

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 7 June 2011 (7.30pm – 9.00pm)  
Havering Town Hall, Romford**

**Present:** Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Dennis Bull, Nic Dodin, Gillian Ford (Vice-Chairman), Robby Misir, Pat Murray, Garry Pain, Billy Taylor and Frederick Thompson.

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

Apologies for absence were received from co-opted member Garry Dennis and non-voting members Margaret Cameron, Sue Kortlandt and Keith Passingham.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Nic Dodin to the Committee who had replaced Councillor John Wood. The Committee thanked Councillor Garry Pain for his contribution as he too would cease to be a member in due course.

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

**25. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2011 and of the special meeting held on 14 March 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**26. CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

The Committee considered a report updating members of progress to date with recommendations submitted by a topic group of the Committee's predecessor, the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Topic Group, which considered the roll out of Sure Start Children's Centres in the borough, reported to the Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and the approved recommendations were considered by Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

The Committee noted that the report only provided an update on those recommendations that had been endorsed by Cabinet. Of those that were being progressed, members noted the following outcomes:

Partnership working between the Council and NHS in Children's Centres

The Committee was informed that since Children's Centres became statutory, there was a renewed emphasis on partnership working with the NHS. To this end, four Centres (Collier Row, St Kilda's, Ingrebourne and Elm Park) were being used as "health hubs".

Compulsory Occupation Agreement for nurseries based at Children's Centres

It was noted that two Children's Centres had a private nursery provision and there was now a standard form of occupation agreement with Ingrebourne Nursery based at the Ingrebourne Children's Centre, with regular reviews built in.

The nursery at Collier Row Children's Centre (Abbs Cross), had still not signed an agreement and this matter was before the Court for resolution.

Self-contained buildings to be used for Children's Centre accommodation

The majority of Children's Centres were in self contained buildings. South Hornchurch Library Children's Centre had recently moved to the converted portacabin on the library site.

Establishing a Parents Forum for each Children's Centre

There were Parents Forums at each Children's Centre. The governance arrangements were agreed by the Children's Trust and were in place. Currently, there were discussions with the School Governor Service of the Local Authority for that service to manage children centre governance.

Transport to Centres to be reviewed and good corporate signage to be installed at each Centre

There had been a review of signage and consistency of approach adopted. There were new signs that clearly mark the buildings and signs on the main highways indicating the location from major junctions.

N3 connectivity to be installed in all existing and future Centres

NHS Havering had supplied their staff with mobile working 3g solutions or at some hubs; health staff had direct access to their database. This matter was no longer an issue.

### Provision of sexual health services at Centres to be developed

Children's Centres had continued to provide some sexual health services. Services had also been developed for teenage parents with an emphasis on preventing a second pregnancy.

### Improved promotion of centres

There continues to be a communication strategy to promote Children's Centres. There had been articles in Living and also invites to the local papers to key events. There had been close working with local radio stations and there was a website and staff were being trained to update this regularly.

### Continued good relationships between the Council and partners

The existing strong working relationship with partners in Health, Job Centre Plus and with the third sector had continued. All of the old and new centres were linked to partner agencies.

### Finalising locations for centres in central Romford and Rainham Village

Work had continued with a centre developed in Pinewood School and Rainham Village School. Both had a Children's Centre offer in place. The plans were well advanced for the self contained Children's Centre at Rainham Village.

The plans for Wykeham and Mawney School received strong local opposition and therefore the plans were withdrawn. Instead, the plans had been adapted for St Kilda's to increase its capacity and there was an offer for parenting groups to local schools in the Romford area. Health Services were moving their staff from Romford Clinic to St Kilda's.

### Continued outreach services from centres with the use of mobile solutions where necessary

There was an outreach service from centres. The outreach service worked with the most vulnerable; providing parenting classes and one to one parenting programmes to parents whose parenting required support

### Continued good relationships between schools and centres

There were excellent relationships with a large number of schools, particularly schools which had a Children's Centre on site.

The Committee **noted** the report.

## **27. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES**

The Committee received a report, presented by the Manager of Inclusion, Assessment and Support, regarding the borough's legal requirement to provide services for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). The report outlined the key areas of service and support being provided with particular focus upon early years, school and post-16 education.

The Committee acknowledged that Havering had a long history of commitment to inclusion, which was reflected in its policy and arrangements for special educational needs (SEN). As a consequence of this the large majority of young people with LDD were catered for within mainstream settings and support services had developed to assist schools, early years settings and young people to support themselves to participate alongside their peers.

The provision of services for young people in early years with LDD was robust and incorporated services jointly-delivered with the charity First Step. The Under Fives Inclusion Service was a means of tackling the most extreme needs such as autism. This service consisted of the Learning Support Service, the Social Communication Service, the Child and Community Psychology Service and the SEN section. The Foundation Stage Funding Panel consisted of representatives from various organisations and provided funding to areas of need.

Measures to ensure that children and young people with LDD attended school were continuing and included rigorous assessment to ensure that the right support and the right school catered for individual needs. OFSTED inspection reports indicated that the large majority of schools ensured that children and young people with LDD achieved well. Progress was being made on improving practice in monitoring the achievement of pupils with LDD in special schools through an ICT system, CASPA, and on the use of provision management and mapping to assist in ensuring special educational needs were effectively met within mainstream schools. In June 2010 guidance was issued to all schools in Havering on appropriate identification of young people with SEN who may go on to be placed at School Action of the Code of Practice.

The Committee noted the post-16 provision for young people with LDD. Members were informed that transition arrangements for Year 9 pupils with LDD were robust and that the young people were involved in planning for KS4 to ensure their eventual progression into education, employment or training. Havering's Parents in Partnership Service held an annual meeting with parents to explain the transition process in collaboration with colleagues from Learning Support and Connexions.

Havering College of Further and Higher Education provided some Post-16 provision, principally at Quarles Campus and dealt with some complex learners with learning difficulties although the majority of its LDD had moderate to mild learning difficulties. Barking and Dagenham College also hosted a significant population of Havering post -16 LDD. Both FE Colleges' provision was delivered in mainstream settings, which were currently considered unsuitable for a proportion of vulnerable youngsters with high support needs.

Of the 3 special schools in Havering only Ravensbourne had a sixth form and this catered for up to 18 young people with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. It predominately catered for its own students but occasionally took students from Corbets Tey and Dycorts. This had meant that other students from Corbets Tey and Dycorts whose parents wanted them to continue in a school sixth form had to go to out of borough schools.

In 2009-10 there was an unprecedented rise in the number of requests for sixth form places in special schools mainly from parents of pupils at Corbets Tey. This was associated with requests that Corbets Tey develop a sixth form, concern expressed by parents that they would prefer local provision and that the proposed developments at Dycorts would not come on stream until 2014.

The Local Authority commissioned an independent review of Post-16 Special Education in Havering, which reported in July 2010. It recommended development of special sixth forms at both Corbets Tey and Dycorts as a matter of urgency. However the report contained no detail as to funding and its completion coincided with the Government's withdrawal of funding for Havering's Building Schools for the Future Programme and the arrival of the current period of financial constraint.

In the absence of significant capital or revenue funding any local development would have to tap into external funding sourced through the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). Currently there were three main routes for funding learners aged 16 to 25 with LDD:

- The SEN block grant, which Local Authorities received to discharge their statutory duties towards those with SEN in special schools.
- Additional Learning Support (ALS) funding allocated to colleges and independent providers for learners aged 16 to 25 in local provision.
- Provision funded for individual learners with LDD aged 16 to 25 as part of the specialist placement budget, which included provision at independent specialist providers where their needs could not be met locally. This budget was managed by the YPLA.

While it was anticipated that these three funding streams would pass to Local Authority control in 2013-14 this did not help with the immediate pressure of securing Post-16 provision especially as much of this funding was only accessible through further education providers and not special school sixth forms i.e. students benefiting from YPLA funding in FE colleges cannot have Statements. The 14 to 19 Strategy Manager had worked with the Havering College of Further and Higher Education and Havering Sixth Form College to establish pilot schemes proposed to run from September 2011 in which students were on the roll of the colleges and so able to access participation funding and Additional Learner Support funding through the YPLA but received their education through provision at Corbets Tey and Hall Mead respectively.

Members, whilst pleased with the programmes in place for pupils with LDD, did express concern that the pilot schemes were too limited or did not extend far enough. There was considerable concern amongst some members that the recommendations about post-16 provision had not been acted upon despite being accepted by the Council.

The two schemes in question, one of which centred around a provision at Havering College of Further and Higher Education and Corbets Tey School involved around 6/7 pupils whilst the Havering Sixth Form College provision involved around 4 pupils. The cost per pupil was said to be approximately £21,000.

Members discussed the role of the Post-16 Strategy Group, which had been established to steer the pilot schemes and to manage the provision offered to post-16 pupils with LDD. There was concern that the role of the group was being diluted by the focus upon the pilot programmes, with not enough focus upon the wider issues of examining the educational offer to the 19 to 25 age group with LDD. Further, it was imperative that the group offered a platform for parents. In response, officers stated that the Strategy Group did comprise two members of parents in partnerships, and more places were available, but places had not been taken. It was agreed that better advertising of the group be provided for parents.

Members considered the drop-off in the number of statemented pupils in the borough and were informed that a statement lasted up to age 19 at which point, if a child with LDD remained in education, a separate, post 16 version of a statement came into effect. There was a level of concern that the intensity of the SEN provision provided could at times be too intense and not equip young people for independence as they would develop a reliance on support.

The Committee noted the report.

**28. ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

The Committee received its Annual Report for the 2010/11 Council Year. It was planned for the report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable members and others to compare performance year to year.

The Committee approved the report subject to some minor amendments and agreed that it should be referred to full Council.

**29. CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the 2010/11 Council Year. As a Sub-Committee of the Children & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee, practice had been for the Corporate Parenting Panel's Annual Report to also be referred to Council.

The Committee noted the work of the Panel, which had included work with the Children in Care Council and meetings with young people both in and that had left care. Members stated that much positive work had been undertaken, particularly around ensuring that satisfactory accommodation was provided for those young people moving to semi or fully independent living. Members stated that as a result of visits by members of the Panel much improvement had been made in the standard of accommodation.

The Committee approved the report subject to some minor amendments.

**30. FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Committee agreed the following items for future meetings:

- Youth Support Services for SEN pupils
- Budget Variance Report (across learning and social care)
- Update on how the SEN and Disability Green Paper will impact upon support for SEN pupils in schools.