

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham



Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 24 April 2017

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Caroline Needham (Chair), Alan De'Ath, Caroline Ffiske (Vice-Chair) and Marcus Ginn

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), Philippa O'Driscoll (Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative), Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative), Vic Daniels (Parent Governor Representative) and Matt Jenkins (Teacher Representative)

Other Councillors: Sue Fennimore (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Acting Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Guests: Hiba Al Moosawi (Youth Mayor), Cas Bradbeer (Deputy Youth Mayor), Anita Pattani (CfBT), and Gordon Young (CfBT)

Officers: Steve Miley (Director for Family Services), Dave McNamara (Director for Finance), Ian Higgs (Director for Education), Alan Wharton (Head of Asset Strategy), Will Parsons (Commissioning and Transformation Lead), and David Abbott (Scrutiny Manager)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Elaine Chumnerly.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Marcus Ginn.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

5. SKILLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Correction: Under 3.1 of the report, the national average figure should be 7.1 percent not 3.4 percent as shown in the printed agenda.

Will Parsons (Commissioning and Transformation Lead) presented the report which provided an overview of the current participation rates for young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET), the current NEET panel process, its links with partner organisations involved and referral routes for young people. The report also highlighted the range of opportunities offered through the Virtual School and Workzone that aimed to provide young people with the necessary skills and opportunities for sustainable employment.

The Chair welcomed Hiba Al Moosawi (Youth Mayor) and Cas Bradbeer (Deputy Youth Mayor) to the meeting and asked them to share their experiences and ideas for improving young people's access to work experience in the borough.

Cas Bradbeer addressed the committee about the obstacles faced when trying to access work experience. Pursuing an interest in social work they enquired about the possibility of doing work experience with social services in the borough but was turned away due to concerns around confidentiality. They persisted and did get to shadow senior social workers in the department, an experience they found to be hugely educational, but they worried that this type of allowance was only given because of personal connections they had made - when these opportunities should be available to everyone. Other members of the Youth Council reported similar issues in other sectors - either no work experience was offered at all or it was highly competitive.

Hiba Al Moosawi informed the committee that the topic of work experience was one of her key manifesto pledges – she felt it was important to educate young people about the need for work experience and how to access it. Many young people weren't aware how important it was for employers and not having it restricted young people's career opportunities.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske asked when the requirement to be in education, employment or training ended. Ian Heggs (Director for Education) said the requirement was to 18 years old.

Councillor Marcus Ginn asked who was legally responsible for ensuring young people were in education, training, or employment. Ian Heggs responded that it was

the local authority's responsibility to provide young people with support and access to opportunities – though there were no legal consequences.

Matt Jenkins noted that, while it was good that NEET figures in the borough were low, it would be helpful to understand more about the quality of the placements. For example, if a young person was in training, was it useful to them in their future careers or were they simply being used as low-wage labour? He asked what more H&F could do to make high quality work experience opportunities available. Ian Heggs replied by saying the council did provide a work experience service to schools that offered a programme of opportunities. There was also a bespoke work experience package for special schools.

Steve Miley (Director for Family Services), referring to the obstacles around offering work experience due to confidentiality, said his service could set-up conversations for young people with social workers to give them an insight into the job.

Matt Jenkins asked if there were any opportunities for students to pursue their own work experience arrangements. Officers noted that work experience for young people under the age of 16 had to be arranged by a responsible adult. Ian Heggs said the service provided to schools by the council had a huge range of employers (around 1500) and could provide links and advice to young people. The work experience coordinators in schools also often had their own links with local businesses.

Cas Bradbeer said when looking for work experience all the opportunities available were through personal or family connections. They noted that many young people did not have those kinds of connections and were missing out – and asked if there were trusted online resources that young people could use.

Anita Pattani (CfBT) said that type of service, if delivered locally, would need to be commissioned. There were, however, many reputable voluntary organisations that supported people into work experience – information about them could be provided to the committee after the meeting.

Philippa O'Driscoll noted that, while there were many providers and volunteer organisations in this space, there didn't seem to be a single gateway to access them. Could the council not provide a 'shop front' for these fragmented groups? Ian Heggs reminded the committee that a similar approach had existed before with Connexions but the system changed. Anita Pattani said there was a free national careers helpline (0800 100 900) where you could speak with qualified careers advisors. There was also an accompanying website - 'nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk'. Philippa O'Driscoll asked how young people were made aware of these resources. Officers said it could be signposted in schools more clearly – the information should be pooled and shared together.

Councillor Sue Fennimore said this had been an area of concern for a while. The Poverty and Worklessness Commission made recommendations around supporting people into work and stemming from that the council had been looking at improving access to work experience, volunteering, and mentoring. She highlighted the supported internship programme for young people with disabilities as an early step

towards this - and noted that two of the nine young people had accepted full-time jobs as a result of the programme. The programme would be expanding next year with local businesses coming on board.

Councillor Alan De'Ath asked if funding pressures had led to fewer schools buying in the council's work experience service (as had happened in the school he worked for). Ian Heggs replied that budgets continued to be strained and it was for schools to set their priorities. Schools were asking for more bespoke offers now and the council was trying to be flexible and respond to their needs.

Nandini Ganesh noted that the supported employment stakeholder network was a very positive development and Parentsactive had contributed a lot toward it. She highlighted the fact that that young people with autism spectrum disorder tended to have very specific interests – particularly in technical areas so would welcome opportunities that recognised that.

Steve Miley drew the committee's attention to the figures for the looked after children population in the borough – 78 percent were in education, employment or training compared with a national average of just 48 percent. The virtual school team had achieved this through intensive relationship building to build up young people's confidence.

The Chair summarised that young people would benefit greatly from having the opportunity to speak to people in the field they are interested in – to learn what the job is really like. Mentoring would also be a great way to give young people an insight into potential careers.

Anita Pattani recommended the committee read the report 'London Ambitions: Shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners', that expanded on many of the points raised at the meeting.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the contents of the report.

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Steve Miley presented the report and highlighted section 4.4 – where the Leader of the Council and one of H&F's care leavers discussed the council tax exemption for care leavers on the Victoria Derbyshire Show. He noted that the care leaver who joined the Leader wanted a career in the media so, to support her, the head of the virtual school spent the weekend preparing her for her appearance.

The Chair noted the disappointing Ofsted result, 'requires improvement', from William Morris and asked officers to update the committee on the school's progress. Ian Heggs replied that the school was very disappointed, the result was largely because of last year's education outcomes and there had been significant progress this year. The school's leadership were putting the necessary plans in place and had the full support of the Governing Body. The Council was supporting them to set up a school improvement board and was facilitating a partnership arrangement with

Fulham College Boys – an outstanding local school. The Chair requested visits to the schools that had recently been inspected by Ofsted.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske noted that The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council had served notice on the tri-borough arrangements, and asked for an update on the position for Children's Services. Ian Heggs responded that, under the terms of the agreement, the current arrangements would stay in place until April 2018 - unless there was agreement by all boroughs. Councillor Sue Fennimore said the new Interim Chief Executive, Kim Dero, was looking at options now and more information would be provided as the plans progressed.

Nadia Taylor asked why the tri-borough arrangements were ending. Councillor Fennimore said H&F had many concerns – particularly around badly commissioned services (SEN passenger transport, BT managed services etc.) and ultimately the savings and efficiencies that were promised didn't materialise.

Steve Miley noted that for Family Services around 80 percent of functions were already delivered locally within H&F so the impact would be relatively minimal. He added that leaving the tri-borough didn't mean stopping joint services – where there was added-value they would continue to share with other local authorities.

Councillor Marcus Ginn, in reference to 4.2 of the report, noted that the council had offered to take an additional 100 Dubs children and asked if that number could be accommodated in the borough. Steve Miley responded that based on previous cohorts around one third could be accommodated within the borough and two thirds outside. Asylum seekers tended not to have local links so it was considered more appropriate to place them out of borough. He added that taking an additional 100 children would be subject to full-cost recovery from central government.

Nadia Taylor asked what the total cost per child would be. Steve Miley said the cost was variable, dependent on the placement, but the department estimated that each child would cost £50,000 per year. The problem with the current funding from central government was that it was banded and older children received significantly less funding – despite added legal responsibilities to care leavers up to 25 years old.

Nadia Taylor asked for more information on the serious case review (4.8 to 4.13 of the report). Steve Miley detailed the case and noted that the review had looked at practice in all three relevant boroughs but found no concerns with the support offered in H&F. The main point highlighted by the review was that Luton's social services didn't see the risk the mother's new partner posed to her and her baby. That was partly due to inadequate requirements around transfer of information between local authorities – Councillor Sue Fennimore had subsequently raised it with the Minister. The Chair added that this case reminded the committee of the vital work social services did every day to keep children safe.

7. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Sue Fennimore (Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Acting Cabinet Member for Children and Education) said this would be her last meeting as acting

cabinet member – Councillor Sue Macmillan had started a phased return from maternity leave and would be back in post from 2 May.

Councillor Fennimore highlighted the following visits and events:

- She visited St. Mary's Primary School and noted it was a 'wonderful' school with happy children.
- She attended an event at Wendell Park Primary School for International Women's Day. 14 women from a range of backgrounds and careers talked to the pupils about what they wanted to be when they were younger and their current professions.
- She noted that the bespoke, disabled children's resource centre at Queens Manor had received planning permission and works were on schedule. The centre was being co-designed with parents.
- She chaired H&F's Children's Parliament day on the environment. She said it was inspiring to see young people from across the borough speak so passionately about their commitment to protecting their environment.
- She hosted a lunch and learn event for staff about autism.
- Along with the Leader, she accompanied one of H&F's care leavers on Victoria Derbyshire's television programme to discuss the council's policy to exempt all care leavers from council tax. Care leavers said this had already made a significant impact – helping them to manage their finances.

8. SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2017

Ian Heggs (Director for Education) and Alan Wharton (Head of Asset Strategy) presented the report. Alan Wharton noted that the projections were much the same as those presented in the previous revision in April 2016. There remained a sufficiency of primary school places for the next ten years but further secondary places would be required by 2021. The impact of the numerous developments in the borough would be closely monitored and incorporated into the next revision of the report.

Councillor Alan De'Ath asked if the projections for new developments considered that many families were being priced out of homes in the borough. Alan Wharton said officers used a 'child yield' calculation to estimate the number of children in new developments that did consider local factors.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske asked what the lead-time was for a new school. Alan Wharton replied that for a brand new school it would be around three to four years – though initially officers would look at the current portfolio to see if existing schools could be expanded.

Councillor Caroline Ffiske noted that the primary places gap seemed not to be closing – she asked if it was sustainable for that trend to continue. Ian Heggs responded that the council looked at the funding position of the schools to ensure they had balanced budgets – if they had high numbers of vacancies then they would look at temporary capping.

Councillor Alan De'Ath highlighted that the report showed only 14 percent of places at the London Oratory were going to local residents, which was particularly low compared with other schools. Ian Heggs responded by saying their figures were due to the school's admissions policy.

The Chair highlighted an issue that was raised at the last admissions forum – namely, could the council keep track of why families left the borough (benefit changes, priced out etc.)? Ian Heggs said the council had sent questionnaires to schools to gather information but it was difficult to build up a reliable picture because the weight of evidence wasn't sufficient. The admissions team did reflect local intelligence in their analysis though.

RESOLVED

That the committee reviewed and commented on the draft school organisation and investment strategy.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair requested a further report on preparation for work, careers guidance, and career related opportunities. She asked that the Youth Council be consulted on the report and that the report author attended one of their meetings to listen to their concerns and ideas for improvements to the current offer.

The Chair noted that she had invited the new Supplementary Schools Network lead to the next meeting for the item on supplementary schools and a video would be shown highlighting the importance of the schools in improving community cohesion.

The committee requested an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Task Group.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 12 June 2017.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.12 pm

Chair

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