



Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Annual Report 2020/2021

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

It has been said an infinite number of times, but last Municipal Year 2020-2021 was unprecedented, the COVID-19 pandemic challenging Government locally and nationally in ways previously unthinkable.

Restrictions caused formal scrutiny in terms of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee (OSSC) and the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) to cease for the six months March to September 2020. During this time, however, Councillor Holt had monthly telephone briefings with Mr. Robert South, Director of Children's Services, to ensure all possible work was being carried out to maintain support for Havering's children in schools and in care, albeit safely with regards to COVID-19. Certain aspects of safeguarding of children and young people need to happen face-to-face and cannot be substituted by Zoom meetings etc.

Since September, the OSSC and CPP have met again virtually. The need to adapt and be flexible with working methods as a consequence of the pandemic was recognised. Nonetheless, scrutiny was carried out on the Children's Services Budget, Complaints Report and Semi-Independent Living Provision, with a topic group formed to scrutinise the Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Havering.

Within the CPP, topic groups have recently been established to scrutinise the implementation of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. These groups will focus on Education and Training, Health, Housing / Accommodation and Participation.

Most recently, as a result of work by the Overview and Scrutiny Board, scrutiny of all secondary schools outcomes has commenced by the OSSC. Although all secondary schools in Havering, plus a significant number of primary schools, are now academies, it remains the responsibility of the Borough to overview their performance, in a variety of ways, to ensure the raising of standards and the best outcomes for our children.

Finally, I should like to congratulate Mr. Robert South on being appointed permanently as Director of Children's Services and look forward to the sub-committee continuing to work with him next municipal year and in the future.

Councillor Judith Holt

Chairman, Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee / Corporate Parenting Panel

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

This report is the annual report of the Sub-Committee, summarising the Sub-Committee's activities during its year of operation ended March 2021.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's activities and performance.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The areas scrutinised by the Sub-Committee are:

- School Improvement (BSF)
- Pupil and Student Services (including the Youth Service)
- Children's Social Services
- Safeguarding
- Adult Education
- 14-19 Diploma
- Scrutiny of relevant aspects of the LAA
- Councillor Calls for Action
- Social Inclusion

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Judith Holt (Chairman)
Councillor Gillian Ford (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Michael Deon Burton
Councillor Tony Durdin
Councillor Tele Lawal
Councillor Sally Miller
Councillor Carol Smith
Councillor Christine Vickery
Councillor Reg Whitney

Statutory Member representing the Churches:

Mrs Lynne Bennett (Church of England)
Mr Jack How (Roman Catholic Church)

Statutory Members representing parent governors:

Mrs Julie Lamb (Special)
Mrs Kathy Freeman (Primary)

Non-voting members representing local teacher unions and professional associations:

Mr Ian Rusha (NEU)

REVIEW OF ACTIVITY

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

ADOPT LONDON EAST – ANNUAL REPORT

At its meeting in September 2020, the Sub-Committee received the annual report for Adopt London East. The report outlined that all adoption agencies are required to provide an annual report to their governing bodies and to elected Members in all partnership Local Authorities.

The report provided a summary of the development and functions of the agency including performance information for 2019/20. Appended to the report was the Havering specific performance information.

PRESENTATION ON THE INITIAL RESPONSE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO COVID-19

The Sub-Committee received a presentation on the initial response of the service to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Members agreed to establish a Topic Group to scrutinise the Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Havering.

Its terms of reference was to review how Education from 0-18yrs (25yrs for SEND) has been impacted by COVID-19. The Group will consider what actions have been taken by the Council and partners from the start of the Pandemic, the impact on the children and young people, and the actions that need to be taken going forward.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET

The Sub-Committee received a report that detailed the monitoring position for the service for 2020/21. The report provided a full statement on the estimated costs and income lost relating to the COVID pandemic and also provided details of the pressures faced by the service and savings that are unlikely to be achieved in 2020/21 due to delays caused by the pandemic.

The report detailed that the financial implications on budgets for 2020/21 continue to be appraised fully during the year to assess the effects of Covid-19 and recovery plans, and any further peaks of the pandemic that may have an impact on demand for services in the autumn. The actual spend at period five was £0.236m, although the Directorate was projecting Covid-19 related expenditure of £0.836m for 20/21.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2019-20

The Sub-Committee received the Children's Services Annual Complaints report 2019-20. The annual report was a requirement for monitoring by Members as part of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

It was noted that Complaints in 2019-20 decreased by 25% in 2019-20 (80) compared to 2018-19 (106) with a small number of complaints made by Young People (8). The number of enquiries trebled relating to ongoing Court proceedings or Court decisions outside of Children's Services remit. There continues to be a steady number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 investigations in 2019-20 (6) and was at the same level as in 2018-19.

The Sub-Committee was informed that many complaints received continue to be regarding the unwelcomed intervention of Children's Services which reflected in Intervention & Support Services receiving the highest number of complaints in 2019-20 and 'attitude/behaviour of staff' being the highest reason. There have been a decrease of complaints received by Triage Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) & Assessments by 59% in 2019-20(13) compared to 2018-19(32).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMPLAINTS COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

The Sub-Committee received the Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy. It was stated that local authorities have a statutory requirement for complaints which are set out in The Children Act 1989 section 26 and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (Children) Regulations 2006.

The Sub-Committee noted that the policy sets out how the service would deal with statutory complaints and compliments.

The Policy outlined the statutory complaints process for Children Services for children or young person who are looked after by the local authority or child in need, fostering, adoption or Special Guardianship arrangements and care leavers to the local authority.

The report informed that the services was committed to using complaints as a learning tool to help improve practice and standards and compliments to inform good practice through quarterly Service Improvement Boards.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS OUTCOME – 2020

Following a motion at Council, it was agreed that the Sub-Committee receive an update report on the outcomes of the 2020 statutory assessments within the

secondary sector. The report included headline figures for attainment and progress at GCSE and attainment at A-Level.

It was explained that Havering schools and academies performed better in relation to national standards, outcomes across London, and in comparison to statistical neighbours.

The Sub-Committee noted that it remains the responsibility of the service to monitor performance in a variety of ways, to ensure the raising of standards and the best outcomes for Havering children.

SEMI INDEPENDENT PROVISION AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Sub-Committee received a presentation that detailed the management and engagement of providers offering Semi-Independent Living Accommodation in Havering.

The report informed the Sub-Committee that the number of new children becoming 'Looked After' was on the decline but children were remaining Looked After for longer periods of time.

It was noted that the duty placed on the Local Authority means that they now have a responsibility for Young People who are care experienced up to the age of 25 years. It was explained that semi-independent provision is not regulated by Ofsted or the CQC, however, local authorities have a responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of the provision and home for the young people being placed. This type of provision is mainly used for young people aged 16 and above. Semi-independent units are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Throughout the year the Sub-Committee continued to receive the quarterly performance reports that had previously been reported to Cabinet and Demand Pressure Dashboards which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the reports had been achieved within.

The update provided an overview of performance against the six performance indicators currently monitored by the Sub-Committee in 2020/21.

THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

The Corporate Parenting Panel met periodically throughout the year, a new innovation was introduced with support from officers establishing Topic Groups to scrutinise the implementation of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy. These groups will focus on Education and Training, Health, Housing / Accommodation and Participation.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Legal implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Equalities implications and risks:

While the work of the Sub-Committee can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Sub-Committee's work over the past year.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of meetings of Children and Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee.