



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

# Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 15 June 2015

## **PRESENT**

**Committee members:** Councillors Caroline Needham (Chair), Alan De'Ath, Elaine Chumnerly, Caroline Ffiske (Vice-Chair), Donald Johnson and Sue Macmillan

**Co-opted members:** Eleanor Allen (London Diocesan Board for Schools), Dennis Charman (Teacher Representative) and Philippa O'Driscoll (Westminster Diocesan Education Service Representative)

**Other Councillors:** Sue Macmillan (Cabinet Member for Children and Education)

**Officers:** Margaret Brown, Steve Comber, Andrew Christie, Daniel Ekechi, Richard Stanley, and David Abbott

## 1. **MINUTES**

### **Updates**

Page 7, paragraph 1 – **Child poverty and food banks** – A report on foodbanks was going to the 7 July meeting of the Health, Adult Social Care and Social Inclusion Policy and Accountability Committee.

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue Fennimore, Nandini Ganesh (Parentsactive Representative), and Nadia Taylor (Parent Governor Representative).

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR**

Councillor Donald Johnson, seconded by Philippa O'Driscoll, nominated Councillor Caroline Ffiske and it was unanimously resolved as set out below.

#### **RESOLVED**

That Councillor Caroline Ffiske be appointed Vice Chair of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

### **5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no public questions during this item.

### **6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Andrew Christie presented the report that provided an overview of recent developments of relevance to the Committee and took questions from the Committee.

#### **Children Requiring Protection Plans**

A member asked what had caused the significant drop in the number of children requiring protection plans. Andrew Christie responded that the number had previously been exceptionally high (192 cases in February 2015) and was now returning to a more normal rate (147 by May 2015). The issue had been that children were kept on plans even when the risks that had triggered the plan had been mitigated. Practice had since been recalibrated to better reflect the specifics of each case, though H&F still had a relatively high number of protection plans compared with the rest of the country.

#### **Operation Makesafe**

A member asked if the Council was communicating the messages of Operation Makesafe to the voluntary sector and community organisations. Andrew Christie responded that those organisations were not a high priority as they were already integrated into the safeguarding system. Operation Makesafe was a police-led initiative aimed at organisations that were outside the traditional safeguarding arena (e.g. taxi companies, clubs, and bars).

A co-opted member suggested there could be a Makesafe sticker or badge that organisations and businesses could display with a number to call to report any concerns. Officers agreed to feed the suggestion back to the police.

Operation Makesafe had launched across London but H&F would be doing its own local launch of the programme to raise awareness across the borough. The Chair asked for a progress update at the September meeting.

**ACTION: Andrew Christie**

### **Other Developments**

A member asked how many schools in the borough would benefit from the 7000 free tickets provided by KidZania (an educational entertainment provider). Councillor Sue Macmillan responded that all schools would benefit.

### **Transition**

A joint task force had been commissioned between the Children and Education and Health, Adult Social Care and Social Inclusion Policy and Accountability Committees to consider the transition arrangements between Children's Services and Adult Social Care in more depth.

## **7. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE**

Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Member for Children and Education, provided an overview of recent developments of relevance to the Committee and took questions from the Committee.

Since the previous meeting of the Committee, Councillor Macmillan had undertaken a number of visits to schools, family services, and social care. She had also attended the foster carer's lunch event to thank carers for their hard work and gave out long service awards to the longest serving carers in the borough.

### **SEN Passenger Transport**

Following the consideration of the issue at the Children and Education Policy and Accountability meeting on 8 July, a working party had been set up to resolve a number of troubling problems with the service. A revised vision for the service was to be presented to Cabinet, refocussing the service as the 'Travel Care and Support Service'. The new vision for the service included; putting travel care officers on site to ensure quality, varying the inter-authority relationship to give more control back to H&F, giving schools and parents more involvement in commissioning, and a more robust contract management framework.

The Chair requested that a review of the new service was added to the work programme for 23 November 2015 to ensure it was delivering against its metrics.

## **8. SUPPORT TO MULTI-LINGUAL FAMILIES**

Richard Stanley, Margret Brown, and Steve Comber presented the report that outlined the experience of being a multi-lingual child in the borough and made

recommendations about how the Council could support those young people more effectively.

Officers reported that there were over 100 languages spoken in H&F schools and 46% of children identified as being bilingual or having English as an additional language (EAL). While being bilingual had a number of educational advantages, some young people had to act as interpreters for their parents which could cause embarrassment, misunderstanding when talking about adult topics, and safeguarding issues.

Secondary schools will enter their pupils for community language examinations at GCSE level but community languages are rarely taught within the school timetable, instead young people rely on the support of parents and supplementary schools. Supplementary schools are supported by SOBUS, a Community Development Agency independent from LBHF.

A member noted that a number of parents had a negative attitude to EAL students, believing they used an unfair proportion of teaching resources and held back other students. How could the Council help to change those attitudes? Officers responded that any support given to bilingual students should be valuable and enriching for all students. Schools with large numbers of EAL learners were among the highest performing. Schools needed to continue to raise awareness of the benefits with parents.

A co-opted member noted that the EAL provision pilot at Fulham Enterprise Studio was an excellent idea but noted that finding and retaining staff to teach community languages was difficult due to the fluctuating need. Could provision be shared amongst a number of providers to mitigate this issue? Officers responded that there was potential to work with other partners to develop broader provision.

A co-opted member who volunteered to teach English to immigrants in the borough highlighted the following issues; it was difficult to impose a course structure because regular attendance was rare, at the first stage there was a total lack of confidence due to ability and familiarity, and sometimes there were modesty issues, e.g. fathers had to bring women into the class.

Michelle Akintoye, Founder of Britafrique (a voluntary organisation committed to mentoring young people through education, training and employment) addressed the Committee and noted that she found it difficult to get schools to 'open their doors' to voluntary groups. Schools needed to remove barriers to the community. Radicalisation of young people was also a major concern and there needed to be more support available to combat it.

A member asked if the continued underperformance of working-class white boys was being monitored. Officers responded that all groups were monitored carefully and the Council identified where performance was lower so officers could work with schools to improve performance. The Council took a 'whole school' approach to raising standards.

A co-opted member noted that there was relatively little research on why working-class white boys underperformed in comparison with their peers, though the group did perform better in London than in many other parts of the Country so it was not necessarily an issue of resources. It was requested that the issue be added to the work programme.

**ACTION: David Abbott**

The Chair asked what the Council could be doing to improve and enhance its relationship with supplementary schools. Officers responded that more needed to be done to cultivate relationships between mainstream schools and supplementary schools and suggested that the Committee looked at how best to do this.

The Chair noted that this was an area that the Committee needed to keep looking at and requested that the Council took a more proactive approach to encourage parents to acquire English language skills and highlight available language classes. The Chair also requested information from officers about what active encouragement was happening in schools in the borough.

**ACTION: Richard Stanley**

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee would investigate how the Council could improve and enhance its relationship with supplementary schools.
2. That the Committee would investigate how the Council could foster better links between mainstream schools and supplementary schools.
3. That the Committee encouraged the Council to take a more proactive approach to encouraging parents to acquire English language skills and signpost to available classes.

### **9. SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS**

Daniel Ekechi presented the report that provided a summary of the work that took place to support young carers in the borough. A specialist provider, Spurgeons, was commissioned to identify young carers and address barriers to learning and achievement which resulted from their caring role.

Officers reported that there had been some issues with the contract, including; churn of staff at the provider, insufficient maternity cover to manage a complex contract, and legacy issues with the cohort of carers. However, officers had challenged recent performance and were beginning to see consistent improvements in the service.

A member asked why other boroughs provided monetary rewards for carers but H&F did not. Officers responded that they were not aware of this but would follow up with colleagues in those boroughs.

A co-opted member asked how carers could be 'hidden' with all of the monitoring that was done by schools and social services. Officers responded that Children's Services would only carry out an assessment if a child was

identified in a caring role. Andrew Christie noted that more needed to be done to make people in the system (e.g. teachers, GPs, and Council officers in other departments) more aware of young carers.

A member asked whether some young people would not identify themselves as a carer because of cultural expectations. Officers responded that family culture often dictated whether someone identified themselves as a carer and noted that there was a stigma around social services that they did not want to associate themselves with.

A member asked what impact being a young carer had on a young person's education. Officers responded that it varied from case to case, for example if a parent had low level mental health issues a child might not get learning support at home or time to complete homework. Officers agreed to circulate a selection of case studies outside of the meeting to give a sense of the experiences of young carers and the impact on their lives.

**ACTION: Daniel Ekechi**

The Chair asked if Spurgeons had a social media strategy, as a way to reach out to more young people. Officers responded that they would provide the Committee with that information outside of the meeting.

The Chair requested that Spurgeons provided a presentation on young carers to the Youth Council.

**ACTION: Daniel Ekechi / Spurgeons**

Officers reported that the contract would be re-commissioned in April 2016. The Chair requested that the Committee had an input into the re-commissioning options report at an appropriate time.

The Chair requested an update, in the Executive Director's Update item, on progress at the next meeting of the Committee.

## **RESOLVED**

1. That the Committee receive updates on the performance of the service.
2. That the Committee have an input into the re-commissioning options report in 2016.

## **10. WORK PROGRAMME**

### **Radicalisation**

A member suggested that the issue of radicalisation should be looked at with input from the police to understand the reality of the situation in the borough.

Andrew Christie noted that there was a highly organised prevention programme in operation within the borough and across London. The Council worked very closely with the police and a variety of provision had been put in place with funding from the Home Office. Officers could bring a report to the

committee covering the aforementioned provision, though there was only evidence of a few isolated events.

### **School Holiday Childcare Provision**

A member suggested that school holiday childcare provision from 9am to 5pm should be considered encompassing; what provision was available for working parents, what the costs were to parents, and what the level of demand was.

### **Recruitment and Agency Staff**

The Chair requested that the Committee considered an item on staffing issues and the use of agency workers. Officers had previously reported that recruitment was a concern in both schools and Children's Services. Agency staff were being used to fill recruitment gaps but had lower retention and cost more than salaried workers.

### **Workload of Teachers**

The Chair requested that schools (both teachers, Headteachers, and Governors) were invited to the next meeting of the Committee to share their experiences under the workload of teachers item.

**ACTION: DA to contact Dave Rogers / Schools**

### **Complaints**

A member suggested an item be considered on how complaints about the Councils services, with a focus on Children's Services, were dealt with. Councillors noted a number of negative comments from residents about the current process.

In addition to the items noted above the Chair requested that the following items be added to the work programme:

- Permanency planning
- SEN School transport

### **School Visits – Sullivan Primary School**

Following the recent Ofsted inspection of the school, Members of the Committee visited the school and spoke with the Headteacher about any issues raised in the Ofsted report.

The Chair presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The school had created a nurturing environment in which every child was assisted to achieve their potential.
- A strength of the school had been its resilience to the threat of closure and its renaissance as a school with a clear vision for the future including expanding their nursery provision to meet local demand.
- The school had engaged and supportive governors who had extensive knowledge of primary education and educational standards and monitoring.
- The point at which the school was inspected precluded the inclusion of a substantial part of the school year for which data had not then been

processed. A few weeks later the data would have shown excellent progress across more of the school year.

- An internal review had rated Sullivan Primary School outstanding and their strong commitment to sustained improvement (and recognition by the Secretary of State) led some to expect better than a 'good' rating by Ofsted. The Senior Management team recognised the high level of anxiety around an Ofsted visit may have led to some teachers not displaying their usual outstanding skills in leading their class to high achieving results.

## 11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for 21 September 2015.

Meeting started: 7.03 pm  
Meeting ended: 9.02 pm

Chair .....

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