

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
21 January 2014 (7.30 - 9.10 pm)**

Present: Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Nic Dodin, Pat Murray, Frederick Thompson, Melvin Wallace and Keith Wells

Co-opted Members: Julie Lamb, Garry Dennis Margaret Cameron (NAHT) and Ian Rusha (NUT)

Officer Attendance: Joy Hollister, Group Director Children, Adults and Housing, Mary Pattinson, Head of Learning and Achievement, Carol Carruthers, Service Manager, Penelope Denny, Attendance and Behaviour Support Officer, Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Head of Service and Business Performance, Wendy Gough, Committee Officer

Apologies: Councillor Robby Misir, Philip Grundy, Church of England, Jack How, Roman Catholic Church and Anne Ling, Primary Schools.

87 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were noted.

88 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 and 19 November 2013 and 5 December 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

89 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW CHAIR OF THE LOCAL CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING BOARD

The Committee met with the Chairman of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB), who had been in position since October 2013. He explained the role of the Board, and explained that following the Munroe Report, the

review of child protection and safeguarding had been updated in the Children's Act.

There were a number of statutory and non-statutory regulations that the board followed. They worked with other partner organisations to coordinate the effectiveness and accountability of all services dealing with children. There were a number of policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children, which the LCSB monitored and evaluated. They would scrutinise alongside the committee to ensure there were no concerns.

The LCSB took any updates direct form the overarching London Safeguarding Board, however local boroughs also had their own localised policies in place. The board oversaw all trained persons, not to train them specifically, but to ensure that partner organisations had essential training in place, there was recruitment supervision, DBS checks were carried out and to ensure that any investigations carried out came to the correct conclusion.

The LCSB was subject to its own Ofsted inspection and review. This measured the performance of the Board, and ensured the best outcome for children.

A member raised concern about the outsourcing of services to other organisations, in particular the Emergency Duty Team (EDT's). Officer's reassured members that the EDT's, whilst working from the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, were still checked and audited by Havering. There was still statutory responsibility for this service with the Group Director of Children, Adults and Housing. The tender for the service was carried out following the recommendation from Ofsted.

The Group Director stated that there were lots of services that were outsourced to other organisations, as there were often specialists in certain areas. It is important to have the best services that can be delivered, however they are still subject to the same inspections and frameworks to ensure the safeguarding of children.

The LCSB cannot make an organisation do anything, however if there were issues and risks identified with a service provided by Havering, the responsibility would lie with the Chief Executive/ Group Director.

The Committee agreed it would be useful to have a report at a future meeting which outlined how the monitoring of outsourced services was undertaken. The Chair of the LCSB stated that he would have an annual report which he would look to present to the Committee in June/ July 2014.

90 **REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE DATA FOR SCHOOLS/ ACADEMIES FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS 2009-10 TO 2012-13 (AUTUMN AND SPRING TERMS ONLY) AND THE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT ATTENDANCE IN MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING.**

The Committee received a report setting out the attendance data for schools and academies. It was noted that the information was for 2009/10 to 2012/13 (autumn and spring term only). There was a national issue in getting attendance figures which were up to date.

Officers stated that it was parents' responsibility to ensure that their children of compulsory school age received efficient full-time education. This could be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by education elsewhere.

Local Authorities are responsible for identifying children missing education (CME) and ensure they are not at risk of becoming CME. Schools also monitor pupil's attendance through their daily register, they inform the Local Authority of the details of pupils who are regularly absent from school or have missed 10 school days or more without permission. All irregular attendance of pupils is referred to the Local Authority to investigate as part of their safeguarding duties.

The report set out the rates of attendance and the persistent absence rates of primary, secondary and special schools in Havering compared with England, Inner London, Outer London and our statistical neighbours.

It was noted that there were robust approaches taken with parents and policies for schools. Head teachers had expectations for attendance and there was a policy of no term-time absence. The absence at secondary schools overall was not a big issue, and the academies were buying into the attendance monitoring to ensure continuity throughout the education system.

The Committee was informed that special schools had good attendance, as pupils were, in the main, collected and supported practically in attending school although health issues could have an impact on attendance figures.

Officers were working on detailed analysis and breakdowns of equalities in order to find out which vulnerable group experienced lower levels of attendance. It was proposed that this would be made available at the next meeting, together with an action plan.

A member asked about direct correspondence with troubled families in respect of lower attendance. Officers stated that there was an early intervention procedure where the service worked with parents and schools to overcome any absence issues. Meetings were held at times suitable to the parents, this could mean weekends or evening. There was also legal

and support groups available. It was noted that attendance and behaviour are linked and so early intervention is vital.

Members discussed how youngsters from traveller families are dealt with. Officer stated that the expectation is the same for all families regardless of their status. Some traveller families choose to home-educate, which is monitored by the service.

The Committee thanked officers for the informative report and looked forward to receiving the updated work plan and equalities analysis.

91 **SELF EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE FUNCTION**

The Committee received the Self Evaluation Forms which set out the different aspects that Ofsted would look at. The Chairman stated that the Committee had found the evaluation session they had on the forms very informative. Since the evaluation, the draft had been written and was due to be sent out to settings and schools for their comments. The deadline for this was early February with the final version being presented to the Committee at its March meeting.

The Committee agreed that the aspects from the Self Evaluation Form should be used to form part of the rolling work programme for the Committee following the election in May 2014. Members stated that they would wish to see this in more detail and also on a 6 monthly basis.

It was noted that the Committee would involve Governors in the process after the election. It was agreed that the committee would look at a good performing school, and also one that needed assistance.

92 **EARLY YEARS ASSISTANCE**

The Committee agreed to defer this item until the March meeting. It was agreed that this would fit better with the item on Troubled Families.

93 **OFSTED ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received the Children and Young People's Services Ofsted Action Plan. This had been compiled following a request from the committee to show the areas for improvement on the RAG scale (Red, Amber Green). It was agreed that this item needed to be on the rolling work programme for the committee.

It was noted that there were no Red ratings, which was good. However there was no actual Ofsted target timescales shown, so it was difficult to work out timescales for each of the ratings. Officers agreed to provide a Key to each of the rating targets so that the Committee can see if areas slip, and the reasons for these slippages.

Officers stated that the chronology in the system was very in depth and needed to be re-written, so that some information was filtered.

A member asked that his concern be registered for any improvement exceeding 6 months was not completed and therefore not compliant. Officers stated that they noted the member's concern and agreed that with the interpretation of the RAG rating through a key would rectify these concerns. It was added that often negotiations with other organisations was necessary to provide the best service, and any non-compliance would ultimately lie with the Group Director. It was noted that officers have large workloads, including protection cases, tendering and Ofsted recommendations.

It was agreed that a special meeting would be arranged for February to look at this item in detail.

94 COUNCIL'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

The Committee were asked if they wish to review the Executive Decision concerning the "award of the frozen food and groceries contract" at its next meeting. The Committee felt that, as this was a tender contract, that is would be better being reviewed by Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

95 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The Committee agreed that the work programme for the next meeting would include the following items:

- Disabled Transport update
- Early Help Assistance
- Ofsted RAG update (ongoing item)
- Troubled families
- School Performance – equalities analysis
- Sight of finalised SEF document
- NEETS strategy
- OFSTED Inspection – Local Authority Dashboard.

The Committee agreed that the item on the Children and Young People plan would be looked at after the election, and that a joint committee with Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be necessary to look at Mental Health and SEN inclusion.

An additional meeting would be held in late February to look specifically at the OFSTED Action Plan.

Chairman