

# MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 16 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair), Octavia Holland, Coral Howard, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud, John Paschoud, Gail Exon (Church Representative) and Monsignor N Rotheron (Church Representative)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Colin Elliott

ALSO PRESENT: Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People), Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for School Performance and Children's Services), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access Inclusion and Participation), Angela Scattergood (Director of Education Services), Claudia Smith (Interim Head of Integrated Services for SEND), Sue Stocks (Parent Participation Officer - Lewisham Parent and Carer's Forum), Nilan Salih (Parent Representative – Lewisham Parent and Carer's Forum), Lucie Heyes (Director of Children's Social Care)

## 1. Minutes

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies from Cllr Colin Elliott.
- 1.2 The order of business was changed to take the SEND strategy ahead of the Children's Social Care budget report.
- 1.3 The following points were made regarding the minutes of the last meeting:
  1. One Member felt that providing information on where to access mental health support should be covered in the PHSE curriculum
  2. The Chair suggested that comments regarding the curriculum should be saved until the next meeting when the Education Strategy would be discussed
  3. Two amendments to the minutes were AGREED as follows:

### **Item 6 - BAME achievement**

6.1.4. "The London Borough of Hackney had undertaken a borough-wide review of the attainment of Black boys, and Lewisham Learning Inclusive Curriculum Conference heard from one Hackney school that had reviewed its curriculum to make it more culturally relevant and inclusive"

and

### **Item 8 – Early Help Review**

1. "A member of the Committee commented on the cuts of £196,000 to the health visiting service listed in the report. The Committee had commented

strongly last year around this cut and so was surprised that further discussions about the cut had not happened”.

4. A briefing session would be arranged to enable Committee members to comment on proposals regarding the Children’s Centres contract.
5. An report on the Early Help Review be scheduled for January 2020.
6. The Chair would request that the Children’s Centre contract be added to the agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

2.1 It was RESOLVED that the following be noted in respect of Item 5 – SEND Strategy:

2.2 Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared that she is a Member of the Brent Knoll and Watergate Trust, and a Trust Governor of Watergate School.

2.3 Council John Paschoud declared the interests of his wife, Councillor Jacq Paschoud (above). He also declared that he would be a Governor of Parkwood Hall Cooperative Academy, effective from 17 October 2019.

Gail Exon, Diocesan Representative, declared that she sits on the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education Academy Trust.

## **3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet**

3.1 Responses were received from Mayor and Cabinet regarding

1. The in-depth review of exclusions from school
2. The Early Help savings proposals.

3.2 The Chair had attended the Mayor and Cabinet meeting at which the responses had been discussed. He reported that in respect of the exclusions review, the report had been positively received and the recommendations largely embraced.

3.3 In response to questions from the Committee it was noted that:

1. Unconscious bias and equalities training (recommendation 19) was already being rolled out and schools were being encouraged to engage with it.
2. Some schools had commissioned whole school training on the back of a pilot scheme that Lewisham Learning had run last year.
3. Training was being funded through a range of sources including Lewisham Learning, Early Years providers, teacher training providers, individual schools.
4. In support of recommendation 2 – increasing BAME representation on panels and school governing bodies, school governors had been requested to complete an electronic ethnic monitoring form but the return rate had been low. Some Members, who were also school governors, expressed concern that the form may not have reached the intended targets, as they had not seen it. The Director for Education Services agreed to investigate.

5. The timescale for the next recruitment round of Independent Review Panel members was not known. The Service Manager for Access, Inclusion and Participation would follow up with the relevant team.
6. In respect of recommendation 8 – improvement or replacement of Abbey Manor’s premises, the committee’s view was that fit-for-purpose accommodation should be a priority. The PRU had delivered improving results and attendance and needed accommodation that could help rather than hinder its offer.
7. Improved premises could also support a reduction in the use of expensive private provision. Place planning needed to be looked at alongside options for premises.

3.4 It was RESOLVED that:

1. the response from the Mayor and Cabinet regarding the Early Help savings proposal be received;
2. the response from the Mayor and Cabinet regarding the recommendations from the Exclusions Review be received;
3. the Director of Education Services will investigate why some governors had not received ethnic monitoring forms to complete; and
4. the Service Manager for Access, Inclusion and Participation will liaise Governance Support officers regarding the recruitment of Independent Review Panellists.

**4. Children's Social Care budget including staffing, fostering, sufficiency strategy**

4.1 Lucie Heyes, Director of Children’s Social Care, introduced the item and highlighted the links between the placements, salaries and S17 Family Support budgets, for example a reduction in placements may result in increased pressure on Family Support.

4.2 Questions were invited from the panel and the following was noted:

1. Foster carers need convincing that Lewisham is as good an employer as independent fostering agencies (IFAs). Many subscribe to the myth that IFAs are better to work for, despite the fact that Lewisham pays competitively.
2. Lewisham would have to do a lot of marketing to encourage foster carers to move in-house, and a fee would be payable to the IFA if existing foster carers were to make the switch.
3. The service has difficulty attracting foster carers for older children. Often, the reasons for older children being taken into care include violence and gang involvement, which requires foster carers with specific skills and experience.
4. The recent inspection judgement outcome had been in line with the service’s self-assessment, and confirmed that no radical change of direction was needed. The department was 1 year into a 3 year plan.
5. The 3 year improvement plan would be looked at in more detail at a future meeting.
6. Some 80% of Lewisham’s case-holding social workers are permanent members of staff, which is considered good for London.
7. Plans were in motion to convert some senior social workers to a more senior role, which would come with a pay uplift and would be good for career planning. This was easier to do than having to rescale existing posts.

8. This conversion was expected to cost £120,000 per annum for 20 social workers each receiving an additional c. £6,000 per annum.
9. Creating career progression opportunities was considered key to attracting good staff as people tend to move for promotion, not to do like for like. The progression would be social worker → senior social worker → advanced practitioner, and the intention was to put this in place by March 2020.
10. The service was also looking at pay benchmarking, affordability and caseload workforce supervision, as well as salary.
11. Some 71% of Lewisham's children looked after population was aged between 10-18, and this included older children coming into care as well as those who have been in care for some time, and may not need to be in care anymore. Stable placements for older children in long term care do get reviewed but family circumstances tend not to be looked at. The service needed to get better at doing this as in some cases it may be safe for the child to return to their family. This would need sensitive and careful long-term management.
12. Additional resource was needed to deliver the improvement plan and discussions were taking place through the finance board. Members asked that detail be provided to a future meeting on what the cost over 3 years would be to make the improvements necessary for the service to receive a 'Good' rating.
13. The Cabinet Member for School Performance and Children's Social Care reminded the committee that just 18 months ago, the service had a £12.5m overspend. The budget had since been stabilised and the council was committed to reducing the amount of spending on placements. Ofsted had noted the progress and the improvements now needed to pick up the pace. He also highlighted that around 20% of the council's general fund was spent on 500 children looked after, care leavers and the associated support and preventative work.
14. The Children's Social Care casework recording system had been delivered on time and to scope, however the system had experienced some instability. A fix had been implemented but it was too early to tell whether this would be sufficient to improve system stability.
15. IT support was not available out of hours to support the Emergency Duty Team.
16. Pressure on the salary budget was expected to increase next year, and to be covered by additional funds being set aside under the Spending Review.

4.3 It was RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted;
2. more information be provided at a future meeting on the cost implications of delivering the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan.

## 5. SEND Strategy

5.1 Claudia Smith –Head of Integrated Services for Special Educational Needs and Disability (Interim), Sue Stocks – Parent Participation Officer, Lewisham Parent and Carer Forum and Nilan Salih – Parent Representative, Lewisham Parent and Carer Forum introduced the report and invited comments and questions from the committee.

5.2 It was noted:

1. That there had been a problem with the report formatting that meant that words had been 'chopped off' making it difficult to read. The Scrutiny Manager would circulate a legible copy by email following the meeting.
2. Reference to supporting those with "dual diagnosis" should be broadened to "dual and multiple diagnosis".
3. Lewisham Autism Support was being funded to provide early support. This support should be extended to cover all SEND, not just ASD.
4. The increase in EHCPs was in line with other local authorities and was attributable in part to the 2014 reforms that extended the age range to include those age 19-25.
5. There had been a sizeable increase in under 5s with EHCPs, which followed the national trend.
6. Where a child needed SEND support, some schools were easier to engage with than others. The SEND Advisory Services had been working directly with schools with pupils receiving SEND Support but without an EHCP. Feedback had been positive but this was work in progress. Data was being analysed to identify where additional support to schools was needed.
7. It was not necessary to apply for an EHCP through the school, but it was helpful to have the school on side.
8. The Parent/Carer Forum can play a role in supporting relationships between parents/carers and schools.
9. The SEND Advisory Service keeps a list of schools that it is concerned about.
10. Councillor Holland requested further information, to be provided outside the meeting, on the SALT offer to Children's Centres
11. Extending SEND provision and resource bases in mainstream and special schools, and promote the Lewisham SEND offer and success of Lewisham schools was part of the mitigation plan to reduce the overspend.
12. Lewisham ASD figures appear high when compared to other boroughs. This was thought to be due to differences in classification.
13. The SEND Advisory Services is working with schools to prevent exclusions, playing a key role in improving attendance and attainment of children receiving SEN Support.
14. Improved efficiency and earlier intervention were key to achieving improvements within the resource envelope.
15. Members requested that monitoring and evaluation statistics relating to implementation of the strategy be shared with the Committee.
16. An email from Kevin Mantle, Parent Governor Representative for Special Schools, was tabled.
17. Members, referring to proposals to restructure the current scrutiny arrangements, stressed the need for specialist scrutiny of the SEND Strategy, and their support for the CYP Select Committee to remain a standing scrutiny function.
18. Officers had completed a sufficiency strategy to identify gaps in provision by looking at where children were going out of borough because of needs that could not be met in the borough.

5.3 It was RESOLVED that

1. the report be noted;
2. Monitoring and evaluation statistics relating to implementation of the strategy would be shared with the Committee; and

3. an update on the SALT offer to Children's Centres be provided to Councillor Holland after the meeting.

## **6. Select Committee work programme**

- 6.1 The Chair noted his disappointment that the provisional secondary results were not available in time for the meeting. Officers explained that this was outside their control as the results were due to be released nationally the following day.
- 6.2 Officers were asked why the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board annual review for 2018-19, which was due to have been considered before the summer recess, had yet to be presented to the committee. Officers gave assurances that the report was ready and would be circulated imminently.
- 6.3 The time being 9:30pm, it was **MOVED, SECONDED** and **RESOLVED** that Standing Orders be suspended for 10 minutes to allow for the completion of Committee business.
- 6.4 After a brief discussion, it was noted that:
  1. If the provisional results revealed anything of note, a briefing would be prepared and circulated by email.
  2. A population needs assessment in respect of the Early Help Review had yet to be provided.
  3. Members requested a briefing on the Children's Centres contract extension and a chance to discuss the Youth Centre Contract.
  4. The Youth Centre Contract was due to be let in either December or January.
  5. One Member expressed frustration at the designation of reports as "Information Items", meaning it would not be discussed. The Chair clarified that Members were free to discuss any item on the agenda but that no officer would be present for Information Items.
- 6.5 The work programme was considered and the following was agreed:
  1. Move "Provisional school results" to December
  2. Move "Children's Social Care Improvement Plan" to January
  3. Add "Early Help Review" to January
  4. Move "Exclusions from school – in-depth review follow up" to March.
- 6.6 It was **RESOLVED** that the following changes be made to the work programme:
  5. Move "Provisional school results" to December
  6. Move "Children's Social Care Improvement Plan" to January
  7. Add "Early Help Review" to January
  8. Move "Exclusions from school – in-depth review follow up" to March.

## **7. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet**

None.

The meeting ended at 9.35 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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