

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 11 July 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair), Octavia Holland, Coral Howard, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor Representative - Special Schools) and Monsignor N Rotheron (Church Representative)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liz Johnston-Franklin, Hilary Moore and Gail Exon

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for School Performance and Children's Services, Adam Abdullah (Young Mayor of Lewisham), Josh Brown-Smith (Young Adviser), Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) (London Borough of Lewisham), Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Catherine Bunten (Commissioning Manager), Helen Buttivant (Public Health Consultant) (London Borough of Lewisham) and Lucie Heyes (Assistant Director of Children's Social Care)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2019

The Chair opened the meeting. Apologies had been received from Gail Exon, Councillor Hilary Moore and Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin. He noted that Councillors John Paschoud and Jacq Paschoud would arrive late owing to council business.

The Chair welcomed Adam Abdullah – Lewisham's Young Mayor, and Josh Brown-Smith – the Chair of Lewisham's Young Advisers, to the meeting.

The Chair explained that the minutes of the last meeting were in two parts, the second being unavailable to the public due to commercial confidentiality, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members agreed the Part 1 minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The Chair excluded the press and public from the meeting to allow for discussion of the Part 2 minutes.

Members agreed the Part 2 minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting, but requested the following:

1. At Paragraph 8.1 delete "KPIs" and replace with "Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)"
2. At Paragraph 8.13 delete "The Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health Fund are ring-fenced" and replace with "The Council has limited discretion as to how the Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health Fund are allocated".

It was RESOLVED that:

1. the Part 1 (open) minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting
2. the Part 2 (closed) minutes be agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to the following changes being made:
At Paragraph 8.13 delete “The Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health Fund are ring-fenced” and replace with “The Council has limited discretion as to how the Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health Fund are allocated”.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

None due. Responses to the two recent referrals made by the Committee would be expected in October.

4. Young Mayor and Advisers

The Chair welcomed Adam Abdullah – Young Mayor and Josh Brown-Smith – Chair of the Young Advisers to the meeting. He explained that once a year, the Committee invites the Young Mayor and Advisers to address the committee with an open brief.

The Young Mayor provided a summary recent activities as follows:

1. Setting up a Young People’s Climate Change Forum to support the council’s aim of being carbon neutral by 2030
2. Participating in activities which led to Lewisham being awarded a trophy for being the best rambling neighbourhood in England.
3. Meeting the Goldsmith’s University outreach team to negotiate use of the library for Year 11 students who need study spaces. The university had been supportive in principle and work was being done for formulate a proposal
4. Contributing to the Democracy Review and Early Help Review
5. Participating in question times in schools with Councillors and the police.
6. Developing a social media strategy to improve communication between the council and young people
7. Working to develop a Curriculum 4 Life to work with schools to better deliver life skills such as budgeting, finding employment, careers advice etc
8. Working on the Lewisham Alumni Programme. This enables young people in Lewisham aged 18-30 to give back to their schools through mentoring, sharing experiences, offering career aspiration talks. One of the aims of the programme was to inspire success and to offer hope beyond poverty and violence.
9. Budget consultation. There were common themes between budget consultation and the Curriculum 4 Life, including improved education on drug use, SRE and mental health support.

The Chair thanked them for their contribution and invited questions from the committee. The following was noted in discussion:

1. The Young Mayor and Advisers were able to access the appropriate decision makes in order to make their proposals a reality, but felt that young people in general were not empowered to influence decision-making. This was why they had created a Climate Change Forum – to help empower young people. The Young Mayor and Advisers wanted a statutory requirement for youth consultation.
2. When asked for their views on permanent exclusion, the Young Mayor and Adviser opposed permanent exclusion, preferring instead a restorative justice approach to resolving issues at school. They felt that institutional racism meant that permanent exclusion unfairly affected some children more than others. It was their view that internal exclusion could sometimes be necessary for 'cooling off'.
3. The Chair invited the Young Mayor and Advisers to consider the published review and respond.
4. On mental health, the Young Mayor and Adviser felt there was a lack of awareness among young people of support services and that schools needed to do more to support mental health. They also felt schools needed to do more to support young people in general, for example instead of saying a young person "has the potential to do well" they should support that young person to realise their potential.
5. In their experience, young people experience a lack of cultural sensitivity when they do access mental health support services, particularly since around 70% of the school population in Lewisham is BAME.
6. Both reported broadly positive experiences of Lewisham secondary schools, however they felt the culture had to change to get the focus off improving exam results. Firstly, the pressure on students to improve grades was leading to mental health problems, and secondly it had prompted students to snapchat about being at the bottom of the league table.
7. The Young Mayor and Adviser wanted to see students represented on school governing boards, as well as more BAME representation on governing bodies, so that Governors share the same lived experience as the children they make decisions on behalf of.
8. The committee heard that smoking weed is widespread among young people in Lewisham but it is a taboo subject at school. The Young Mayor and Adviser felt that proper training for teachers, investment in PHSE and open, blunt conversations in schools needed to be encouraged around staying safe and what to avoid. Talk to Frank (drugs advice) and Compass (online health and wellbeing advice) were referenced as examples.

The Chair thanked the Young Mayor and Adviser for their time and invited them to attend a joint meeting of the CYP and Healthier Communities Select Committees on 17 July to discuss BAME mental health inequalities.

It was RESOLVED that the views of the Young Mayor and Adviser be noted.

5. Lewisham's Early Help Approach: Priorities and Timescales

Catherine Bunten, Service Manager – Joint Commissioning, and Helen Buttivant, Public Health Consultant, introduced the item and invited questions from the Committee.

It was noted:

1. Some Members were concerned that looking at early help service by service was not the right starting point and requested a population needs analysis and details of how services would be mapped according to identified needs that result.
2. An initial piece of work had been completed which gave an early indication of need at borough level. The Early Help Board would be supplied with this data.
3. Public Health analysts had been tasked with gather data and preparing an analysis at ward level. This work was ongoing and would be presented to the Board at the end of July.
4. Proxy indicators such as estimated Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) were also being considered as part of the needs analysis.
5. The evaluation criteria referred to at paragraph 5.11 related to assessing whether a service should be delivered in-house, externally or jointly. It had yet to be decided how services would be delivered.
6. Some Members felt that the Early Help review had not matched up to initial expectations. Whereas a direction of travel was being set for the process to continue beyond 2020, some Members had expected wider, more radical redesign options rather than an incremental approach. Some felt that more than one option should be presented at the end, and that the financial case for investment in early help needed to be clearly made.
7. The Committee wanted the opportunity to scrutinise all proposals before they are put to Mayor and Cabinet.
8. Concerns were raised about the timescale being too tight for meaningful change before March 2020.
9. Members were also concerned that without a clear, strategic plan, Mayor and Cabinet would have to make uninformed decisions to cut or maintain existing services.
10. Officers explained that there was a need for pragmatism and incremental approach because there was little scope to change statutory services. In addition, there was uncertainty around funding, due to both the existing funding gap and the possible loss of the Troubled Families grant.
11. Members were clear that, in spite of funding uncertainty, the Committee wanted to see recommendations before being put before Mayor and Cabinet for a decision.

It was RESOLVED that

1. The report be noted
2. That the Committee receive a report back before any proposals are put to Mayor and Cabinet.

6. Safeguarding Services 6 monthly report

Lucie Heyes – Director of Children’s Social Care highlighted key aspects of the report and explained that in the past the service had been over-interventionist. The focus was now on managing risk differently in order to keep children safe while

reducing the numbers of children with Child Protection Plans. A key aspect of this was strengthening support for those on the edge of care to prevent escalation.

The following was noted in discussion:

1. The number of re-referrals had increased from 8% to 15%. There was insufficient performance data to accurately assess whether this was a result of an increase in the number of families whose needs had been stepped down, and in many cases there did not appear to be a correlation. There had been significant changes to the recording system recently which meant that a straight comparison was not possible. Re-referral figures were in line with other London boroughs.
2. Business systems had been improved, and the initial focus had been on improving discipline, compliance and oversight. The next phase would see skilling up of social workers and practice improvement.
3. Signs of Safety is used by many local authorities. It places the emphasis on using families' own resilience and resources to bring about improvements. It takes a balanced approach to risk management and is not deficit-based.
4. It can be common to conflate risk to the child with professional anxiety or family hostility. Signs of Safety tries to separate out the risk to the child from other factors that may result in premature intervention. It is more respectful to families, and facilitates better relationships.
5. The reduction in proceedings can be directly linked to the introduction of the Signs of Safety practice modal as well as more checks and balances in the system.
6. Visits fell below target, and social worked caseloads were up to 15-20.
7. There had been a bulge in the number of assessments due to a combination of factors. There had been an unexplainably high number of contacts in May. It was thought this was an isolated increase and not part of a wider trend. Contact rates were down in June and would be low in July and August due to school holidays.
8. MASH thresholds were under constant review.
9. One Member had recently accessed the service and had found it difficult to get help for a young person that they had had concerns about. It was acknowledged that there was currently variability in practice and the aim was for better consistency.
10. The Chair remarked that he was pleased to see the comprehensive improvement plan and continuous testing of changes.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Select Committee work programme

The Chair introduced the item and brought Appendix D, a scoping report entitled "how living in temporary accommodation affects children", to the Committee's attention and invited comments.

The following was noted:

1. To the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) add at 3
 - (vi) school attendance
 - (vii) what impact does the quality and location of the temporary accommodation have (eg Out of Borough placements)?

(viii) to what extent do children living in temporary accommodation appear in Children's Social Care, Missing Exploited and Trafficked?

The work programme was discussed and it was agreed to:

2. Add CAMHS update to December
3. Move children in temporary accommodation review to January
4. Add BAME achievement to September
5. Move Education Strategy to December
6. Add a further item on the Early Help Review to the agenda for September, to include information relating to the population needs assessment and proposed cuts.

It was RESOLVED that:

1. The KLOE be agreed subject to the following additions:
 - (vi) school attendance
 - (vii) what impact does the quality and location of the temporary accommodation have (eg Out of Borough placements)?
 - (viii) to what extent do children living in temporary accommodation appear in Children's Social Care, Missing Exploited and Trafficked?
2. The work programme be amended as follows:
 - Add CAMHS update to December
 - Move children in temporary accommodation review to January
 - Add BAME achievement to September
 - Move Education Strategy to December
 - Add a further item on the Early Help Review to the agenda for September, to include information relating to the population needs assessment and proposed cuts.
3. The reports be noted.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair reminded Members of a joint meeting with Healthier Communities Select Committee scheduled for 17 July on BAME mental health inequalities.

8. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

No referrals were made.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

Chair:

Date:
