**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3B - Town Hall
18 December 2019 (7.00 - 9.00 pm)**

Present: Councillors Judith Holt (Chairman), Gillian Ford,
                                          Dilip Patel, Tele Lawal, Ray Best and Philippa Crowder

                                          Co-opted Members:
                                          Kathy Freeman

                                          Church Representatives:
                                          Jack How

                                          Non-voting Member: Ian Rusha

                                          Apologies for absence were received from Councillor
                                          Christine Vickery, Councillor Reg Whitney, Lynne
                                          Bennett and Julie Lamb.

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

20   **CHAIRMAN ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that Councillor Lawal had submitted a Councillor Call to Action on the consultation for the Children's Centre Re-Design. The Sub-Committee would have to consider the matter at a meeting to be organised before the decision was made by Cabinet.
- The Chairman was meeting with Senior Officers to discuss Topic Group on relevant work areas.
- Councillor Holt informed the Sub-Committee that she had recently retired from her teaching job.

21   **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Mr Ian Rusha declared he was a governor at the Corbets Tey School during consideration of the report on SEND Travel Assistance.

22   **SEND TRAVEL ASSISTANCE - UPDATE REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report that outlined the key issues in respect of the provision of travel assistance for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

It was noted that the Education Act 1996 requires Local Authorities to make suitable and where eligible, free travel arrangements for 'eligible children' as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance of school or college and this duty underpins the Council's policy. There was a requirement to refresh and re-publish the Council's policy annually.

The Council's policy was written in conjunction with the following regulations:

- Education Act 1996
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 0-25 years Code of Practice 2014
- Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2016
- Post 16 Transport to Education and Training 2019

The Council's policy was underpinned by the following principles:

- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly
- The use of existing provision such as free travel on public transport will be encouraged wherever possible
- Students who are able to travel independently, use public transport or be transported to school by a parent/guardian or other appropriate person are encouraged to do so
- Students who have additional travel needs are offered the most independent and personally enabling solution for their situation
- All travel options are explored for students and any assistance offered will look at what is efficient and effective, both in terms of sustainability and cost – where travel assistance is provided, the most cost-effective mode of transport that meets the individual's needs must always be used
- The travel needs of students will be reviewed regularly to ensure the arrangements are still appropriate for their assessed needs

Most children and young people will access school and college without additional assistance from the Council. Where assistance is given, it should be seen as part of a plan of support that encourages children and young people to become more independent and resilient in their future lives.

As part of the Transport for London service, children and young people in full time education can travel free and at a discounted fare on public

transport, up until they turn 18 and finish education. Children under five can also travel for free on public transport with a fare paying adult. For support above and beyond what is available for free from Transport for London, the Council may provide further travel assistance.

The eligibility criteria sets out who is defined as eligible for support from the Council, which is applied in conjunction with the Council's principles for offering travel assistance. The eligibility criteria and the type of travel assistance that may be offered differs depending on the age of the student, their needs and the circumstances of the family.

The types of travel assistance available to children and young people, following a local authority assessment, include:

- A free space on the travel training programme to build confidence travelling and gain the skills required to do so independently, or with support
- Reimbursement of fuel for an identified person to perform a maximum of four journeys per day
- A seat on a bus with pick up at a designated meeting point
- A seat on a bus with pick up outside of the dwelling
- A taxi

Following an assessment to determine eligibility, all students are considered firstly for a space on the travel training programme or for fuel reimbursement. If these are not appropriate, a direct transport service may be arranged.

The Sub-Committee noted that the budget for travel assistance for children and young people was £3m and expenditure for 2019-20 was forecasted at £3.46m.

The demand for travel assistance was increasing and applications received during the 19-20 renewal period have risen by almost 70 compared to last year.

The report also highlighted the continued overspend on budgets for the service over the last three financial years, which highlights the need to respond differently to the needs of the borough.

The most frequently accessed mode of travel assistance have been the provision of a seat on a passenger transport bus. Following a change in practice against the policy, a shift have seen other modes of travel assistance to meet people's needs such as Taxi, Fuel reimbursement, Travel training and Exceptional/multiple.

The Sub-Committee was informed that as part of the 19-20 annual refresh of the policy, the following refinements in practice were introduced:

- Increasing the offer and incentive for parents to take up fuel reimbursement in order to safely transport their children to school.

- Working with the market to increase the capacity for independent travel training therefore increasing the number of referrals made for students to be assessed for their ability to travel independently

- Developing an online 'eligibility checker' tool which supports parents/guardians new to travel assistance to check whether their child may be eligible before they apply, and to signpost to other options in the community that may best support them

- Strengthening the internal processes to assess and manage applications/appeals; ensuring adequate intelligence is gained about a family's circumstance.

- Shifting outcome notifications to being online instead of postal, to enable a faster response to parents/guardians.

The Sub-Committee noted following actions to further manage demand and budget

1. There was a need to change the way that travel assistance was provided to a more flexible service that is able to meet changing demand and one that promotes resilience and independence in the community. In order to deliver this objective, the service had been identified as one of the Council's 'transformation' projects reporting under the 'Communities' theme.

2. The matter of meeting people's needs would not be compromised during the flex in service, but may be met in a different way.

3. A number of lessons learned after the 19-20 renewal period had led to set further recommendations to practice and policy. This included looking at promoting independent travel training and working with schools, case officers and families to view travel training as part of the wider independence promoting plan.

4. Another recommendations was the recruitment of a travel assistance assessment officer, with the aim to act as a dedicated liaison within the council who would provide support   through the application process, work with families on the most appropriate travel solutions and provide good information and advice to parents/guardians, schools and other members of the community.

The report indicated that in order to monitor the impact of the practice changes, discussions were held at a Parent forum in November, to discuss the renewal period and seek feedback on the application process that had taken place. This was also an opportunity to discuss options for the next academic year.

The report informed that the Local Authority had started to increase its independent travel training offer and availability, the Council had arranged for its Young Advisors to collect views from students and parents about how

the service works. This was being supported by easy read feedback sheets with support from Advocacy for All.

The Sub-Committee noted the Council was part of a London Borough Travel Assistance Group, which seeks to share information, issues, best practice and opportunities for the future of service provision. It was stated that Havering would continue to participate in such groups to share information about options and learn from other initiatives.

During a brief discussion the Sub-Committee requested further information on the average journey time on the passenger transport bus at a future meeting.

It was confirmed that parents and other users of the SEND transport were aware of the consultation and have responded.

The Sub-Committee noted the comments of the report.

23   **ADULT EDUCATION OUTCOMES - UPDATE REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report that provided an update on Havering Adult College, including performance outcomes for 2018-2019.

The Sub-Committee noted that Havering delivers adult and community learning (ACL) through Havering Adult College. The College receives two direct grants to fund its operation, one from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and one from the General London Authority (GLA), which enables the service to deliver a range of courses aimed at learners aged 19+ who could be resident in the borough, or attend from outside of the borough.

The report indicated that in the academic year 2018-19, Havering Adult College delivered learning opportunities to 4368 learners. The achievement rate for learners overall was 98.79%, based on the Management Information System data returned to the ESFA for that year.

The last three Ofsted inspections have found the provision to be Good, and with some excellent features.

The report outlined that Havering Adult College presently offers a broad curriculum to the public, covering key areas of learning; specifically, Digital & Computer Skills, Languages (including BSL), Creative & Performing Arts, GCSEs (English, Maths, Science, Psychology), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Floristry & Horticulture, Personal Wellbeing and Fitness, Counselling, Food & Drink, Teacher Training, History & Modern Culture, and Teaching Assistants.

A key objective of the Skills for Londoners Strategy is to increase the number and diversity of adult learners in London gaining skills to participate in society, and progress into further/higher or additional education.

The following eight areas of reform under the devolution of the AEB in London were outlined:

1. Eligibility for full-funding for people in low-paid work
2. Basic English and maths skills
3. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
4. Basic digital skills
5. Adult & Community Learning (ACL)
6. Support for disadvantaged learners
7. Support for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
8. Addressing London's sectoral and occupational skills needs

The report informed the Sub-Committee that the College was proposing to focus on the following key occupational areas that were anticipated to be introduced following the pilot year of 2019-20:

- Health and Social Care
- Construction
- Tourism, Hospitality and Retail
- Creative and Digital
- Finance and Professional services

The Sub-Committee noted that the College was part of the Local London (Eastern London) Region, aligned to the following priority outcomes identified through the Local London Steering Board:

- Supporting in-work low paid residents to up-skill, secure new qualifications and progress into higher paid work
- Supporting unemployed and economically inactive residents (particularly those with disabilities and long term health conditions)
- Supporting lone parents who are struggling to secure and maintain part-time/full-time work at a reasonable wage
- Supporting residents whose first language is not English, for whom it is a barrier to employment and accessing educational opportunities
- Supporting residents both younger and older with SEND needs
- Supporting skills development for: construction, digital, health and social care, cultural and creative industries

The Sub-Committee noted the following In-Year Outcomes for Learners:

1. 4368 learners recruited overall during 2018-19, retention was excellent at 97%, with overall achievement also excellent at 98.79%.

2. For skills-based (accredited) courses, retention was excellent at 97.94%, and achievement was particularly excellent at 98.86%.

3. For community learning (non-accredited) courses, retention was very good at 95%, with achievement remaining excellent at 98.72%.

4. All withdrawn learners were followed up as part of the college's robust quality assurance and improvement infrastructure, and reasons were recorded for the early departure.

The Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

24   **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS - UPDATE REPORT**

The Sub-Committee received a report that provided progress made to improve School Admissions & Inclusions arrangements across all Havering's Schools/ Academies and Alternative Provisions.

The report noted that the Local Authority had a statutory duty to provide pupils who have been Permanently Excluded an education from day 6 of the exclusion. The Inclusion Team works with schools and academies to avoid permanent exclusion where possible and offer other alternative pathways to support pupils.

The Sub-Committee noted that the Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Service, an Early Help Education Service monitors pupil attendance where the attendance of pupils falls below the acceptable level in school.

The service works closely with parents to overcome barriers to school attendance whether it was medical, social, and emotional or for any number of reasons. Whilst there are legal routes open to local authorities where parents do not ensure that their children receive a suitable education, these legal sanctions were generally a last resort after a period of working alongside parents and professionals to reduce/remove any barriers to good school attendance.

The report outlined that the Early Help Attendance Behaviour and Traveller Support Service performs the school welfare checks for students. Children Missing Education (CME) were monitored and tracked through the Attendance Service as a statutory function.

The report informed that the levels of overall absence and persistent absence (PA) have reduced in Havering in the past 5-year period and only remain slightly higher than London and national averages. It was stated that unauthorised absence was slightly below London average in both primary and secondary schools over the 5-year trend which was a positive step in the right direction.

The Sub-Committee noted that in the last academic year, the Attendance, Behaviour and Traveller Support Service led on an attendance project with the key aim of sharing outstanding practice within schools and academies across key stages with a focus on challenging the rationale for authorising absence; this resulted in an Attendance Summit that was attended by thirty Schools and Academies.

The following key measures around attendance/absence were set by as indicators:

- Overall Absence
- Authorised Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Persistent Absence at 90% and below

Primary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Overall Absence	3.9%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.3%
Authorised Absence	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%	3.5%	3.6%
Unauthorised Absence	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0.7%	0.7%
Persistent Absence	8.3%	9.0%	9.2%	9.9%	10.7%

Secondary School Absence Data in Havering (Summary Past 5 years):

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Overall Absence	5.1%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%
Authorised Absence	3.9%	4.1%	4.2%	4.0%	4.4%
Unauthorised Absence	1.2%	1.4%	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%
Persistent Absence	12.9%	13.6%	13.8 %	12.4%	14.9%

The Sub-Committee noted the comments of the report.

Chairman

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