

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19 March 2014 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Paschoud (Chair), Stella Jeffrey, Jacq Paschoud, Alan Till, Lisa Palin (Parent Governor Representative), Gail Exon (Church Representative) and Nicholas Rotheron (Church Representative)

APOLOGIES: Councillors David Britton, Marion Nisbet, Sharon Archibald (Parent Governor Representative) and Mark Saunders (Parent Governor Representative)

ALSO PRESENT: Alan Docksey (Head of Resources, CYP), Andrew Hagger (Scrutiny Manager), Keith Martin (Service Manager, Children with Complex Needs), Aine Ni Ruairc (Headteacher, Watergate School), Ian Smith (Director Children's Social Care) (Directorate for Children & Young People), Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People) and Sue Tipler (Head of Standards and Achievement for CYP)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2014

Resolved:

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2014.

2. Minutes of the joint meeting of the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee, 3 February 2014

Resolved:

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2014

3. Declarations of interest

- Gail Exon declared a personal interest as a Governor at Trinity School
- John Paschoud declared a personal interest as a Trust Governor at Watergate School
- Nicholas Rotheron declared a personal interest as a Governor at Christ the King School
- Lisa Palin declared a personal interest as a Governor at Greenvale School
- Stella Jeffrey declared a personal interest as her husband works as a clerk at Trinity School

4. Mayor & Cabinet response to the Nursery Education and Childcare Review

4.1 Sue Tipler, Head of Standards and Achievement, introduced the response.

4.2 The Committee noted the response.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the response.

5. Schools Traded Services

- 5.1 Alan Docksey, Head of Resources, Children and Young People, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:
- Some services are regulatory and are funded through the Education Services Grant, others are regulatory but are purchased, while many are support services that are traded at economic cost or market rate.
 - Services are usually provided on a fees basis or using a fixed base cost.
 - If the Council were to pursue trading outside Lewisham there would be significant risks attached.
 - There are other approaches to trading services to schools that other organisations use, such as transferring risks to a different organisation.
 - Trading services to schools has been identified this as an area for potential savings and increased trading could be pursued if an alternative vehicle could be used.

- 5.2 In response to questions from the Committee, Alan Docksey and Frankie Sulke provided the following information:
- When trading with schools in the borough, the Council already has a relationship and established position. Trading outside the borough would require officers to pursue business and raise the reputation of the organisation.
 - The council operates with a static level of resource, so if more staff are needed to do traded work it would be difficult to take on the work as base budgets would need to be changed. There are large difference between expanding work and becoming a business to providing services to schools to improve. In addition there are lot of businesses in the market selling services to schools.
 - With some services, former local authority staff left to provide services directly to schools. For example, schools buy-in peripatetic support for finances, often from former staff who have previously worked with the school. Schools sometimes like having their own clerk for governing body meetings, who are also often former local authority staff.
 - Schools have the option to enter into Service Level Agreements with the Council, or they can buy in services as and when they need them.
 - The Council's aim is not to seek a profit from schools and prices have been increased in the past few years to cover the costs of providing services.
 - By providing services to schools, the local authority maintains a link to the school, and can use these services to apply pressure to schools about maintaining standards.

- 5.3 The Committee then discussed the SLA document attached in the appendix, noting that it is quite large and complex and that a simpler, governor friendly version might be useful.

6. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Reform

- 6.1 Keith Martin, Service Manager, Children with Complex Needs, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The Children and Families Act has received Royal Assent and will be implemented in September 2014.
- The Act will change delivery of SEN services and introduce the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC) to replace the Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- There will be an increase in the age range of provision to 25.
- A local authority local offer will need to be available which shows how Lewisham will meet the needs of SEN children.
- Lewisham has carried out a pathfinder project along with 20 other authorities to pilot the changes.
- EHCs put in place services throughout the process as they are identified, not at the end of the process as with statements. They build into existing TAC processes, carry out consultations with parents and schools and allow children have a greater voice.
- Training has been delivered to schools about the new EHC.
- The aim is to build a multi-agency team to deliver the new EHC process, with an integrated service and combined teams.

6.2 Áine Ní Ruairc, Headteacher at Watergate School, then spoke to the Committee and highlighted the following key points:

- Watergate is a school that specialises in teaching children with severe learning difficulties. 50% of children at the school are autistic and 20% have profound and multiple learning or physical disabilities.
- 8 pupils at Watergate have EHCs in place with 6 currently in process. All of them are young children just entering or who have recently entered the school.
- The experience of EHCs has been a good one. There are positives within the process, as it is child centred and considers the whole child rather than different aspects sequentially.
- There is parental involvement from the beginning and parents are given time and support as well as reassurance.
- Professionals are involved at the beginning, whereas previously the statement process would go through one officer. This allows more professional dialogue about current needs of the child and is an opportunity to tease out problems and solve them with parents.
- Further consideration should be given to education provision, which currently forms a relatively small part of the EHC and should be expanded.
- Two 6 month reviews have been carried out so far. The reviews are not as rigorous as the statementing review process and detailed, written reports for parents and for records would be useful.

6.3 Lisa Palin, Parent Governor Representative, then addressed the Committee, sharing her experience as a parent who has gone through the EHC process and highlighting the following key points:

- The EHC approach has worked well, offering a more holistic approach that is supportive for parents.
- There have been some difficulties, it seems harder to go through with someone who is already 'in the system' and has a statement rather than a child coming into it for the first time. The key worker role was not always clear and parents carried out some of this role themselves. Not all parents have been invited to give feedback on the process yet.

- The challenge will be how to make the EHC a living plan, rather than a static one like a Statement could be. Transitions from Children's Social care to Adult Social Care have not happened yet and could be difficult.
- Managing parents expectations are key. The EHC approach uses a soft process, with suggestions from professionals and parents need to be reminded that they may not get everything they wanted or suggested. However a positive is that parents don't feel that they have to fight to get provision for their child.

6.4 In response to questions from the Committee, Frankie Sulke, Executive Director for Children and Young People, Ian Smith, Director of Children's Social Care, and Keith Martin provided the following information:

- Under the EHC approach tribunals have reduced. There are usually 2 a week under the previous approach, under the EHC approach there has been 1 in 6 months.
- It would be a huge task to convert all statements to plans. However, this is not the aim as not all those that currently have statements will necessarily need plans.
- Schools can provide for children without the need for a plan. Primary schools can help and deliver support, as they tend to be smaller, more nurturing environments. However there can be a worry that this support will not be available in the bigger environment of a secondary school, which can result in parents or primary schools requesting a statement.
- Transitions are therefore important to manage. When entering primary school there is dialogue between parents and schools at an early stage to build relationships. Talk about transition to the secondary school starts in year 4, so that trust can be built that the secondary school will be able to provide the support needed for the child.
- Ofsted reports include sections specifically about schools meeting the needs of children with SEN.
- SEN numbers have gone down as it has been recognised that some children don't require statements of SEN, instead they need support and intervention.
- The issues about a lack of clarity with key workers are a concern as the key worker model is the one that is preferred. There have been difficulties and staff who are better able to fulfil this role are being put in place.
- There is a need to fill the gap between the needs of children and the needs of young adults. The transition to Adult Social Care was at 16-19 but will now be up to 25. Officers are meeting with Adult Social Care commissioners to build links and get better integration.
- The organisation appointed by the DfE to monitor the pathfinder projects (SQW) is supposed to contact all those families who have taken part. Overall the feedback has been positive, with very good feedback from the DfE. By using this sharing approach the aim is to build capacity across London.
- It is difficult to compare EHC and SSEN in terms of conflict propensity. The EHC is relationship based and hopes to avoid conflict. However people have had to sign up to the EHC and it cannot be truly representative as it is voluntary.
- The 'Local Offer' will be developed across all networks and all schools have published theirs. Officers are supporting the college in developing theirs.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to receive an update on progress in early 2015.

7. Select Committee work programme

7.1 Andrew Hagger, Scrutiny Manager, introduced the report.

7.2 The Committee then discussed the following topics as suggestions for the new Children and Young people Select Committee to consider for their 2014/15 work programme:

- Capacity of secondary schools, including planning for 2018
- Supplementary schools.
- Gap analysis of service for children and young people across the borough
- IT provision in schools

8. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

8.1 There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

Chair:

Date:
