

CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT, 2010/2011

SUMMARY

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during the year ended May 2011.

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 note the 2010/11 Annual Report and authorise the Chairman to agree the final version for Council.
2. That the Committee agree the report be referred to full Council.

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Background Papers - None



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

CHILDREN & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

CMT Lead:

Report Author and contact details:

Policy context:

Annual Report
2010/2011

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To summarise the
work of the
Council's Children &
Learning Overview
& Scrutiny
Committee.

SUMMARY

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REPORT DETAILS

During the year under review, the Committee met on 8 occasions and dealt with the following issues:

1. SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUPS.

1.1 LEARNING VILLAGE

- 1.1.1 At its meeting on 16 February 2011, the Committee considered the final report of the Learning Village Topic Group; the work of which had transferred from the previous Council as part of the Committee's predecessor, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.1.2 The Group had been formed in 2009 to monitor and review the process of Kingswood School becoming the Draper's Academy. The Topic Group, in the course of its work, sought to investigate best practice and made numerous visits, spoke to various stakeholders and presented a number of recommendations for the Committee's approval.
- 1.1.3 The Group's recommendations were for consideration by the Drapers' Academy Governing Body and/or Council officers and therefore they were not submitted to Cabinet. One recommendation, regarding a visit by the Topic Group to the Academy during and after construction is currently being organised and it is expected that the first of these visits will take place before the summer holidays.

1.2 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

- 1.2.1 This Group is an open Topic Group, meetings of which all members of the Committee are welcome and encouraged to attend, however, the core group of members comprises: Councillors Sandra Binion (Chairman), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Robby Misir, Garry Pain, Billy Taylor and co-opted member Anne Ling.
- 1.2.2 The Group was formed at the Committee's meeting on 11 November 2010 and has met on three occasions during the Municipal Year to scrutinise Havering's Children & Young People's Plan, which has been under development, led by Havering's Children's Trust.
- 1.2.3 The Group has met with officers from Social Care & Learning, including the Assistant Director (Commissioning) to discuss the formation of the Plan and the consultation process. The Group identified one theme (of the three in the Plan) that it would like to explore in the greater detail ("Breaking Negative Cycles").
- 1.2.4 A further meeting was held with the Service Manager, Prevention and Intervention to examine key services in greater depth, namely the Intensive Family Intervention Service and the role of the Fathers' Officer. Arising from this meeting the Group identified a number of areas that it would like to pursue

further, including planned visits to Children's Centres to gain a greater understanding of their role in prevention and intervention.

1.2.5 The Group's work is ongoing.

2. REQUISITIONS

2.1 The Committee held a special meeting on 14 March 2011 to consider two requisitions of executive decisions regarding the Integrated Youth Service.

2.2 The first decision concerned the closure of school based youth facilities, which would affect three sites in the borough. The second decision concerned the withdrawal of funding for the re-provisioning of the Angel Way development to accommodate the youth facilities previously at Century Youth House (which in turn was being transferred for the use of the Pupil Referral Unit).

2.3 After a detailed debate, members were informed that the move away from fixed based services would enable greater flexibility and nuance in service delivery through a street-based provision. Also, the Council planned to establish an (as yet unspecified) sum of money to encourage and enable the voluntary sector to take over the running of some youth services. Members were also reassured that there would be no anti-social behaviour implications as a result of the changes.

2.4 The Committee voted not to uphold the requisitions by 9 votes to 1 with 2 abstentions in respect of the first decision and by 7 votes to 3 with 2 abstentions in respect of the second decision.

3. ADMISSIONS REPORT

3.1 At its September meeting, the Committee considered a report from the Manager of Additional Education Needs regarding the statutory provisions underpinning school admissions.

3.2 The Committee considered the statutory framework underpinning the school admissions process, noting the role of the Admissions Forum and the School Admissions Code in ensuring that the admission arrangements of all schools in the borough were fair and equitable. The Committee was also informed about the role of community, foundation, voluntary-aided and academy schools in relation to the admissions team.

3.3 Particular attention was given to the security of the system and its propensity for abuse by those wishing for their child to go to a certain school. Officers informed the Committee that the admissions team was rigorous in ensuring that fake addresses did not allow certain people an unfair advantage and that council tax records were used where possible.

3.4 When considering the impact of future school place pressure, particularly in areas such as Harold Hill, the Committee was informed that an extra 1000 places would be needed in the coming years. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the number of secondary schools in the area had decreased dramatically. Officers stated that a long-term strategic planning report was

being prepared which would address issues of future school places as well as the broader question of community infrastructure to accommodate an increased population.

4. SOCIAL CARE & LEARNING ANNUAL COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS REPORT

- 4.1 At its meeting in September 2010, 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 120 (37 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 (45 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 were pleased that the overall number of Stage 1 complaints had decreased from the previous year by 15. Members felt that this reflected the proactive work that had been carried out in dealing with Pre Stage 1 complaints: 32% of Stage 1 complaints were upheld. However, the Committee was concerned that compliments were not captured consistently, but in some areas they were received to quite high levels. Members noted that compliments usually related to a specific event or service dimension, but wished for more work to ensure that all were captured and reported.

5. SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS

- 5.1 At its meeting in November 2010, the Committee considered a report from the Committee Administration Manager regarding the administration of the statutory provisions underpinning the process by which parents could appeal against decisions relating to the admission or permanent exclusion of children from school.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that each year the Council, as Local Authority for education purposes, arranged for the admission of children to schools in the borough, the vast majority of which were dealt with to parents' satisfaction. In Havering, the appeal processes were managed by Committee Administration in Legal & Democratic Services. This arrangement had applied since the appeal system was set up in 1982. All Committee staff were trained to be Appeal Panel clerks and administrative support staff played an essential role in preparing for, delivering and following up appeals.

- 5.3 In relation to admission, although the parents' right was often loosely referred to as being the exercise of "choice", it was in fact no more than the right to express a "preference" and, as such, the Admission Authority (the LA for Community Schools, the Governors for Voluntary Aided and Foundation Schools) were entitled to refuse admission if to do so would cause "prejudice to the provision of efficient education or use of resources". This meant, in practice, that once the School had admitted children up to its declared Admission Number, it could only admit more if directed to do so by the Local Authority under its Fair Access Protocol (generally in relation to children who are being Looked After by a Local Authority, or who require a managed move on disciplinary grounds) or by an Appeal Panel allowing an appeal. Admission to Infant Classes (years Reception, 1 and 2) was further restricted by the statutory limitation of Infant Class sizes to 30 pupils.
- 5.5 The Committee further considered various statistical data relating to the number of appeals heard in Havering. The Committee noted the fluctuating numbers and considered the various reasons as to why this would happen. The Committee noted that a total of 707 appeals had been received, but only 398 of those had gone to a full hearing.
- 5.6 Members asked questions relating to the cost of the appeals process, to the Council. The Committee was informed that as of 1 April 2011 Havering would receive £93,000 from the Dedicated Schools Grant to administer the appeals process in the borough. The average cost of an appeal leading up to the point of a hearing was around £110, whilst another £50 pounds would be added to this total after the hearing.

6. 14-19 LEARNING PATHWAYS

- 6.1 At its meeting in November 2010, the Committee received a report, presented by the 14-19 Strategy Manager, regarding the commissioning and delivery of 14-19 Learning Pathways since the functions were assimilated by local authorities after the abolition of Learning and Skills Councils.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that the Coalition Government was proposing further changes to education, which could affect 14-19 services and commissioning. The Committee noted that The Local Government Association (LGA) was involved in key discussions with ministers on the issue; the main mechanism for taking these discussions forward was the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) which was convened by Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education. The MAG comprised ministers, leading councillors representing the LGA and individual local councils, representatives of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, school and academy representatives. The MAG's role was to advise the Secretary of State on how the role of Local Authorities might need to change in the light of the government's programme of reform and the current economic climate. It covered the whole age range of 0-19 and would input to the education white paper (currently expected on 1 November). This meant that there would not be a replacement for the National Commissioning Framework until the white paper was issued.

- 6.3 Locally, work was continuing to develop local commissioning statements and 14-19 strategy and the LGA and YPLA have both confirmed that it was crucial that this continues, despite the withdrawal of the National Commissioning Framework and the national policy uncertainty. Local Authorities continued to have a legal duty to secure provision and should continue to work towards this. Havering continued to build positive relationships with local providers, including through the 14-19 Partnership and those relationships would remain fundamentally important.
- 6.4 The Committee acknowledged the background to the 14-19 pathways at Havering. The Local Authority had never had a full 14-19 team, operating for years through various secondments and short-term consultancy support with no-one on core staffing budget. The Local Authority had however benefited from the recent appointment of a 14-19 Commissioning Officer (Dedicated School Grant funded) to support employer engagement, a secondment from Havering College of Further and Higher Education as a Diploma Lead Assessor (DfE Grant funded) and the 14-19 Senior Inspector in HIAS (which was core funded). The current focus for this last role was quality assurance, inspection and developmental support as undertaken under the auspices of HIAS.

7. BUDGET SCRUTINY

- 7.1 In both August 2010 and January 2011, 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 this 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 2010 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 2009-10 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. EDUCATION COMPLAINTS

- 9.1 The Committee considered a report providing information regarding the numbers and types of complaints handled by the Learning and Achievement Department and Schools for the Future during 2010 and how they were dealt with to minimise the impact of justifiable concerns and to reduce the likelihood of future complaints.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that the Council currently had a corporate complaints model that captured non-social care complaints, principally education, and Children's Services activity. Attached to that are separate regulated processes, for the Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care Service (including health aspects). These complaints systems are statutory and have separate defined and differing regulated processes. A review was currently assessing how the current arrangements could be more effectively structured and managed for the future within the Social Care and Learning Directorate. There was an intention to explore the possibility of a more comprehensive single reporting process for the directorate.
- 9.3 Members noted the number of enquiries received from MPs and councillors and officers explained that a large proportion of these related to letters responding to refused school places. Often parents would go to elected members seeking support for their application/appeal for a school place. Members wished to see a briefing take place for all members on the school admissions process to assist them in supporting constituents.
- 9.4 On 10 March 2010, a briefing was organised for all councillors at the invitation of the Chairman of the Committee. The briefing sought to explain to members the school admissions process so as to better equip councillors with the knowledge and expertise with which to assist their constituents.

10. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The Committee received a report, 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.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that under Section 6 (1) of the Childcare Act 2006, local authorities have a duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare in their areas. The findings from the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) would enable the Local Authority to draw up an Action Plan aiming to narrow the gaps in childcare provision as highlighted. The LA, in line with good practice had produced annual reviews of its first CSA and made these available to the public to clearly show that priorities were being met. Havering's reviews were published in April 2009 and in April 2010.
- 10.3 Members were gratified that the LA was meeting its sufficiency duty as the availability of childcare on a Borough wide basis continues to outstrip the number of 3 and 4 year olds in Havering.

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Background Papers

None.

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.