

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham



Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 28 January 2020

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Sharon Holder (Chair), Lucy Richardson, Alexandra Sanderson, Asif Siddique and Mark Loveday

Co-opted members: Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative) and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative)

Other Councillors: Councillor Larry Culhane (Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

Guests: Scarlett Knowles (Youth Mayor), Ozan Erder and Mariam Ali (members of the Youth Council)

Officers:

Kim Smith (Chief Executive)

Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director of Finance and Governance)

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)

Emily Hill (Assistant Director, Finance)

Jan Parnell (Assistant Director of Education)

Kevin Gordon (Assistant Director of Assets, Operations and Programmes)

Mandy Lawson (Assistant Director SEN and Disabilities)

Jo Baty (Assistant Director, Mental Health LD Provider)

Bev Sharpe (Assistant Director of Family Services)

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services)

Phil Tomsett (Head of Early Years)

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator)

David Abbott (Scrutiny Manager)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 June 2019, were approved as an accurate record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Matt Jenkins (Co-optee).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. YOUTH TAKE OVER CHALLENGE 2019 'WITH ME 4 ME' REPORT

Brenda Whinnett (Youth Voice Coordinator) introduced Scarlett Knowles (the Youth Mayor), Ozan Erder, and Mariam Ali (members of the Youth Council) who gave a presentation on 2019's Youth Take Over Challenge Day.

Through the Make Your Mark survey they learned that the two key issues for young people in the borough were protecting the environment and knife crime.

For 2019 the Youth Council decided to change the format Youth Take Over Day – rather than holding it in the Town Hall and shadowing council officers it became an opportunity to bring in a wide variety of different service providers and workshops around key topics under one roof.

The Youth Council wanted to use the opportunity to educate young people on the issues that they felt were important - and give some advice on what they could do to help. They also gathered feedback on the work the Youth Council was doing, and what other agencies like the police and the council were doing for young people.

In total there were 130 young people at the event and the Youth Council got a lot of valuable feedback from them. Members of the Youth Council then went through some of the key findings from the different zones.

Staying safe zone and body matters findings

- There wasn't enough accessible information for young people.
- Young people felt 'talked at' but not engaged with.
- The Youth Council could help connect young people with services and make them more accessible.
- There wasn't enough focus on Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) sessions. PSHE didn't have a broad enough curriculum that was relevant to a diverse group of young people (i.e. the current curriculum focussed on heterosexual relationships).

Mental health and work experience / opportunity findings

- Mental health needed to be talked about more. Many young people weren't confident enough to tell anyone about the problems they faced.
- It was felt that everyone should have the same opportunities to get support – through schools, young people in care etc.

- A more diverse group of young people needed to tell their stories – including LGBTQ+ young people, young people with disabilities etc.

In addition to the areas noted above, Imperial College had a zone where they held a variety of experiences and workshops for young people – including trying to create an app for young people to teach them what they can do when they leave school.

Brenda Whinnett noted that they had also presented their findings at Full Council and were hoping that the committee would digest their feedback and be able to provide suggestions about how to take the feedback forward.

The Chair thanked the Youth Council for their presentation and opened the item up to questions from the committee.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson congratulated the Youth Council on their successful event, and the report of their findings. She asked them to give more detail about the sexual health research project.

The Youth Council explained that it was just starting up with the Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation. The project involved sexual health specialists conducting a major consultation on access to sexual health services. They used Take Over Day as way to get more feedback from young people that would inform their working group.

Councillor Sanderson noted there had been an amazing amount of information gathered and asked if there were plans for a similar project on mental health.

The Youth Council said mental health was a very broad topic so they were focused on social isolation, with a number of the Youth Council already trained as youth champions. The Young Hammersmith and Fulham Foundation have created website to signpost young people to resources. Brenda Whinnett added that the Youth Council had produced a mental health report last year that went to the borough's headteacher forum.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the Youth Council had any 'quick wins' that the Council could implement. The Youth Mayor said the main thing was advertising the available resources to young people. The Youth Council also noted that the Council could do more to encourage recycling, including producing educational resources that covered how young people could reduce their waste.

Nadia Taylor asked the Youth Council how they felt about work experience opportunities in the borough. The Youth Council said they would like to have two-week work experience available in all schools. Some schools had very good work experience opportunities, but others left young people to find them themselves. They also wanted to see more work experience at a diverse range of private companies – e.g. law firms, architects, markets, vets etc. This would require making it easier for firms to offer work experience and offer it at the right time - i.e. pre-GCSE and pre-A-Level so there is time to adjust subject choices. They also wanted to make work experience more accessible – saying that a single online list would be helpful.

Nandini Ganesh asked how young people signed up, or were chosen, for the Take Over Day. Brenda Whinnett said they put on assemblies which were offered to all schools. Young people then applied and were drawn by ballot to make it as fair as possible. She added that they worked closely with the SEND, youth offending, and family services teams from the beginning to ensure it was inclusive.

Nandini Ganesh said it would be good to see more special needs children in the Youth Council. Brenda Whinnett said she was working closely with Jack Tizard to host sessions there and they were trying to improve in that area.

Councillor Lucy Richardson suggested holding Take Over Day on a weekend might help to make it more inclusive. Brenda Whinnett said the venue and the fact that it was a school event made it difficult to hold on a weekend but they would consider it in future.

Councillor Richardson applauded the Youth Council for the successful event and asked if they had considered expanding their reach – for example, by recruiting ambassadors. Brenda Whinnett noted that they invited everyone who attended to sign up and there was a recruitment event scheduled for next week. They also promoted it to schools through assemblies, student council meetings, and were showing more of what they did on social media.

Councillor Richardson noted that the Health Policy and Accountability Committee recently received an interesting report by Healthwatch on digital options for mental health support. Brenda Whinnett said she'd also been sent it and it was on the Youth Council's list for discussion.

Councillor Mark Loveday commended the Youth Council for getting such a diverse group of young people from different backgrounds to attend the event – including young people from maintained schools, independent schools, and children in care.

Councillor Loveday asked the Youth Council what the one thing they could change about the Council would be. The Youth Council said it would be to put continuous support in place for projects. They felt that too often projects were started but not given the resources to be sustained over the longer term.

Brenda Whinnett added that PHSE was a top priority for young people in the borough. There was a real need to speak directly to young people to understand what they wanted from it. Young people also wanted to see more funding and support for youth services that were tackling social isolation, knife crime, and opportunity. A member of the Youth Council also added that many schools didn't have recycling facilities yet despite being a top priority for the young people they had surveyed.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked the Youth Council if they felt teachers were the best people to deliver PHSE. The Youth Council responded that it depended on the teacher – some were very good and engaging but some were too serious or awkward. Some schools used external speakers who were often more effective as it was their specialism.

Councillor Sanderson asked how young people accessed information about support - was it just the internet or did they ask teachers? Youth Council members said most people would ask their friends, though that wasn't an option for everyone. Some people found teachers and other professionals at school intimidating.

Jan Parnell noted that there used to be centrally devolved funding for PSHE but now it went directly to individual schools, so the Council couldn't directly control what was delivered. The Council would need to work with schools on this in partnership and there was already a high degree of cooperation in place. Schools and the Council were also starting to meet with private schools to cooperate. It was felt that 'collectively we can do more'.

Jan Parnell added that the borough was lucky to be home to a number of amazing businesses and entrepreneurs and the education team was beginning to tap into those resources. For example, a local entrepreneur had agreed to fund a new portal for teachers to access a range of opportunities to schools such as work experience opportunities, assemblies, supported internships etc. There were also ambitions to set up an H&F alumni portal.

The Chair thanked Brenda Whinnett and the Youth Council for their time and congratulated them on another successful Youth Take Over Day.

5. INTEGRATED 2.5-YEAR-OLD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CHECKS

Phil Tomsett (Head of Early Years) and Andy Kimber (Public Health Commissioning Manager) presented the report which provided an update on progress to better integrate health and development checks for children aged 2.5 to 3 years.

The committee was informed that there were currently two reviews for very young children - an education review that took place in an Early Years setting and a separate Health Visiting review. Both reviews took place at around the same age and making them more integrated would ensure that needs were addressed earlier.

The way this was done nationally was through the use of the Personal Child Health Record (PCHR) or 'red book' as it's commonly known. The red book is primarily used in health settings but there is a page in it for early years settings so professionals can cross-reference. The example was given of a health visitor wanting to know how a child was doing socially – the Early Years practitioner could write information in that the health visitor could then see when visiting a child alone.

Officers had already undertaken work with the private nurseries' forum (there were around 90 private nursery settings in the borough) to promote the use of the red book and were starting to develop and take that forward.

Phil Tomsett said officers had explained to Early Years providers an approach they wanted to adopt across the borough to ensure consistency. Every Early Years provider had a contact so they knew who their health visitor was. Health Visitor reviews at 2.5 years were one of 5 mandated touchpoints for all children aged 0-5

under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. If Early Years also identified an additional need they can flag it and request a review.

The Chair asked if health visitors had been engaged in this process. Officers said they were 'fully engaged' – and noted that it was health visitors who delivered the new process to the private nurseries' forum.

Officers were undertaking a commissioning exercise in 2020 with a new specification that could deliver a more efficient, joined-up service in respect of two year reviews.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked, regarding the recommissioning, if the fact that health visitors had to be qualified nurses meant the only provider was the NHS. Officers said there were a number of NHS and very few private providers who could deliver the service. They expected around ten organisations to apply. Some private providers may not have the clinical governance standards to get through the commissioning process.

Councillor Richardson asked if H&F Council was limited to its local NHS trust purely because of geography. Officers explained that EU procurement rules required the service to go out to market and they expected around 8 to 10 providers to attend the market testing event.

Councillor Richardson asked what special measures the Council was taking to ensure the most vulnerable residents were being engaged. She added that the take-up of healthy start vouchers had been very low – and asked what lessons had been learned from that. Officers replied that they were working with the Family Support service to improve uptake. Phil Tomsett added that if a child attended an Early Years setting there would be a SENCO who could feed any concerns into the integrated review process. Andy Kimber added that data sharing protocols between H&F and CLCH had been a challenge, and that this would be addressed in the new specification for Health Visiting and School Nursing.

Eleanor Allen asked for more information on the red book, was there a page for each child? Officers explained that there was a page for each child and a page for Early Years practitioners. The Early Years review covered three prime areas of development - communication and language, personal development, and social and emotional development. Eleanor then asked how the reviews were undertaken. Officers said health visitors used observational assessments in the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ).

Nandini Ganesh asked what happened if children didn't attend an Early Years setting. Officers explained that health visiting was a universal service. They covered the entire population and aimed to see all children within a local authority area by age two. The target was 100 percent coverage – in H&F the service was achieving approximately 75 percent, which was significantly higher than the average in London of approximately 65 percent. Phil Tomsett added that there were other areas where you could identify some groups of children's needs like children's centres or other Children's services.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked what happened if children were missed - did the service try to track them down? Phil Tomsett said the services had access to birth data so if a child didn't attend an Early Years setting, they reached out through community champions to reach hard-to-reach families.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the reviews also looked at the parents and environment a child was being brought up in. Officers said they did also look at the family environment, including and evidence of issues with parents, maternal mood scores - there was a long list of family markers. The reviews were designed to be holistic, though they were predominantly focused on the child.

Councillor Sanderson asked if the same health visitors carried out follow-up visits. Officers said they were nearly always the same - continuity was very important.

Nandini Ganesh asked what happened with children who didn't have red books – e.g. expats or asylum seekers. Transfers in and out of borough are managed and Officers said it was a good point and they were looking at best practice elsewhere to see what could be put in place through the commissioning specification. The Chair asked for an update on this area once a solution had been put into the specification.

Councillor Asif Siddique asked how data was shared when people moved or changed GPs. Officers explained that CLCH managed transfers in and out of particular areas. The data sets were regularly audited and very well monitored.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked if the existing workforce knew about the upcoming recommissioning. Officers said the workforce was fully informed.

Councillor Richardson asked if decommissioning CLCH would be disruptive. Officers said they may apply and be successful in which case it was a moot point but otherwise staff would transfer over via TUPE.

Councillor Lucy Richardson asked why maternity champions had not taken off as well as others. Phil Tomsett said officers were looking into it. The new Early Years Strategy had a proposal for 'parent champions' who would take on a similar role.

The Chair noted that vaccinations rates had reduced in the borough over the past few years and it was a key concern for the committee – she asked if this would be addressed by health visitors. Andy Kimber noted that there had been a change in the way immunisations were commissioned - they used to be commissioned through Public Health but were now commissioned by NHS England, directly from NHS Trust providers. One area that the local authority could still work on was population health promotion to encourage families to change their behaviour.

Councillor Alexandra Sanderson asked if we had access to data on vaccinations. Andy Kimber said it was managed by NHS England, is published nationally and the Council could access it. It was noted that Children's Services had commissioned Healthy Early Years London to promote healthy lifestyles to children known to services which included keeping up to date with vaccinations.

The Chair thanked officers for their update and requested an update on the new Early Years Strategy later in the year.

6. 2020 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services) introduced the item and gave a presentation that set the context for the Children's Services budget proposals. She noted that the budget was informed by the department's vision:

- To improve the lives and life chances of our children and young people.
- Early intervention in order to give the best start in life and to promote wellbeing.
- To ensure children and young people are protected from harm and that all children have access to an excellent education and achieve their potential.

Jacqui McShannon highlighted a number of key achievements for the department in 2019/20 including:

- Consolidating the new sovereign service.
- Getting a 'good' rating from Ofsted for services to children in need of help, protection, care, leaving care, and fostering and adoption.
- Excellent performance in all education phases and a strong collegiate approach.

Tony Burton (Head of Finance, Children's Services) took the committee through a slide detailing the department's controllable budget for 2020/21. He explained that £38m was passported through to maintained primary schools and funding for academy schools in the borough (around £68m) went directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to academies.

Tony Burton then discussed 2020/21 savings and growth, noting that the £5.5m of growth was mostly for Family Services, driven by an increase in the looked after children population and increasing complexity of need.

Jacqui McShannon spoke about the challenges for 2020/21 - highlighting the following key issues for the department:

- Increasing numbers of looked after children (264 at present). Officers were carrying out a peer review to understand if that was down to differences in practice or if it was due to the demographics of the borough.
- Further demand growth for travel care and support – due to increasing numbers of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- An increasingly complex and challenging commissioning landscape.

Jacqui McShannon then discussed the following key priorities for the department in 2020/21:

- Review the early help and intervention offer to families and schools
- Implement strategies to support inclusion in schools
- Develop a strategic commissioning approach to contracts
- Review the effectiveness of services which support children to remain safely at home

- Ensure placement sufficiency to provide choice and range of high-quality local placements for looked after children and care leavers
- Analyse demand led pressures on front line service delivery and develop options

Councillor Mark Loveday asked what the Council's projected overspend was for the year. Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director of Finance and Governance) said the overspend for Period 6 was £9m, though officers were being cautious in their reporting and he expected the actual position to be better. In the previous year, Period 6's overspend had been reported at around £5m but the final figure was £1.6m.

Councillor Loveday asked what proportion of the Council's overspend was Children's Services. Hitesh Jolapara said the department was responsible for the largest proportion of the overspend.

Tony Burton added that in Period 6 the High Needs Block was spending £5.7m over the Department for Education (DfE) allocation. Since then the Government had confirmed a grant in the autumn for the projection for 2021 had improved. Hitesh Jolapara said there was £2.9m in the Government settlement for the High Needs Block – which was a recognition that this was a problem nationally. At officer level the Council was lobbying Government to look at a sustainable funding model for the High Needs Block. Councillor Loveday noted that 1.32 of the report mentioned using reserves – setting aside £15m for the current year and the next four years. He asked if this was over and above the anticipated overspend of £2-3m in 2020/21. Hitesh Jolapara explained that accounting rules set by the DfE and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government meant when the Council closed the accounts each year any overspend had to be funded. So that money was being set aside to be prudent.

Councillor Loveday noted that the base budget last year was £43.8m for Children's Services but the report for this year showed a figure of £51.3m - an increase of nearly £10m. He asked what accounted for the difference. Tony Burton explained that the comparable budget was £44.16m. Tony Burton said the figure of £51.3m included non-controllable expenditure for corporate overhead charges and capital charges.

Councillor Loveday asked for clarity over what the £5m of growth was for. Emily Hill (Assistant Director, Finance) said the vast majority was for increases in Family Services placement costs. It had been an area of significant overspend in the past and so the new budget was an attempt to more accurately reflect spending.

Councillor Loveday noted that in the report the department was already anticipating an additional £3m spend on top of this budget and asked if the growth should reflect that. Tony Burton explained that the anticipated overspend of £3m was in the High Needs Block, used for SEND pupils in schools and funded by the Government, which was separate to the rest of the department's budget. He added that officers were meeting with the DfE to discuss the gap between DSG expenditure and the funding the Council made available for services. It was hoped the funding formula

used would move towards what the actual need was on the ground now – rather than the current approach which was based on historic levels of spend.

Councillor Loveday asked if it was a sustainable approach to keep going to the Government for additional funding. Hitesh Jolapara said the DfE understood that High Needs Block spending was unsustainable, not just in the borough but nationwide, and were considering taking action. The Council also had a plan to try to better focus resources.

Councillor Loveday noted the main area of savings, £1m on placement costs, and asked what that involved in practical terms. Jacqui McShannon said the issue for looked after children placements was around placement sufficiency – officers were looking to avoid the need for independent foster agency places. It would lead to both better quality placements and deliver better value. There were a number of projects in train to deliver better placement outcomes.

Councillor Loveday noted that last year's budget had similar savings for placement costs and asked if the department had achieved those savings. Tony Burton said there had been considerable work on semi-independent living and he did believe those savings were achievable. Officers were looking to scale this up over the medium term.

Councillor Loveday noted that the appendices mentioned a £250,000 saving for staffing efficiencies. Tony Burton said that mostly related to a reorganisation in the Special Education Need and Disabilities (SEND) service that would reconfigure the way some support services were provided. There was also an element that came from the general staffing budget. Councillor Loveday asked if that meant staff numbers were reducing. Mandy Lawson noted that while going through the 'Moving On' process, when shared services were disaggregated, a number of posts were identified that weren't required in the new structure – e.g. due to merged management posts etc.

Nandini Ganesh commented that there were a number of elements in this budget that had appeared in previous budgets – reducing demand for plans, improving inclusion in schools, independent travel training and more – but they had not materialised. Mandy Lawson said there was a lot of work being done on the inclusion agenda including better outreach and specialist teaching in schools. The department was now in a position to take these projects forward.

Jan Parnell noted that one of the big impacts in schools was in secondaries – H&F was one of the first boroughs in London to implement a managed move protocol that gave children fair access to a panel discussion. It had already had a huge impact - last year there were 29 managed moved but this year there had been just two.

Councillor Loveday requested a full schedule of fees and charges to be circulated, as had been the convention in previous years.

ACTION: Hitesh Jolapara

The Chair thanked officers for their time and work on the budget.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the final meeting of the municipal year was scheduled for 30 March 2020.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.15 pm

Chair

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