

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Committee Room 2 - Town Hall
5 December 2013 (7.00 pm – 9.45 pm)**

- Present:** Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Nic Dodin, Robby Misir, Pat Murray, Frederick Thompson and Melvin Wallace
- Co-opted Members:** Phillip Grundy (Church of England), Jack How (Roman Catholic Church), Julie Lamb (Special Schools), Anne Ling (Primary Schools), Garry Dennis (Secondary Schools) and Ian Rusha (NUT).
- Officer Attendance:** Mary Pattinson, Head of Learning and Achievement, Coral Hayden (Complaints, Information & Communication), Phillipa Brent-Usherwood, (Head of Service and Business Performance), Veronica Webb Senior Complaints and Information Officer, Chris Kiernan Interim Quality Assurance Manager and Lorraine Hunter-Brown, Committee Officer
- Apologies:** Councillor Keith Wells, Margaret Cameron (NAHT) and Keith Passingham (NASUWT)
- Observer** Joan Smith (Healthwatch)

79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were noted.

80 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

81 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

82 REVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2012/2013

The Committee received a presentation of the report by Carol Hayden, Business & Performance Manager in Children's Young People's Services.

The Committee were referred to Appendix 1 containing the summary report on the position regarding service complaints handled in relation to the Children and Young People's Services during the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. In addition, it also showed the compliments received.

Complaints about Children and Young People's Services are reported separately because they are 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 within the report during 2012/13 were:

- The overall number of complaints are around 180 and within this figure 46 matters raised by MP's and Councillors.
- The Pre Stage 1 process has been very successful in resolving many initial concerns, with 5 escalating to the formal stage 1 process.
- Matters raised through a Councillor or MP are monitored through their own individual corporate processes.
- The overall number of Stage 1 complaints has decreased by 5. There has been a consistent approach with complaints made by the Children's Advocacy Service.
- The number of Stage 1 complaints, that escalated to a Stage 2 complaint had increased in 2012/13 by 1.
- There was one Stage 3 complaint for the financial year 2012/13 This Stage 3 complaint will roll over into 2013/14.
- For 2012/13, 43 Compliments were received, these are in relation to the good work Children and Young People's Services have carried out.
- 5 complaints were submitted to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).
- The outcomes from these complaints were: 2 referred back as a premature complaint and investigated locally as a statutory Stage 1 complaint. 1 outside LGO jurisdiction, 1 informal enquiry, 1 complaint was investigated by the LGO with local settlement.
- Most complaints are initiated by parents and very few by children and young people.
- The majority of complaints relate to the quality of service, alleged behaviour of staff and disputed decision.

- Currently Havering Council has a corporate complaints model that captures non-social care complaints, principally education, children services activity. These complaints systems are statutory and have separate defined and differing regulated processes.

83 REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT FOR LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Committee were referred to Appendix 1 containing the summary report on the position regarding service complaints handled in relation to Learning and Achievement for the period 1 April 2012 - 31 March 2013. The Committee were asked to note that the report excluded Social Care & Learning, Pupil Services - School Admissions & Exclusions Appeals, which are a statutory requirement and are dealt with by Committee Administration within Legal & Democratic Services.

In 2012/13 there were 8 complaints, compared to the previous year 2011/12 the number was 20 and 1 of these complaints were against Commissioning (Schools). The reasons related to quality of service, challenge of Council decision, dispute decision, Council being unreasonable and policy issue. The number of enquiries received from MPs and Councillors amounted to 50, 17 of which related to school appeals decisions.

The Committee noted the report and voiced their concerns on both of the reports format which they found confusing. Officers advised that the report presentation would be improved in 2014.

84 LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL EVALUATION FORM AND TRAINING FOR OFSTED INSPECTIONS

Members participated in a practical training exercise relating to the Self Evaluation Form for OFSTED Inspections. Members were given 9 possible aspects that Inspectors may investigate and were asked to provide their suggestions for an Evidence Base – i.e. what meetings the Inspectors may want to attend, documents they might wish to see, people they may want to talk to and questions they might ask. Members were split into discussion groups of two or three. The results from the discussions would be collated and evaluated by officers within the Children and Learning department and would form part of a briefing to be circulated at a later date. The Committee found the exercise very informative and requested that the paperwork for the training exercise be circulated to members.

Officers advised the Committee noted that an action plan would be in place by January 2014 to address areas for development. A final draft form of the SEF would be sent to all education providers in the New Year and that members observations from the training exercise would be collated and considered prior to circulation and that a briefing document would be make

available on each of the points in each task. The Committee requested sight of the final document at the March 2014 meeting.

85 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Vice-Chairman proposed that future reports/briefings are noted only due to the large volume of information and data requested by the Committee.

86 **URGENT BUSINESS**

No urgent business was raised.

Chairman