

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 December 2017 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Liz Johnston-Franklin (Vice-Chair), Chris Barnham, Andre Bourne, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Alan Till, Gail Exon (Church Representative), Monsignor N Rothon (Church Representative) and Kevin Mantle (Parent Governor representative for special schools) (Parent Governor Representative)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Joyce Jacca and Co-Opted Member Lilian Brooks

ALSO PRESENT: Kate Bond (Head of Standards & Achievement), Warwick Tomsett (Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning), Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People), Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Ann Wallace (Service Manager, Children with Complex Needs), Sir Steve Bullock (Mayor), Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Councillor Jonathan Slater (Mental Health Champion), Caroline Hirst (Joint Commissioner, Children and Young People's Services), Keith Cohen (Lewisham YOS and South London Consortium Strategic Manager) and Jackie Jones (School Improvement Officer)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2017

- 1.1. The order of business was changed to take Item 8 ahead of Item 4.
- 1.2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2017 be agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared an interest in respect of Item 6 – SEND update. She is a Trustee of a short breaks provider operating within the borough. She is also a council-appointed Trustee of Brent Knoll Watergate Co-operative Trust and a Governor of Watergate School.
- 2.2 Kevin Mantle declared an interest in respect of Item 6 – SEND update. He is a Trustee of Signal, a parent support group for autistic children and their families in Lewisham, and is employed by the Government Equalities Office.
- 2.3 Councillor John Paschoud declared an interest in respect of Item 6 – SEND update. He is a Governor of Perrymount Primary School, appointed by the local authority.
- 2.4 Councillors John and Jacq Paschoud declared each other's interests as they are required to do under the council's constitution.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

No responses were due.

4. Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools - guest speaker

4.1 The Chair welcomed Ammar al Ghabban, Education Consultant- social, emotional & mental health, behaviour & relationships, and Councillor Jonathan Slater, the Council's Champion for Mental Health.

4.2 Mr Al Ghabban gave a brief presentation about his experience of mental health in secondary schools.

4.3 A discussion followed, and the following key points were noted:

- Mr Al Ghabban's view was that until schools were required to capture data on the work they do around mental health, head teachers would not see mental health as part of their core business.
- Tense relationships between adults, whether teacher/teacher or teacher/parent transferred pressure to children, therefore it was important to have regard to the mental health of staff as well as pupils.
- Young people's mental health and wellbeing was at the heart of a number of the council's key policy documents including the Children and Young People's plan 2015-18.
- Lewisham had the worst rates of adult mental health in London and the agenda was high on Lewisham schools' radars.
- Schools had received mental health first aid training. Mental health best practice in schools went beyond crisis management. It was not yet fully embedded but progress was being made.
- Examples were given of some of the work around mental health that was being done with/in schools eg conferences, individual support within the virtual school, engagement in cultural/art activities, nurture groups, school governors focused on LGBTQI issues.

4.4 The Chair thanked Mr Al Ghabban for his presentation.

RESOLVED: that Ammar Al Ghabban's presentation be noted.

5. The Mayor

5.1 The Chair welcomed the Mayor of Lewisham, who had been invited to address the Committee on what he saw as the major challenges for children and young people facing the new mayor during his or her term of office.

5.2 The Mayor gave a brief presentation in which he outlined the following key challenges for the new mayor:

- Austerity had created unprecedented pressure on public services and users since 2010, and this would continue for local authorities.
- Online bullying and the negative and damaging effects of social media for young people.
- Pressure for school places had been intense due to demographic change but was now reducing.

- Place planning for secondary schools.
- Schools finances were reducing in real terms. He noted that the rate of inflation in the wider economy was not the right indicator to measure financial growth/ shrinkage in terms of school funding.
- Secondary school performance - modifying/improving the secondary challenge to deal with issues such as class, gender, race and ethnicity.
- Growing demand and ever-increasing complexity of need for services for children and young people with SEN.
- Continuing and worsening recruitment problems, not just of teachers but also young professionals who cannot afford to access the housing market.
- The housing crisis.
- The implications of Brexit.
- The cost of accessing higher education – young people starting adult life with large debt from student loans.
- Disconnect between the labour market in London and routes into it. The housing crisis can only be solved with the skills and capacity for building, yet young people do not want to work in construction. The Construction sector would need to change the opportunities it was offering and the way these are presented to young people.
- Housing and homelessness, which affects children and families.
- Gangs and criminal activity.
- Violence against women and girls.
- Making culture more accessible to all children in the borough. The Mayor referred to the Albany programme to raise funds for every five year old in the borough to see live theatre.

5.3 A discussion followed in which the Mayor made the following points:

- Primary school improvement was due to schools coming together in groups. Secondary schools historically did not build a culture of heads working together, but secondary heads are now coming together to drive improvement.
- The Mayor’s “top 3” issues were
 - Secondary school improvement
 - The housing crisis
 - Child protection.
- In order to minimise teachers moving out of London/Lewisham, individual schools need to build teams that people want to be part of.
- There still existed a culture of not valuing non-academic jobs. Vocational education needed to be valued as well as academic attainment.

5.4 The Chair thanked the Mayor for sharing his thoughts.

5.5 The time being 9:15pm, the Chair adjourned the meeting for a brief comfort break.

6. SEND update on transport and short breaks

6.1 Warwick Tomsett, Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning and Ann Wallace, Service Manager – Children in Need, introduced the item.

- 6.2 The Committee heard that after-school and holiday provision at Drumbeat had previously been funded. 18 months ago, the Dedicated Schools Grants changed and provision of these services had been covered through the general fund but there was no budget to cover it. After-school or holiday provision is not funded in any other school in the borough, and other local authorities do not fund this provision either. The provision was creating an overspend and officers were working with the school and parents on a model that would use alternative sources of funding and that would be available to other schools to use if they wanted to.
- 6.3 It was reported that these discussions were ongoing and that working parents were willing to contribute to the cost. The majority of parents were using these services as childcare while they worked, although some were using it for short breaks, the Committee heard.
- 6.4 Officers explained that Lewisham partners (including the council) had received a positive Ofsted report on SEND provision. The report had been circulated to members. The Committee heard that some parents did not share this view, and were not satisfied with the services that Lewisham offered.
- 6.5 The time being 9:25pm it was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that standing orders be suspended to allow committee business to continue beyond 9:30pm.
- 6.6 The following was noted in discussion:
- National Department for Education criteria regarding travel policy had not changed, but the council had been more robust about assessing need and implementing the criteria.
 - In some cases where home school transport had been discontinued the child had either moved or was now older and able to be more independent.
 - Each case was assessed individually. For the majority, the only criteria that was applied was distance from home to school. For those closer to school, an assessment was necessary.
 - Officers mentioned the benefits of working with young people to support them to be independent.
 - Concerns were raised – reflecting the findings of the Ofsted report - that details of services were not adequately disseminated to parents, and where parents were getting this information, it was through voluntary sector organisations such as Parent Engage or Signal rather than through awareness of the local offer.
 - Some parents had experienced lack of continuity/information sharing at Kaleidoscope and felt that the Ofsted inspection did not reflect their experience. These parents had indicated that they would respond to Ofsted directly.
 - Improved signposting of the local offer was a key issue, and work was being done to clearly communicate through case workers, placing links on every communications, through schools, websites etc.
 - Ofsted inspectors heard mixed views and the report reflects this.
 - The inspection covered Children's Centres as well as kaleidoscope.
 - The overall number of children being provided with transport was lower than in 2015, but higher than in 2016.

- There had been no appeals this year. Last year there had been around 50 appeals of which 10 were successful.
- Officers were exploring the reasons why usage of Cyberzone – a self-referral club for families with disabled children aged 7 and over – had dropped so significantly that there was talk of closing it down due to underuse. It had previously been oversubscribed.
- Young people who are eligible for transport and short breaks provision require an adult social care assessment upon turning 18, and the eligibility criteria is different.
- Personal budgets can be made directly to parents, but only some aspects of care and support can be purchased this way.
- Cuts to short breaks have not been made but demand has increased so there will be an overspend next year unless the eligibility criteria are changed.
- A £1m overspend on transport is forecast.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report be noted.
- 2) A referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet, requesting a review of funding levels for SEND provision and in particular travel assistance and short breaks. The Chair should draft the referral to take account of the comments made in this meeting and the views of the Mayor under the previous item, and share the draft with the committee by email to enable comment before the referral is submitted to Mayor and Cabinet.

7. Provisional GCSE results and update on Secondary Challenge

7.1 Jackie Jones, Service Manager – School Improvement, introduced the report.

7.2 The committee noted that under the new measures of Progress 8, Attainment 8 and English and Maths, there had been some improvement to the extent that the results could be compared with last year's.

7.3 The committee also heard that the comments made by Ofsted in recent secondary school inspections had been more positive. Bonus Pastor, Haberdashers Hatcham College and Prendergast School had recently been inspected as Outstanding. Forest Hill, Trinity, Knights Academy and Sydenham Girls schools were all Good, the remaining secondary schools Required Improvement with the exception of Sedgemoor which was rated Inadequate.

7.4 The following was noted in discussion:

- The Regional Schools Commissioner's Strategic School Improvement Fund had made £3/4m additional funding available via the ATLAS Teaching School. Each secondary school would have a challenge partner which would offer subject support. This could be up to 10 days support in English/ Maths/ Science. Support would be tailored to each school and need would be assessed.
- The Secondary Challenge had focused on maths last academic year, and while only 1% improvement had been achieved overall, some schools had made significant improvements and work was in place to improve maths further.

- Further details of where and how the funding would be used would be incorporated in the Annual Schools Standards report to the Committee in March.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. In-depth review of recruitment and retention of school staff - final report

8.1 The Chair invited Emerson Sutton, a Young Advisor, to address the committee. Emerson made the following points and observations in respect of the report.

1. Teachers should be and feel valued
2. Job satisfaction and good working conditions are as important as pay
3. Teachers need support Senior Leadership Team
4. Teachers need breaks and down time in the school holidays
5. Better discipline in the classroom would benefit both teachers and pupils
6. Better manners should be expected, such as greeting each other in the morning
7. Teachers should do more to help families to support home learning as not all families are able to support their child's learning at home
8. Less time should be spent on paperwork
9. Continuity of teaching staff should be a priority
10. More should be done on mindset so that children "yearn to learn"
11. Teaching is an international profession and therefore there should be lessons learned from other countries
12. Support for children with SEN should be properly resourced
13. Teachers should inspire ambition and equip their students to achieve their ambitions.

8.2 The Chair thanked Emerson for his input, and commented on the thoughtful and mature nature of his remarks which went far beyond what would be expected of a primary school pupil.

8.3 The Chair shared draft recommendations with the Committee. These had been circulated by email in advance of the meeting.

8.4 Officers were concerned that they had not had prior sight of the draft recommendations to advise on what was feasible in a school context. The Scrutiny Manager explained that the formulation of recommendations was a Member-led process that should not be unduly influenced by officers. The Scrutiny Manager had sought legal advice in respect of two of the recommendations, and provided this to the Committee.

8.5 The following points were noted in discussion:

- Some Members were concerned that the Committee would appear to be challenging the autonomy of schools. The Chair was satisfied that the recommendations were not phrased as instructions, but as suggestions.
- There was concern that some recommendations could increase the workload of schools.
- The practicability of paying responsibility allowances in a redundancy climate was raised. However, it was noted that this recommendation came directly from a head teacher's suggestion.

- Some Members questioned the council's influence regarding the recommendations for the dioceses. The faith schools recommendations came directly from 2 faith schools and therefore the Chair was keen to keep them in.
- The recommendations were all supported by evidence and echoed what was said by schools. They were clearly worded as recommendations and not directions.
- Giving priority to staff members could lead to problems in a single form entry school and could make it harder to attract teachers over a 2/3 form entry school. It was agreed that the following be added to this recommendation "consideration should be given to possible disadvantage of such priority in one form entry schools"
- The feasibility of the schools' recommendations was not for the committee to decide, but for schools.

8.6 The recommendations were put to the vote, with 6 in favour and 4 against (no abstentions).

8.7 One Member voted against the recommendations because felt they had not had sufficient time to consider the recommendations. The Committee heard that the Chair had prepared an initial draft set of recommendations which had been shared with the Committee via email by the Scrutiny Manager. Over a period of several weeks, Members had provided comments on the draft recommendations and these comments had served to refine the recommendations.

8.8 Those Members that voted against the recommendations said that they would have preferred to have had advice from CYP officers on what was feasible. The Scrutiny Manager explained that the correct and usual process had been followed, and that it was not standard practice to consult officers prior to recommendations being agreed.

It was RESOLVED:

- 1) That the comments made by Emerson Sutton be shared with the Mayor and the Executive Director for Children and Young People
- 2) That the report be noted
- 3) That the recommendations be approved subject to the addition of the following wording "consideration should be given to possible disadvantages of such priority in one form entry schools" to the recommendation regarding priority admission for children of staff members
- 4) That the report and recommendations be agreed and submitted to Mayor and Cabinet for consideration and response.

9. Select Committee work programme

Without discussion, it was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

It was RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report and recommendations of the in-depth review into the recruitment and retention of school staff be submitted to Mayor and Cabinet for consideration and response.

- 2) A referral be made to Mayor and Cabinet, requesting a review of funding levels for SEND provision and in particular travel assistant and short breaks. The Chair should draft the referral to take account of the comments made in this meeting and the views of the Mayor under the previous item, and share the draft with the committee by email to enable comment before the referral is submitted to Mayor and Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm

Chair: -----

Date: -----