

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall
10 November 2011 (7.30- 9.30 pm)**

Present: Councillors: Sandra Binion (Chairman), Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Nic Dodin, Robby Misir, Pat Murray, Billy Taylor, Frederick Thompson, Linda Trew and Wendy Brice-Thompson

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

Non-voting Member: Bev Whitehead

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 Dennis Bull, co-opted member Margaret Cameron, Keith Passingham and Garry Dennis.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF SEN TRANSPORT CHANGES IN SEPTEMBER 2011 - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Commissioning and the Project Manager regarding the implementation and early stages of the new SEN Transport arrangements.

Members were informed that at Corbets Tey and Dycorts Schools the use of meeting points had seen a reduction in the number of routes being taken, representing a significant saving. At Quarles Campus of Havering College of Further and Higher Education, a similar saving had been achieved through the merger of three routes into two. Hall Mead School had seen a shift from the use of buses to taxis; Oglethorpe Pupil Referral Unit had had two routes merged into one as had been the case at Gaynes and James Oglethorpe Schools.

Since the new policy had been in place, 121 assessments had been carried out for pupils at Corbets Tey and Dycorts Schools and these had returned the following results:

- 69 pupils were to continue to have a home pick-up.
- 47 pupils were to use a meeting point.
- 3 Dycorts pupils had been assessed as ready for travel training.
- 32 pupils were to be reassessed for travel training within the next two years.
- Following the assessment meeting, 5 parents had agreed to take their child to and from school themselves.

These assessments and the new policy in general meant that Corbets Tey School routes had been reduced from seven to five with an average of 17 pupils per vehicle and two vehicles having welfare escort officers. Similar savings and reductions had been achieved at Dycorts.

At Corbets Tey School, Transport Observers were on each vehicle for the first two days of term to monitor punctuality and record any issues. The average journey time in July 2011 (based on figures recorded by PTS) was 43.09 minutes, whilst average journey time in September 2011 was 43.00 minutes.

Since the start of term, 33 parents have contacted the Council with queries or problems with the new arrangements; these were broken down in terms of the seriousness of the issue and its resolution, as follows:

- 10 queries were easily answered.
- 12 problems were resolved by agreeing an alternative meeting point.
- 4 issues were resolved by altering the bus route or moving the child to a different bus, without adversely impacting the journeys of other children on the route.
- 4 appeals were rejected.
- 1 appeal was upheld (taxi provided).

Overall, officers remained in constant contact with parents and staff at schools to monitor problems and to constantly review the service.

The Committee heard that at Quarles Campus, due to students' timetables being more aligned this year; it was possible to reduce the number of routes from 3 buses to 2 larger vehicles. There were issues with punctuality during the first few weeks, due to timetable changes from the college which resulted in frequent reconfiguration of the routes. We are aware of some remaining punctuality issues and are monitoring this closely whilst considering possible solutions. This had been resolved and both vehicles are taking students onto the campus.

The Committee noted changes that had taken place at Hall Mead and Redden Court Schools and further noted that Havering Council has started a six-month pilot scheme with DABD to provide independent travel training.

During this phase, referrals were being sought from mainstream secondary schools that could put forward pupils with special educational needs who were currently transported by Council bus or taxi. If assessed by DABD as suitable and ready for training, pupils would receive a 12-week one-to-one training programme which it was hoped would enable them to travel to and from school or college independently.

Numerous points were raised regarding the update; Members expressed some concern that siblings with younger children would pick-ups but this was not reflected in assessment results and it was queried what the average journey time was for a child picked up at 7.30am. It was explained that siblings did not have an automatic qualification and that for a 7.30am the range would be up to 8.45 to 8.50 depending upon the circumstances. On the subject of journey times there was conflicting information regarding the punctuality and efficiency of the new arrangements around journey times and it was requested that officers bring more information around journey times.

There was discussion around the location of meeting points, with some expressing concern that the location of the points was dangerous and unrealistic for vulnerable young people, but it was explained that many points had already been moved that were deemed unsuitable and the location of the meeting points would be continuously reviewed.

Further questions revealed that the projected savings of the new arrangements were on course, with £40,000 per bus being saved. Chaperones were available on some routes, but where pick-up points had been moved nearer to pupils' homes then it was not possible to provide chaperones at every point. Where taxis were being used the Council was ensuring that it had contracts with a small number of fully accredited companies which had been vetted to quality standards.

More generally, the borough did have an ambition to improve information on journey times and pick-up points were compared with other boroughs to maximise efficiency. The Cabinet Member for Children & Learning had travelled on the longest route to gain first-hand experience of the service. Time logs were kept by each school to monitor standards.

A record of journey times from the Headteacher of Dycorts was circulated via a Member, the information of which was thought to demonstrate the potential range of journey times for journeys to the school and was not an actual record of journeys to and from the school. This was to be looked at further by officers outside of the meeting.

The Committee received a statement from the Chair of Positive Parents regarding their view of the new arrangements. This statement was to be circulated to Members outside of the meeting and the Council response was to be drafted and also circulated.

6 14-19 UPDATE

The Committee received and considered a report from the 14-19 Strategy Manager to update Members on developments within the 14-19 programme.

The Committee noted that on 13 April 2011, the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning made an announcement giving details about proposals for a new all-age careers service in England by April 2012. The Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) would continue to fund careers services for adults both online and through helpline services; from September 2011 these would be linked to similar services for young people, so there would be a single point of access for all users of each service. The department would also fund a network of public, private and voluntary organisations to provide careers guidance to adults. From April 2012 these services would be known as the *National Careers Service*.

From September 2012, the Education Bill would place a new duty on schools to secure access to impartial and independent careers guidance for every pupil in Years 9 to 11. Schools will have the freedom to decide how best to fulfil this duty. Schools would be able to access the National Careers Service for this purpose. Schools would be expected to make provision for careers guidance from within the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The DfE had issued statutory guidance to local authorities on targeted support services for young people and a communication to schools on changes to the delivery of careers guidance. Boroughs would not be expected to provide universal careers service once the new careers service was established and the duty on schools had commenced. However, local authorities would still need to support vulnerable young people to engage in education and training,

Local authorities, working with schools, Academies and colleges would additionally be expected to track and record young people's participation post-16 on the local Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) in order to ensure there is reliable data available centrally on young people at risk of being NEET. They will also be required to maintain close links with JobCentre Plus to ensure young people NEET are given appropriate support.

During the transition process, schools were being encouraged to think about putting in place new arrangements for careers guidance in advance of September 2012. Havering was currently in discussion with the current Connexions contractor (Prospects) with regard to a possible extension to the existing arrangements which come to a conclusion in March 2012.

The London Borough of Havering was currently drafting a strategy aimed at helping young people to succeed in learning and finding a job. As part of

this process, a draft Youth Commissioning document would be published later in 2011. The Youth Commissioning document would outline the nature of the commissioned activity that would deliver the Local Authority's responsibilities outlined above from September 2012.

Regarding post-16 participation, the Committee considered data showing that 87% of 16 and 17 year olds were in education and work based learning. This was a significant improvement in each of the last two years since 2007 when the comparative figures were 81% and 84%. 16 year old participation increased to 91%, and 17 year old participation increased to 83%.

Further data showed information from the YPLA and DMAG regarding recruitment rates in 2011 for the 16-19 population. This showed a predicted drop in numbers over the next eight years. The predicted drop would almost cancel out a rise in the participation age to full participation in 2015. Local data from the Census showed a small reduction in the size of the Year 11 cohort in Havering between 2010 and 2014 (about 80 young people by 2014); it then begins to rise again.

The population measure and the Year 11 cohort sizes were measuring two different groups of young people. There was a view in London that the Census data may provide a more reliable measure for predicting future 16-19 demand in London than the ONS data.

In terms of access to Higher Education the latest information available from UCAS showed that an increasing number of young people were making applications to University, and whilst the acceptance rate was staying relatively static, the total number of young people being accepted was increasing from 964 in 2003 to 1,233 in 2009.

The Committee noted the report.

7 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2010/11

The Committee received a report from the Interim Head of Children and Young People's Services regarding the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Children and Young People's Service during 2010/11 and how they were dealt with to minimise the impact of justifiable concerns and to reduce the likelihood of future complaints.

The Committee noted that the key reasons for reporting complaints on Children and Young People's Services separately was because they were handled under specific regulations that individually define the statutory process into 3 formal stages (Stage 1, 2 and 3). Havering introduced an informal Pre Stage 1 process in 2005 to support a better complaints practice and avoid complaints escalating to statutory processes.

Some of the key messages that arose from the report during 2010/11 were that:

- The overall number of complaints was around 176 (46 matters raised by MP's and Councillors).
- The Pre Stage 1 process (40) had been very successful in resolving many initial concerns, with both more handled through that process and with none moving from that stage to the formal stage 1 process.
- The overall number of Stage 1 complaints had increased from the previous year by 32. There had been an increase in complaints made by the Children's Advocacy Service.
- The number of Stage 1 complaints, that escalated to a Stage 2 complaint had increased in 2010/11 by 6 complex complaints.
- There were two Stage 3 complaints for the financial year 2010/11. However one had rolled over to 2011/12 due to the complexity.
- For 2010/11 7 Compliments were received, these were in relation to the good work Children and Young People's Services had carried out.
- 7 complaints were submitted to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The outcomes from these complaints were: 4 referred back as a premature complaint and investigated locally as a statutory Stage 1 complaint. 1 complaint was investigated by the LGO and no maladministration was found. 1 LGO Discretion – no or insufficient injustice. 1 LGO on going.
- Most complaints were initiated by parents and very few by children and young people.
- The majority of complaints related to the alleged behaviour of staff or the quality of service.
- A number of future actions had been identified as a result of the Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2010/11. These were set out on page 7 of the appendix 1. Most were continuous development matters, but with one or two specific new actions. Key was the continuation of a staff training programme.

The Committee noted that following a major restructure within Social Care & Learning Directorate, there would be new arrangements whereby Children's and Adult complaints had now merged. It was envisaged that the annual report of 2011/12 would include combined data and more effective comparisons about performance in managing and dealing with complaints across all services. Proposals were being considered to bring complaints services within Social Care and Learning (Learning and Achievement, Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's Services) together in the future and as part of that change consideration would be given to how a wider service report can be provided.

The Committee noted the report.

Chairman