



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

**ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

### **SUMMARY**

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during the past Council year.

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

**The Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel is included at the conclusion of this report.**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Council note the 2010/11 Annual Report of the **Children & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee**.

**That Council note the 2010/11 Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel.**

### **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

## Council, 20 July 2011

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**

## Council, 20 July 2011

- 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.



## **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2010/2011**

#### **SUMMARY**

This report is the annual report of the Panel, summarising the Panel's activities during the past Council year.

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 to year.

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

#### **REPORT DETAILS**

- 1.1 Since the Panel's previous Annual Report, there had been both a Local and General Election, which had in turn led to changes in the membership of its parent body, the Children & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including a new Chairman. This has resulted in new membership of the Panel and consequently its early work was concerned with building an understanding of the Panel's role and responsibilities as well as the wider care system.
- 1.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel met 4 times throughout the Municipal year, and made two visits, firstly to the Leaving Care Club to talk to those who had left or who were about to leave care and secondly to the Children in Care Council. Some members of the Panel also made visits on the Panel's behalf to the accommodation of a number of children in care to scrutinise the standard of provision. The Panel's visit resulted in some of the young people being re-housed in more suitable accommodation, as well as a review of the service provided by some of the Council's contractors. A member of the Panel also made a visit to a Corporate Parenting Conference and highlighted a number of important matters for the Panel's consideration.

## Council, 20 July 2011

- 1.2 At its meeting in September 2010, the Panel met with officers from Social Care to consider and be advised and the roles and responsibilities of the Panel, noting that all councils, and particularly all elected members, carried responsibility for ensuring good outcomes for children looked after by their authority. They [members] were required to consider whether the standard of care provided would be good enough for their own children and, if not, to take steps to improve it. The Panel was informed that their role applied to all children defined legally as “looked after”, which a legal term was created by the Children’s Act 1989 to describe all children in the care of the local authority. The Panel also considered the various reasons why children were taken into care as well as the various legal sub-categories by which a child was in care.
- 1.3 At its meeting in November 2010, the Panel met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Havering Foster Carers’ Association to discuss their work and the quality of foster care in the borough, as well as satisfaction amongst the foster carers. Members were keen to establish the difficulties and challenges faced by social workers. The foster carers responded by talking of arranging normal necessities such as doctors appointments and school day trips could be difficult. This was particularly the case when the parent of the child was still the legal guardian. Where the LA had care of the child then this process was easier. Carers would often place children under their own doctor, for ease and for emergencies approval was not required. Members were informed that pocket money for children would come out of the Carers Allowance. Child Benefit money would stop once the child was placed in care, though the parent would receive the payment for six weeks after the child had been placed. Most children in care were eligible for the Education Maintenance Allowance (this has since been abolished and replaced by a £180 million bursary scheme).
- 1.4 In January 2011, the Panel attended a visit to a group of care leavers, who formed a voluntary group comprised of young people who have left or who are about to leave care. The group would meet every so often at the Council’s Midland House. Members discussed with the young people their concerns and the positive things about the care system in Havering, as well as their individual aspirations and how the Council could help them to achieve it. There was also some discussion of the accommodation provided for the young people leaving care in independent living, whether in shared accommodation or supported lodgings; many experiences of the accommodation was negative. Many stated that the hostels provided were of better quality; there was a consensus that the shared lodgings were not up to standard, and examples included broken windows, broken locks, blocked toilets, broken front and rear doors; as well as the accommodation being situated in areas with high-levels of crime and deprivation. In one case the young person lived in a flat that was so small that it could only fit a double bed. The debate was wide-ranging and whilst many expressed an extremely negative view of the care services; it was also clear that

## Council, 20 July 2011

- each young person's experience of the care system was unique. There was some extreme polarisation in terms of the general view of the care system which seemed to vary significantly depending upon age. The older amongst them seemed to have a more positive attitude to the care service than the younger
- 1.5 At its meeting in March 2011, the Panel met with a representative from the Council's Housing Department to discuss the allocation of houses to young people, particularly in light of issues arising from the members' visit to the Leaving Care Club. The Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme had been operating for over six years and had built up a portfolio of 820 good quality properties to meet ongoing demand from groups in high housing need such as Young People Leaving Care. Under the scheme, properties were leased from private landlords across the borough for a period of three to five years and then let to the new tenants on a non-secure council tenancy. The Council managed the properties and the tenants were required to comply with conditions of their tenancy which were broadly the same as tenancies for council-owned accommodation. The Panel noted that in March 2010, a Service Level Agreement was made between the Housing Service and the Leaving Care Team that the PSL Scheme would accommodate all Young People Leaving Care, with certain exceptions. The Panel was informed that so far, the PSL Scheme had accommodated 22 Young People Leaving Care and there was currently a further 13 clients that had been referred to the scheme and were awaiting accommodation.
  - 1.6 Also at its March meeting, the Panel met with Havering's Virtual Head Teacher to consider his annual report for the last year. The role of the Virtual Head Teacher was described as providing support to schools and social workers to narrow the attainment gap between LAC and their peers, which was typically pronounced. Designated Teachers also oversaw the Personal Education Plan for every LAC in their respective schools. Personal Education Plans were documents which highlighted the primary needs for each LAC in terms of their education and learning. The PEP commenced at foundation state (age 5) and ran through to GCSE. The PEP needed to track attainment and was added to every 20 days. The Virtual Head Teacher oversaw each PEP. The process for reviewing the PEPS was underway, though only 50 of the 160 PEPs had been received. The Panel noted the various achievements and areas targeted for improvement.
  - 1.7 Towards the end of March 2011, the Panel attended a meeting, by invitation, to Havering's Children in Care Council where members participated in a discussion with young people about the Panel's role and responded to a series of questions and requests made by the young people.

**Council, 20 July 2011**

- 1.8 Throughout the year, the Panel received statistical data on children in care. The information provided included information on the number of children in care; and the patterns of fluctuating numbers, the ethnicity, care status and age-ranges of the children in care. The purpose of the data was to allow members to judge how effectively the service was providing for the looked after children in the borough.