

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 February 2015 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors John Paschoud (Chair), Brenda Dacres (Vice-Chair), Chris Barnham, David Britton, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud, Joan Reid, Luke Sorba, Alan Till, Sharon Archibald (Parent Governor Representative), Lisa Palin (Parent Governor Representative) and Mark Saunders (Parent Governor Representative) and Monsignor N Rothon (Church Representative)

APOLOGIES: Gill Exon (Church Representative)

ALSO PRESENT: Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Jim Mallory, Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Kath Nicholson (Head of Law), Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney (Head of Crime Reduction and Supporting People), Frankie Sulke (Executive Director for Children and Young People), Sue Tipler (Head of Standards and Achievement for CYP), Maxine Haffner (Former Parent Governor, Sedgehill School), Magda Moorey (Former Chair of Governors, Sedgehill School) and Kate Platt (Early Intervention Strategic Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014

- 1.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014 be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. Young People's Mental Health Review - Final Report

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the final report arising from the Committee's review into Young People's Mental Health be AGREED and submitted to Mayor & Cabinet on 18 February 2015.

4. Sedgehill School

- 4.1 The Chair outlined the purpose and scope of the item and Frankie Sulke summarised the key interventions that had taken place to date, noting that it had been a difficult time for all involved and that the decision to intervene had not been taken lightly.
- 4.2 In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following key points were noted:
- In the period of time leading up to the issuing of the warning notice there was a lot of engagement with the leadership of the school in terms of how improvement might best be achieved.
 - There was no disagreement between the Council, the leadership of the school and the Governing Body that the pace of progress in terms of improvement was inadequate and additional leadership capacity was

required. The disagreement was over how this capacity would be provided. The School preferred an extension and strengthening of the current partnership with Hayes School, the Council felt more direct and intensive leadership input was required.

- The school was 'self-assessing' as requiring improvement with a couple of departments presenting particular concerns. The Headteacher assessed 80% of lessons as good or outstanding but the last Ofsted report found that the quality of teaching still required improvement.
- Whilst a number of Lewisham schools did not deliver good GCSE results in 2014, some producing poorer results than Sedgehill, the issue at Sedgehill was that results had been poor over a number of years and the pace of improvement was not sufficient.
- It was clear by spring 2014 that the predictions for GCSE results were not likely to be achieved and concerns were expressed.
- In addition to the formal meetings and interventions described in the officer report, there were numerous telephone calls between the Council and the school in-between meetings. The Council never refused a meeting or refused to talk to any of the people involved in the situation.
- Before the warning notice was issued the method of intervention preferred by the Council and the method preferred by the school and governing body were fully discussed and presented by the people who would be delivering the intervention.
- The Governing Body disputed the warning notice when it was issued and OFSTED therefore had to rule on whether the situation at the school warranted a warning notice being issued. They considered evidence submitted by both the governing body and the local authority and ruled in the local authority's favour, confirming the warning notice.
- The local authority first considered the possibility of the School working with Bethnal Green Academy when it became clear, to the Council, that a more direct option for Sedgehill might be needed. The school had a more deprived intake than Sedgehill yet had managed to produce very good results over a number of years. The school was in a 'benchmarking group' consisting of 55 similar schools and was top of the list in terms of results.
- If the school had accepted support from Bethnal Green Academy this would not have immediately required Sedgehill to become an academy, but if Bethnal Green Academy was going to continue to support the school in a formalised manner than Sedgehill would have been required, by law, to become an academy. Current legislation states that an academy cannot be in a formal federation with a school unless that school is also an academy.
- The application to establish an Interim Executive Board (IEB) was sent to the Secretary of State on 15 December 2014.
- The IEB was now considering a range of options for the future of the school and a formalised relationship with Bethnal Green was likely to be one option considered. The confirmation letter from the Department for Education stated that an academy solution must be actively considered, as required by law.
- Whilst it was noted that parents were concerned about a change in ethos should the school become an academy, officers hoped that the

ethos would remain, but be strengthened in relation to those elements of the ethos that perhaps did need to change, such as attendance.

- Prospective parents would be included in any consultation carried out by the IEB.
- The IEB only consisted of three people but they were able to co-opt other individuals to perform specific tasks if required. The Council felt the experience of the people forming the IEB was particularly suitable to the task in hand: school improvement.
- The local authority remained concerned about the school's predictions for the 2015 GCSE results – 65% of pupils gaining 5 A-C grade GCSE results, including Maths and English. The IEB was currently working with the leadership team and teachers to examine current data.
- The intervention had been a painful process, primarily because it had not been possible to reach agreement with the school. In terms of learning lessons for the future, officers felt they had done everything possible to make the process as successful as possible – the fundamentals were all done correctly. However, officers were taken by surprise when the intervention was made public and would have expected the school to alert the local authority to their wish to make the news public and to discuss a joint approach to communicating the news. It may have been possible to have done more to make the school feel better about sharing its intention with the Council.
- In terms of the process followed, the decision to intervene was one that was delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Young People, and the Mayor, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and Members were kept updated on the situation. Ward councillors and the Chair of the Children and Young people Select Committee were orally briefed on the decision when it was made. The decision was taken following a thorough consideration of the evidence base and following the receipt of advice from the Head of Standards and Achievement.
- The decision was also discussed on 16 December at a member briefing. The Mayor decided not to intervene in the Director's decision.

4.3 Magda Moorey, the former Chair of Governors at Sedgehill School was invited to address the Committee. Maxine Haffner, a former Vice-Chair of Governors and a Parent Governor was also in attendance. The following key points were made:

- The last three months had demonstrated the astonishing energy of the parent community and the amount of tenacity and intellect present within it.
- The GCSE results had been disappointing and the Governing Body was in agreement with the Council that a more rapid rate of improvement needed to be achieved. However the approach to securing this was the issue of disagreement as the Governing Body was not convinced that the local authority's preferred approach to securing improvement would be more successful than building on the work with Challenge Partners and the collaboration with Hayes School.
- The Governing Body felt that their preferred approach would not disrupt the trajectory of Y11 pupils as it was based on continuous change and involved people with great records who knew the school.

- In terms of the reasons why the GCSE predictions were not reached, the Governing Body felt that two particular teachers and a certain cohort of pupils were regarded as 'safe', so most of the focus went on getting D students to C, removing focus from the C students.
- The Governing Body had challenged the predictions and had asked for external challenge from the Pixel group. However it was clear that the Council was not happy with the level of assurance received and the governing body perhaps needed to have told its story better.
- In most cases of intervention the leadership or governance of a school isn't doing its job, but Ofsted had judged Sedgehill well on both these counts in an inspection in 2013.
- The Governing Body had visited Bethnal Green Academy and had witnessed some outstanding classroom practice but felt that the school was very different to Sedgehill and was concerned about the disruption such intervention might bring. The governors therefore felt that current improvement plans should be held on to and strengthened for the rest of the year (the Headteacher of Hayes School had agreed to spend 40% of his time at Sedgehill); with more interventionist action taken after the 2015 results were known, if required. The Council's response was that the school had already been given a chance the previous year following the 2013 results.
- The Council had been very clear about its preferred option but Governors were unclear about the strategic approach which underpinned it.

4.4 In response to questions from Members of the Committee the following key points were noted:

- In attempting to improve results, it is possible that the school was trying to do too many things (e.g. vertical tutoring); and it was accepted that core teaching practice was the most important factor in school improvement.
- The Governing Body felt that, once the warning notice had been upheld, a wider number of people, including parents and students, needed to be involved in the discussion (up to that point only 14 people at the school were aware) and this necessitated going public.
- The Governing Body had not had chance to discuss the academy model in a measured way and consider what model was right for Sedgehill and it trusted that the IEB would do this. It also hoped that the IEB would establish a parent reference group at the earliest opportunity.

4.5 In response to a question from the Chair, Magda Moorey stated her view that it was right and proper that this scrutiny had taken place and that it was important to reflect on what had happened. However the timing was difficult as the school needed to focus on improving results as it was only 13 weeks to the first Maths GCSE.

4.6 The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People commented that it was important to focus on the children rather than the process. He stressed that when the Local Authority had lost confidence in a school it was important to be able to deal with it without delay as the children required

swift action and improvement. He questioned whether it was right to deal with such a loss of confidence in public.

4.7 Standing Orders were suspended to allow the business of the Committee to be concluded.

4.8 After much debate on potential recommendations, it was clear that Members of the Committee held divergent views of the merits of the intervention and any action that might be taken to change the way in which it happened in future, but it was also clear that all Members of the Committee wanted the same thing for Sedgemoor pupils: improved results. Following a vote, the following recommendation was agreed by the Committee:

4.9 **RESOLVED:** That the Mayor is asked to review and consider the relevant part of the scheme of delegations so that where it proves that such interventions by the LEA into the governance of a school are contentious, decisions concerning the process can be considered by the Mayor and Cabinet; and that in taking such a decision consideration is given to consultation with ward councillors, parents, staff and other interested parties. The intention to issue a warning notice should indicate that the level of contentiousness to trigger this activity has been reached.

5. Lewisham Future Programme

5.1 The Committee considered updates on three savings proposals:

K2 (Youth Offending Services)

- Geeta Subramaniam introduced the update and following discussion on cuts to the Youth Justice Board Grant and the use of predictive modelling to assess whether the new model would be workable, the Committee noted the update provided.

Q1 (Improving triage for Children's Social Care services & re-designing the Children's Centre & Early Intervention offer)

- Deregistering all but 4 of the 17 Children's Centres in the borough would provide greater flexibility for providers to secure improved outcomes for targeted families within the smaller funding envelope that would be available. Services for children would still be offered from the de-registered centres via council contracts requiring certain outcomes to be reached (payments by results).
- The Children's Society had not received payment by results money.
- The contract with the Children's Society would end in March; the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the Clyde Early Childhood Centre were being asked to take it over for 6 months; and officers were recommending that they should continue to work with St James'; Family Centre and other subcontractors until the re-tendering of the contracts in October.
- Councillor Barnham expressed concern about the reduction in registered Children's Centres from 17 to 4 and the reduction in the number of targeted families.

- It was stated that capital clawback in respect of the deregistered centres was a risk but unlikely as services would be continuing.

Q2 (Reduction in Youth Service Provision):

- Following comments made by Councillor Johnston-Franklin, the Committee recommended that, in relation to Recommendation 1 in the Youth Service Working Group report, all councillors should be kept updated on progress, and not just the ward members for Ladywell and Perry Vale.
- Frankie Sulke stated that there was not the capacity to investigate an alternative, back-up plan to the employee led mutual (ELM) preferred option, but that, should the ELM option prove unfeasible, the fall-back option was the Youth Service remaining in the Council and being subject to proposals for savings alongside other council services.

5.2 **RESOLVED:** That the updates be noted and the Public Accounts Select Committee be advised that the Committee recommends that, in relation to Recommendation 1 in the Youth Service Working Group report, all councillors should be kept updated on progress, and not just the ward members for Ladywell and Perry Vale.

6. Select Committee work programme

6.1 **RESOLVED:** That the work programme be noted.

7. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

7.1 There were no referrals to Mayor and Cabinet, other than those mentioned under items 3 and 4 above, but it was agreed that a referral would be made to the Public Accounts Select Committee in relation to the budget saving Q2 (Youth Service).

The meeting ended at 10.30 pm

Chair:

Date:
