

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE  
Council Chamber - Town Hall  
1 February 2024 (7.05 - 9.20 pm)**

**Present:**

**COUNCILLORS**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Conservative Group</b>            | Jason Frost (Chairman), Judith Holt and Christine Smith |
| <b>Havering Residents' Group</b>     | Jacqueline McArdle and Julie Wilkes                     |
| <b>Labour Group</b>                  | Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair) and Patricia Brown          |
| <b>East Havering Residents Group</b> | Vacancy   |
| <b>Also Present</b>                  | Ian Rusha (NEU)   |

**77 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

**78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor Laurance Garrard and Co-optees Jack How and Julie Lamb.

**79 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Co-optee Ian Rusha disclosed a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the National Education Union (NEU).

**80 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

Officers explained to members that the new Home to School Transport Scheme Policy was not yet available as the consultation had just closed and the data had not yet been compiled to allow the service to draft the new policy. As such, officers talked through the findings and responses to the consultation.

It was explained to members that the consultation had received over 550 responses from mainly parents or guardians of children with SEND. It was

explained the consultation was online-only and no paper version were sent to service users. Members expressed concern an online-only approach could cause some service users to be missed or unable to respond. Officers explained guidance allows for online-only consultations but understood the concerns raised by members.

The consultation comprised of 8 questions and members noted the following responses. Question 1 asked if the new policy would positively impact on their own or their families' employment to which 397 responded and ≈57% disagreed. Question 2 asked if the new policy would make their lives easier to which 397 responded and ≈60% disagreed. Question 3 asked if the new policy would positively impact on their own or their child's mental health to which 410 responded and ≈55% disagreed. Question 4 asked if the new policy would give them greater flexibility and financial independence to which 407 responded and ≈58% disagreed. Question 5 asked if the new policy would improve school attendance to which 405 responded and ≈61% disagreed. Question 6 asked if they worried about managing a personal transport budget to which 383 responded and ≈67% agreed. Question 7 asked if the Post 16 TA should be capped at a maximum amount to which 362 responded and ≈59% agreed. Question 8 asked if the Post 16 TA should be means tested to which 465 responded and ≈51% agreed.

The Chairman of the Sub-Committee then allowed a representative of the service users to speak about their views on the consultation. The representative explained the consultation felt like a guilt trip to parents and the changes felt forced. Officers responded that there were lessons learnt from the consultation process.

Officers then explained the new policy would only affect children making application to start school in September 2025 and any child currently receiving home to school transport that could be affected by the policy change would be worked closely with by the council's children services team. Officers also explained that the new policy was focused on reducing the number of parents using single-use taxis as those means are overpriced and better solutions could be found for the child and their needs, involving an individual assessment of the child and not a 'blanket approach'. The new special schools due to be built in the Borough would see a reduction in children travelling out-of-borough to special schools and would in turn reduce the number of families utilising single-use taxis.

Members suggested the policy should be made available in an easy-to-read and children's version. Officers confirmed they would work with other teams to see if that was possible.

Officers explained it is good practise to review policies and this review followed statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and would present a cumulative saving of ≈£1.4million over the next 4 years.

People Overview & Scrutiny Sub  
Committee, 1 February 2024

The Sub-Committee made no recommendations on the consultation but noted the cabinet report and decision would be brought back to the Sub-Committee for pre-decision scrutiny at a later date.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report.

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**Chairman**