

## **CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT, 2011/2012**

### **SUMMARY**

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during the year ended May 2012.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to compare performance year on year.

There are no direct equalities or environmental implications attached to this covering report. Any financial implications & risks from reviews and work undertaken will be advised as part of the specific reviews.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Committee agree the report be referred to full Council.

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Chief Executive

**Background Papers** - None

# CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Subject Heading:**

**CMT Lead:**

**Report Author and contact details:**

**Policy context:**

Annual Report  
2011/2012  
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To summarise the  
work of the Council's  
Children & Learning  
Overview & Scrutiny  
Committee.

## SUMMARY

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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## REPORT DETAILS

During the year under review, the Committee met on 6 occasions and dealt with the following issues:

### **1. REQUISITION**

- 1.1 The Committee held a special meeting on 5 July 2011 to consider a requisition of an executive decision regarding the changes to the transport provision provided for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 1.2 Broadly, the decision meant that the door to door collection bus service would be replaced by a series of collection or 'pick-up points' where children would be both collected and dropped-off. Parents would be required to apply for travel assistance for each academic year and new children requesting assistance would undergo a full needs assessment. The changes would allow the Council to make £600,000 of savings as well as creating a climate that reduced dependence on Council services.
- 1.3 The Committee principally questioned the fairness of the assessments that would be undertaken, wishing to ensure that children in need to door to door transport were not disadvantaged. Further, the Committee sought reassurance that the new emphasis on travel training would not pressure or force children who were not ready for certain levels of independence to make that step.
- 1.4 Officers emphasised firstly that the drop-off points had been carefully considered and would be under review to ensure that children did not face a journey that they would not be able to make. Children would not be forced into travel training where they were not ready. The Committee also noted that similar changes had been made in other boroughs and these had been largely successful.
- 1.5 The Committee voted not to uphold the requisitions by 8 votes to 3 with 2 abstentions.

### **2. CHILDREN'S CENTRES**

- 2.1 On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011, 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 21st April 2009 and the approved recommendations were considered by Cabinet on 24th June 2009.
- 2.2 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 various outcomes.

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

- 3.1 Throughout the year, the Committee considered numerous reports relating to the services and support provided with children with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). A report considered by the Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011 highlighted the legal requirement on the Council to provide for such children.
- 3.2 The Committee considered the various ways in which the Council met its responsibility, including the under-5 provision, the transition for SEN pupils at crucial stages of education and measures to enable inclusion of SEN and LDD pupils in mainstream education. Although there was an emphasis on inclusion, a specialist SEN provision was available and very effective in the borough.
- 3.3 The Committee was informed that 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.
- 3.4 There were two pilot programmes to deliver the required service for post-16 learners. The Committee received information about these schemes at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2011; the Committee received an update on the success of the schemes at its meeting later in the academic year on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012.
- 3.5 The Committee had discussions around the future of the programmes, the first scheme, a partnership between Havering College of Further and Higher Education and Corbets Tey Special School, which catered for six learners and which had cost rough £240,000 from various funding streams, would continue with modifications. The second scheme, which was a partnership between Hall Mead School and Havering Sixth Form College and which catered for four learners, would not be continued as it was specific to the 2011/12 SEN needs.
- 3.6 Throughout the year, at its meetings in September, November and January, the Committee received updates regarding the roll-out of the SEN Transport changes, the same decision that the Committee had considered as a requisition in July. The last update, at its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012, demonstrated that the projected saving of the changes was on track, with the depot for the buses having been moved to allow for new start times, culminating in 10 less buses which translated to a saving of £40,000 per bus.

### **4. SOCIAL CARE & LEARNING ANNUAL COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS REPORT**

- 4.1 At its meeting in November 2011, the Committee received a report, presented by the Head of Children & Young People's Services, regarding the complaints received by Children and Young People's Services in the previous council year.

- 4.2 The report outlined information around the numbers and types of complaints handled by Children & Young People's Services and how they dealt with these to minimise the impact of justifiable concerns and to reduce the likelihood of future complaints.
- 4.3 The Committee noted that the overall number of complaints was around 146 (46 matters raised by MPs and Councillors), which was relatively low given the nature of the services involved and against a backdrop of a significant increase in referrals to social care in 2009/10. In addition, the Pre-Stage 1 process (40 matters raised) 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.
- 4.4 Members noted that the overall number of Stage 1 complaints had increased from the previous year by 6. 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.

## **5. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

- 5.1 At its meeting in September 2011, the Committee considered a report on Havering's New School Improvement Strategy, presented by the Principal Inspector of the Havering School Improvement Service.
- 5.2 In light of the forthcoming Education Bill, 2011, (now the Education Act 2011) and the wide-ranging and significant changes to both funding and policy in relation to schools and school improvement, the Department for Education (DfE) directed all Local Authorities to submit detailed plans on their strategy to support all schools, and especially those that were failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils/students, or those schools that were performing below the new government floor standards.
- 5.3 The Committee considered the various categories for school improvement as well as those schools in need of more robust support from the service. The different categories of support would equate to greater or smaller periods that the team would spend in the school, ranging from 0.5 to 6 days.
- 5.4 The Committee also considered the specific and general guiding principles underlying the Strategy before looking at the work that Havering Improvement and Advisory Service undertook in schools in the borough. The Committee was informed that as an education community, Havering was using all its resources collectively to enhance pupils' learning and improve the overall quality of provision. There was a collective commitment to open, transparent communication and honest and frank debate. The LA regularly reviewed its practice in relation to its key activities with representative groups of schools

and governors, particularly in relation to the nature of the monitoring, challenge, intervention and any core elements of the support provided.

## **6. 14-19 LEARNING PATHWAYS**

- 6.1 At its meeting in November 2011, the Committee received a report, presented by the 14-19 Strategy Manager, regarding the 14-19 programme.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that on 13 April 2011, the Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning made an announcement giving detail 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.
- 6.3 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.

## **7. BUDGET SCRUTINY**

- 7.1 In both July 2011 and January 2012, the Committee met jointly with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in order to scrutinise aspects of the Council's proposed budget for the coming year. The meetings scrutinised several issues of relevance to the Committee.

## **8. SCHOOL'S PERFORMANCE**

- 8.1 The Committee received a report from the Principal Inspector of Havering's Inspection & Advisory Service (HIAS) for schools, on the performance improvements in primary and secondary schools supported by the service.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that the core purpose of HIAS was to challenge and support all schools to improve. Overall attainment at all Key Stages in 2011 remained above the national average for each of the main national attainment measures in each Key Stage and was higher than the performance of Havering's statistical neighbours.
- 8.3 There was a particularly pleasing improvement in Key Stage 4, where Havering's improvement was greater than that of other local authorities and using the measure 5+A\*-C GCSE grades with English and maths Havering was performing within the top 20% of all 150 Local Authorities for the first time for four years. In Key Stage 1 Havering's performance in reading, writing and maths remained within the top 20% of all Local Authorities. During 2010-11 primary and secondary schools receiving support improved in all cases more

quickly than those schools not in receipt of support. Improvements were particularly significant in supported secondary schools.

## **9. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 The Committee received a report, in January 2012, presented by the Service Manager of the Foundation Years & Independent Advice Service, regarding the borough's second Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, which was required to be completed and published by April 2011.
- 9.2 The report detailed the progress towards meeting those actions as published. It also provided an opportunity to inform Councillors of the recently published consultation document which called for significant changes in the way the Local Authority must ensure sufficiency in the childcare market and the Local Authority's statutory role on the delivery of free Early Education for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

## **10. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2011-14**

- 10.1 At its meeting in March 2012, the Committee considered a report from the Strategic Lead, Performance and Policy from Social Care and Learning, regarding the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 (CYPP). Specifically, the report was updating the Committee on the progress made against the six priorities as determined by the Children's Trust.
- 10.2 The Committee had regard to the six priority areas of the Plan, as determined by the Children's Trust, and the progress made against each of the priority areas.

**The following comments have been submitted by members of staff:**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no financial implications or risks arising directly from this report.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no human resources implications or risks arising directly from this report.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

There are no legal implications or risks arising directly from this report.

### **Equalities and Social Inclusion Implications and Risks:**

There are no equalities or social inclusion implications or risks arising directly from this report.

### **Background Papers**

None.