence Barrett

Co-opted Members: Phillip Grundy, Jack How, Julie Lamb and Anne Ling

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

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gillian Ford (Councillor Clarence Barrett substituting) and from Garry Dennis, co-opted Member.

Also present:

Mary Pattinson, Head of Service – Learning and Achievement
Mark Butler, Head of Asset Management
Martin Shipp, Acting Service Manager – Foundation Years and Independent Advice Service
Grahame Smith, HSIS

Joan Smith, coordinator, Healthwatch Havering was also present.

25 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Pat Murray disclosed an interest in item 6 (School Improvement Strategy) as he was a school governor.

26 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman gave details of the action to be taken in the event of fire or other event requiring evacuation of the meeting room.

27 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that, on the minutes of the special meeting held on 6 March 2013, Jack How (co-opted member) had in fact voted against upholding of the requisition concerning the review of children's centres, rather than as stated. The minutes were otherwise agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28 **MODULAR SCHOOL BUILDINGS**

Officers explained that modular buildings in schools had moved on significantly from the old style mobile classrooms. Current modular buildings could be drop-in modules and came from a growing range of suppliers. Such buildings were also now available with brick cladding.

Drop-in modular buildings had a number of advantages including that they could be delivered in one piece and quickly constructed. Depending on the specification, such buildings were expected to last 15-20 years. Disadvantages included high cooling and ventilation costs and the basic aesthetic qualities of these types of buildings.

Multiple drop-in modules were more economical as they consisted of a series of the same units. These were also constructed off site allowing better quality control. These types of buildings were often used for student accommodation or budget hotels.

Structural insulated panels (SIPS) consisted of modular components rather than an entire structure. This type of design was being used in the expansion of Branfil Primary School which was currently Havering's largest school expansion programme. Officers agreed that a high quality of construction control was needed when SIPS-based buildings were constructed on site and the Council in fact worked with an experienced partner to monitor conditions on school building sites. This had been seen at the current Branfil School construction site which was running one week ahead of schedule.

While modular buildings did have a longer durability, they could also be used if needed for a single year expansion in a school and then moved elsewhere. Officers were mindful of the situation should a school convert to Academy status as any capital investment would be lost should this happen. The head of service felt however that Heads and Governors of Academy Schools were likely to agree to expansions of their schools if asked.

The new build at Branfil would accommodate an extra 210 places at the school. Fourteen new classrooms would be built although the existing infant block at the school would be demolished. A transport assessment had been included as part of the planning application granted by the Regulatory

Services Committee in June 2012. The school's travel plan had also been scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a previous meeting. The officer agreed to circulate a copy of the travel plan to Councillor Dodin.

It was clarified that the cost of the Branfil expansion was quite similar to that of traditional construction methods but the use of modular buildings allowed construction to be much quicker.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

29 **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

Officers explained that recent legislative and OFSTED framework changes had led to alterations in how schools were assessed and categorised with the School Improvement Strategy. The Strategy was shared with partners including Heads, Governors and chief inspectors. The categorisations themselves had been decided by the Schools Monitoring Group which took a wide range of views including from school improvement teams, HR specialist and SEN teams. This group met monthly and, while schools were formally categorised annually, categories could be altered in order to reflect current circumstances. It was emphasised that the Strategy was not a system of punitive categorisations.

The process was based around the OFSTED categorisation framework and all schools were required to work towards achieving good or excellent status. In Havering, 81% of primary and 72% of secondary schools had achieved this status. Any school that was not on track to reach this level was required to be regarded as causing concern.

In terms of support levels, schools at category 1 already had a good or outstanding rating and were expected to continue to retain this. This applied to 80% of Havering primary schools. Category 2 schools had a clear trajectory for improvement to good or outstanding level. Category 3A schools were likely to have been assessed as requiring improvement and this category could also include current good or outstanding schools but with a downward trajectory. A category 3B school had a Local Authority warning that it was at risk of failure while a category 3C school was on a formal warning notice or had already failed an inspection.

In Havering, forty-seven schools were currently at category 1, three at category 2, one at category 3A, seven at category 3B and one at category 3C. A total of nine Havering schools were therefore causing concern as not yet having reached the good categorisation.

For schools in categories 1 and 2, 'keeping in touch' meetings were held with the Council's quality assurance teams. These were also held with

category 3A schools but with additional progress review meetings at least once a term. For category 3B schools, as well as these measures, a school would also be expected to undertake measures such as recruiting new Governors or partnering with a more successful school. All the above steps also applied for category 3C schools but there would also be monthly monitoring board meetings that sought to ensure a rapid and sustainable improvement. A new Executive Head may also be appointed for a school in this position.

Statutory powers of intervention included the appointment of new Governors, a forced closure (although this was not used in reality) or conversion to Academy status. Warning notices, including on financial issues, could also be issued and concerns could also be raised with OFSTED. A school could also be compelled to partner or federate with a more successful local school. It was accepted that the system may need reviewing due to the increasing number of Academies but officers were keen to continue developing school partnerships in Havering.

As regards academies that were failing, officers still had access to Academy data and 'keeping in touch' meetings could also be used. The head of service added that it was a challenge to maintain strong partnerships with Academies but this was generally done well in Havering. The Council retained statutory responsibility for children in Academies. Havering Academies were not holding back information and officers would be concerned if a school was not prepared to share information.

A co-opted member who was a Governor of a former category 3C school had found the improvement process to be very supportive and the school had been judged as Good in its most recent inspection. It was suggested that the Chair of Governors at a school that had improved from category 3 could address a future meeting of the Committee on how their school had improved.

The Data Dashboard school information produced by OFSTED was used by officers but there was also more detailed data available for judging a school. National or Local Leaders in Education (NLEs/LLEs) could also be attached to struggling schools and this was currently used at two schools in Havering. Some Havering Heads also fulfilled this role in other areas. As regards self-evaluation, schools were still advised to follow the OFSTED format for this but were able to choose their own format.

The Council would take budgetary control of a failing school if necessary and it was confirmed that the Education Services Grant would commence in April 2013. Children's Services also worked closely with audit in the process of appraising schools. School auditors worked on site although in the case of an Academy, powers may be limited to raising concerns with the Governing Body. The Department for Education could also be involved if necessary.

Officers explained that it was not the case that failing schools tended to be in deprived areas of Havering with failing schools often being located in more mixed areas such as Elm Park or Romford.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

30 **CHILD CARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT**

Officers explained that the Council was required to publish a detailed Childcare Sufficiency Assessment every three years. This was published on the Council website and an annual update produced for Members. This duty was due to be repealed in the Children and Families Bill that was currently before Parliament and this would be replaced with a duty to produce an annual report for Members similar to that already produced in Havering.

A priority was to make the early education entitlement offer in Havering more flexible than simply three hours a day, five days a week across a 38 week year and 95% of Havering providers did alter the hours their services were offered. Access to the early years entitlement in Havering had risen by 3.4% compared to the previous year and 86% of Havering nurseries (71% for child minders) had been rated good by OFSTED which was above the national average.

Entitlements for two year olds would become statutory from September 2013 and this entitlement would extend to disabled children or those with special educational needs from September 2014. The current offer of early education entitlement was mainly for families on benefits etc.

Publicity for early years education had increased recently with advertisements on local buses and in cinemas. Extra funding had been made available in order to build up place numbers. Officers were confident that there were sufficient places at present but primary rolls were increasing with the number of under 5s in Havering expected to rise 22% between 2010 and 2019.

The shortage of places referred to in the report in the Cranham, Hylands and Mawney wards would only take place if every entitled child in those areas took up their places. The figures for Mawney ward were a 2011 total of 174 places and a population of eligible 2 year olds of 300. The officer agreed to supply Councillor Barrett with figures for the three wards.

Officers clarified that children were placed with both child minders and in other settings but only with providers rated good or exceptional by OFSTED.

Although section 106 type funding from developers could be used to provide further child care, the Council did not have the power to specifically insist on infrastructure of this kind being included within developments. It was also clarified that all 3-4 year olds were entitled to the 15 hours of early education provision.

Research had shown there to be a positive correlation between 0-5 provision and later educational achievement up to university level. The Chairman asked if data on this could be brought to a future meeting.

It was clarified that if a child would qualify for free school meals at a later age, the child would receive the two year old offer even if their circumstances later changed.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

31 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012-13**

It was noted that child protection indicators were classified under Individuals and the Committee felt that perhaps this should say Children and Learning rather than Individuals. These figures and areas would also be discussed further at meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Officers clarified that the percentage of Child Protection Plans lasting more than 24 hours should in fact read 3.7% rather than 8% as stayed in the report and they were pleased at this improvement. Figures for placements lasting at least two years had also improved.

The Government had changed the way in which it recorded numbers of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training. The figures for this dropped after September once all the data had been collected. Members expressed disappointment that the quarter 3 corporate performance report had not been included with the agenda papers and the Committee Officer would forward this to Members outside of the meeting.

The Chairman agreed to raise a co-opted Member's question re the classification of flytipping with the chairman of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

32 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

Items for future agendas included special educational needs issues, troubled families and a review of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Members were invited to suggest other work programme items.

It was also agreed to take at the September meeting of the Committee a report on the recent OFSTED inspection of safeguarding in Havering and the annual report of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

33 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank