

Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 25 April 2016

PRESENT

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

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

Other Councillors: Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Member for Children and Education

Officers: Brenda Whinnett, Steve Miley, Ian Heggs, Alan Wharton, and David Abbott

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members noted that at the bottom of page 4, the final sentence should read, *“Councillor Sue Macmillan responded that she would consult with Councillor Sue Fennimore, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, and provide this information outside of the meeting.”*

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Caroline Needham, Vic Daniels, and Dennis Charman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public questions.

5. PRESENTATION ON YOUTH COUNCIL AND YOUTH PARLIAMENT ACHIEVEMENTS, YOUTH MAYOR ELECTIONS, AND THE NEW YOUTH MANIFESTO

The Chair welcomed Aminata Koroma, the newly elected Youth Mayor, and Joshua Owuraku, the Deputy Youth Mayor. They addressed the committee and informed members that they had recently held the first meeting of the Youth Cabinet to discuss their manifesto priorities and how they could become more involved in decision making in the Council. They also highlighted some of the Youth Council's previous achievements such as; helping to research and develop recommendations for the Mental Health Task Force, generating over 6000 responses to the Make Your Mark survey, and helping to shape the Youth Partnership.

The Youth Cabinet were working on their manifesto for 2016/17 and the key areas of focus would be on encouraging local employers to adopt the London living wage, tackling racism and extremism, and preparing young people for later life. The Youth Cabinet would be working with policy and governance officers to drive their agenda forward within the Council over the coming year.

Members asked how the Youth Cabinet engaged young people to determine their priorities. Brenda Whinnett responded that the Youth Council produced questionnaires and distributed them through schools. They also worked with services (like the Youth Offending Team) and partner organisations to plan who to target.

Members asked if they also used social media to engage with their peers. Brenda Whinnett responded that they had a Facebook page that was popular. They were also considering creating a space on the Council's website focused on young people's issues.

Members asked which schools had been involved in the election and whether there were plans to expand in future. Brenda Whinnett responded that most schools in the borough were involved in the election, excepting the minority that did not engage with any youth voice initiatives. Members asked why those schools did not engage and Brenda responded that they did not feel that it linked with the curriculum.

Members asked if the Youth Council were involved in the recently launched Youth Partnership. The Youth Mayor responded that they would be working closely with the Youth Partnership and sat on a panel to feed in their ideas.

Members asked if children with special education needs would be involved with the Youth Council and Cabinet. Brenda Whinnett responded that Cambridge School (a local special school) had been very involved and the previous Youth MP had given presentation on their work at the school. They also worked regularly with Action on Disability and HFMencap. Ian Hegg

noted that the Council was very interested in getting young people's feedback on the new SEN local offer website and they would value input from the Youth Council and Cabinet.

Members asked that the new Youth Manifesto for 2016/17 be sent to all school governors and councillors for discussion and to promote the work of the Youth Council.

The Chair congratulated the new Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor on their recent electoral success and thanked them for their presentation.

RESOLVED

1. That the new Youth Manifesto for 2016/17 be sent to all School Governors and Councillors for discussion and to promote the work of the Youth Council.
2. That the Youth Council be invited to provide feedback on the new SEN local offer website.

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Ofsted Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Looked After Children & Care Leavers and Review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Steve Miley shared that Ofsted's judgement regarding the overall effectiveness of children's services in Hammersmith & Fulham was that they were 'good' with sub-judgements about adoption performance and leadership, management, and governance were found to be 'outstanding'.

Areas highlighted for improvement over the next year were the Look After Children and Care Leavers service - even though they achieved a rating of 'good' it was felt there was still room for improvement.

The Chair asked which of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) recommendations (3.8 of the report) were the highest priority. Steve Miley informed members that LSCB results nationally had been lower than social care results and there was a national debate about how they can enact change across all of their partner organisations without executive powers. Consolidating three LSCBs into one across the shared services area was a good foundation but Ofsted are now looking for LSCBs to more clearly demonstrate the impact that they have.

Members asked how much of the Ofsted inspection was focused on SEN. Steve Miley responded that Ofsted took a relatively light touch approach to children with disabilities because SEN providers were inspected separately. Ian Heggs noted that the SEN service did provide information to Ofsted on a number of cases and was a local area inspection coming in the near future that would look at local provision for young people from 0 – 25 years old with SEN and / or disabilities.

The Chair asked if senior officers had any thoughts on the inspection process itself. Steve Miley responded that the services had fed back to Ofsted that, in future, more thought should be given to proportionality as currently smaller authorities received far more scrutiny than larger authorities. It was also felt that the inspection would be a good opportunity to offer help and more specific recommendations for improvement rather than just getting a one word judgement on each area. The inspection teams were very knowledgeable as they saw best practice across the country – a move to narrative judgements would have a far greater impact.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated all staff involved in the inspection on the excellent result.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

7. CABINET MEMBERS UPDATE

Councillor Sue Macmillan, Cabinet Members for Children and Education, gave an overview of the work that she had undertaken since the previous meeting including:

- Schools visits to Wendell Park, Good Shepherd, and the new West London Free School campus.
- A visits to the Looked After Children's and Care Leavers service following the recent Ofsted inspection to discuss how to take forward the issues highlighted.
- A meeting with schools on proposed changes to the national funding formula. Many schools in the borough had serious concerns about the changes as they could mean significant shortfalls in school budgets. The Council provided a lengthy response to the funding formula consultation and Councillor Macmillan said she would report back when more detail was known.

Members asked if all schools were facing funding issues if the national funding formula changes went ahead as proposed. Councillor Macmillan said that the changes would affect all schools and rising costs applied across the board.

8. IMPACT OF DELAYS TO DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE CHECKS

Steve Miley presented the report that detailed significant delays to the Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks at the stage where the Metropolitan Police undertake their check of locally intelligence. The delay had impacted the delivery of local services for children, most notably the Fostering and Adoption Service and the Travel Care and Assistance Service.

It was reported that the Metropolitan Police had a backlog of around 30,000 outstanding DBS checks and while they had acknowledged there was a problem they were struggling to recruit staff to reduce these numbers.

Members asked if it was possible to recover the costs for the DBS charges, in light of the poor level of service. Steve Miley responded that the police had no plans to compensate affected parties.

The Chair asked why this was only an issue in London. Steve Miley responded that it appeared that the police had underestimated the level of demand and were simply under resourced to deliver the function.

Members asked if it was possible for another police force to deliver the service for the Council (e.g. Thames Valley Police). Officers did not believe that would be possible because the DBS check involved reviewing hard and soft intelligence from local police stations, but they would explore whether it was a possibility.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the contents of the report.

9. SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2016

Ian Heggs presented the annual revision of the School Organisation and Investment Strategy.

The Chair asked if there was sufficient provision of secondary school places across the borough. Ian Heggs responded that schools in the centre of the borough were near capacity but there were still a number of schools with spare places further north and south.

Members asked if there would be capacity to support the requirement for all young people to be education or training up to the age of 18. Ian Heggs responded that Hammersmith and Fulham was generally in a good position on young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), but there were groups such as young people with SEN and care leavers where more work was needed. Overall there was far more provision than necessary (both locally and across London) – an upcoming review was expected to lead to a 25 percent reduction. Officers were working with schools to ensure that the right kind of provision was in place, including routes into work, pre-internships, and pre-apprenticeships.

Members asked for more information on the range of apprenticeships on offer to young people. Ian Heggs responded that the Council was working closely with local partners (e.g. the Lyric Theatre) to provide a broad range of opportunities. Steve Miley added that the virtual school had recently added a post that would focus on apprenticeships.

The Chair asked what action the Council took with regards to schools with significant numbers of surplus places. Ian Heggs said that officers provided advice to schools but ultimately it was a decision for the governing body. The Council was more focused on setting the wider trends through discussions at Headteacher and governors groups.

Members asked how the Government's recent white paper on converting all schools to academies would affect the strategy and the role of the local authority going forward. Ian Heggs responded that officers were waiting for the details of the proposal, particularly around the practicalities of converting so many schools over a relatively short period. Officers were running a workshop in May with schools about the possibility of forming a joint multi-academy trust that would allow the Council to retain some influence.

RESOLVED

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the School Organisation and Investment Strategy for 2016.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2016

Members asked for an item on childcare during the school holidays – including how provision was promoted, cost per child, available hours, and information on where demand was highest – for the next meeting.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 13 June 2016.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm

Meeting ended: 9.00 pm

Chair

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