

# MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 28 June 2017 at 7.15 pm

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Councillor Joyce Jacca and Hilary Moore

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Paul Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), Emma Aye-Kumi, Kate Bond (Head of Standards & Achievement), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access Inclusion and Participation), Warwick Tomsett (Head of Targeted Services and Joint Commissioning), Ann Wallace (Service Manager, Children with Complex Needs) and Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People) (London Borough of Lewisham)

For a full attendance record at the joint session, please see the records of the Public Accounts Select Committee's meeting on 28 June 2017.

## 1. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2017

That the minutes of the meeting on the 19 April be agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

## 2. Declarations of interest

There were none from Members of Public Accounts Select Committee nor from the Children and Young People Select Committee for the joint section of the meeting (Item 4). For declarations for the remainder of the Public Accounts Select Committee, please refer to the record of that meeting.

Cllr Jacq Paschoud declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 6 as a Trustee of the Ravensbourne Trust as well as Brent Knoll and Watergate Schools.

Kevin Mantle declared an interest in the same item as Trustee of Signal, which provides support for families with autistic members in Lewisham.

Cllr John Paschoud declared a non-pecuniary interest due to his wife, Cllr Jacq Paschoud, holding office as detailed above.

## 3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

3.1 The Committee heard that:

- the Transition Working Party would meet again in November to consider feedback and the result of Self-Evaluation Forms from schools to assess

how successful the new transition arrangements had been and where improvements could be made.

- Conisborough College and Deptford Green would open their IT Suites to parents completing secondary applications.

### 3.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the responses be received.

## **4. School Budgets**

4.1 The order of the agenda was amended to accommodate the joint session. This item was considered first.

4.2 Councillor Hilton opened the meeting and nominated Councillor Sorba as the Chair of the joint session.

4.3 Dave Richards (Group Finance Manager, Children and Young People) introduced the report. The following key points were noted:

- The main thing that would affect school funding in the coming few years was the proposed introduction of the national fair funding formula by central government.
- The formula was due to be introduced in April 2018.
- When proposals for the new formula were introduced, it was anticipated that Lewisham schools would lose a significant amount of funding.
- The government had previously committed to protecting the worst affected schools by ensuring that no school would lose more than 3% of its annual budget.
- Under the original proposals every one of Lewisham schools was at the 3% funding floor.
- Since the policy was announced, the general election had taken place and in their manifestos all parties had committed to providing more funding for schools.
- The day before the meeting, government ministers had recommitted to introducing the national funding formula in parliament. However, they also said that no school would lose out under the formula.
- There were currently no additional details about how this amendment to the original funding formula would work in practice, nonetheless, Lewisham schools would likely be in a better position in the next few years than had been anticipated.
- Schools were also facing significant cost pressures. These pressures had been mounting over the past two years and had risen to nearly 5% of schools' budgets. Schools' funding settlements had also been frozen, meaning that schools had faced a real terms loss due to inflationary pressure.
- Cost pressures, salary and non-pay inflation in the next two to three years would amount to approximately 8% of schools' budgets.
- There remained a great deal of uncertainty about the future of school funding. Clarity was not expected on the next steps for the national funding formula until the end of 2017.

4.4 Dave Richards, Sara Williams (Executive Director for Children and Young People) and Kate Bond (Head of Standards and Inclusion) responded to questions from the committees. The following key points were noted:

- Further detail was awaited on the new proposals for the schools funding formula. It was expected that the majority of any new money would be paid to schools that would have benefitted from the original proposals but that this would be achieved without taking funds from schools that would have lost out.
- The new system meant there would be much less discretion for local authorities. The original intention for the new formula was that the funding would be provided directly from the Department for Education to Schools.
- There was a possibility that the figure of the 8% cost pressure could increase if there were changes in government policy. For example, there had recently been discussions about ending the public sector pay freeze.
- Additional work had been carried out with schools to prepare them for the difficult financial climate in the coming years. As a result, a number of schools had improved their financial management processes, resulting in some underspends.
- The aggregate school balances held by Lewisham schools had unexpectedly increased in the past year.
- Schools were facing a very challenging financial climate and a number of schools were overspending on their budgets each year.
- Schools were liable to pay business rates but they were provided with full funding for rates through their budget. Schools were given an increase in funding to cover the cost of any increased rates.
- The money to pay for business rates was 'top sliced' from the dedicated schools grant before this money was paid to schools. In the previous year, combined business rates for school had increased by £300k to £3.6m.
- It was recognised that while the quality of new school environments was good, schools with private finance initiative (PFI) buildings had some constraints on the availability of premises for extracurricular activities.
- The Council had good arrangements to get the best possible deal with PFI operators.
- The schools forum and the Mayor had agreed to cap the cost of PFI arrangements to 10% of a school's budget, which was roughly the same as the benchmark for facilities management and maintenance costs in all schools.
- PFI was a legacy of the school building programme by central government.
- There were ways in which schools could raise income - but these tended to be for extra activities, rather than a contribution to their core budget.
- The Department for Education's forecast that schools could save significant amounts from improved efficiency and procurement was probably optimistic.
- Schools working together could make savings. In Lewisham there was a well-managed schools catering contract. A number of schools who

had left the combined contract had re-joined, alongside some schools from neighbouring boroughs.

- A review of traded services to schools had been carried out (alongside comparison with the cost for traded services in other boroughs) to ensure they were good value.
- Work was also carried out with school business managers to encourage them collaborate in order to reduce spending.
- Schools were also provided with benchmarking information about their non-salary costs to assist with their decision making.
- There had been significant changes to the funding for early years. In the past different local authorities had had different systems for funding early years. The government had brought in new rules about funding.
- Under the government's previous proposals - school based early years provision would have lost significant amounts of funding.
- However, central government had provided additional funding to protect local authority maintained nursery schools. It was not clear how long this protection would last.
- Lewisham also provided additional hours of early years education to children from deprived backgrounds. The rules had been changed, which meant that in future, the Council will no longer be able to provide additional hours of support to these children beyond the statutory free offer.
- The changes to early years funding created additional funding pressure on schools with nursery provision and could be seen to devalue the work of early years education.
- The Council recommended that schools retained 2/3% of their budget for contingencies.
- Average salaries for teachers in Lewisham were seventh highest in the country. This was partly because of the inner London weighting. The rest of the top ten highest paying authorities in the country was probably made up of other London boroughs.

4.5 Councillor Maslin (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) responded to a question from the Committee about support provided to schools:

- Schools were provided with advice and training to help them better manage their budgets.
- Schools in deficit were lent money to enable them to manage their budgets in the short term - so that they could better balance their budgets.

4.6 Councillor Maslin also responded to a question from a member of the public about the current financial situation at Forest Hill School:

- The dispute between the National Union of Teachers and Forest Hill School was a matter for the school and its governors.
- Schools were funded by central government through the dedicated schools grant.
- The scheme of delegation for the dedicated schools grant was agreed by the schools forum, which was comprised of head teachers.

- Forest Hill school had overspent its budget by 10% and was now putting in place plans to manage down its deficit. The current cuts were a result of the requirement for the school to spend within its annual income.
- Statutory guidance was that schools should pay back loans from the local authority within three years, the Council had extended this to five years.
- There had been other schools in the same position as Forest Hill School who had taken difficult decisions to control their costs, so equity and transparency were important.
- Forest Hill School was a popular school and was in a better position to manage its budget than other schools that had been in a similar position but which did not have a full roll of pupils.
- Lewisham operated a different system to some local authorities regarding the liability for redundancy costs in schools. The approach being taken by the Council with Forest Hill School was consistent with the approach taken to date at other schools in Lewisham.
- He would be happy to meet with parents and the MP for Lewisham West and Penge. He would not meet with the school, the National Union for Teachers, parents and teachers from Forest Hill School to "broker a deal" because the Council was not in a position to do this.

4.7 RESOLVED: that the report be noted. The Public Accounts Committee also confirmed that it would be scrutinising the issue of private finance initiatives at a future meeting.

4.8 The Public Accounts Committee moved to room three for the remainder of its agenda

## **5. Recruitment and Retention - First Evidence Session**

5.1 The Scrutiny Manager introduced the report and welcomed James Kerr, NUT committee member and teacher at Sydenham School.

5.2 James Kerr, representing the NUT, circulated a copy of Coventry's Fair Workload Charter, and presented his views as follows:

- Recruitment problems were more acute in London than in the rest of the country due to the high cost of living.
- NUT members cited workload as the biggest issue, ahead of cost of living.
- According to a DfE survey in March 2016, some 82% of responses said that workload was unmanageable.
- Impossible workloads had a human cost to physical and mental health and to relationships both inside and outside of school.
- Teachers staying up late to mark were unlikely to perform to their best ability in the classroom.
- Teachers who were able to cope with their workload and have time and energy benefitted the children.
- Workloads were being driven up by:

- Accountability measures and pressure to meet targets performance related pay
- Class size
- Funding cuts
- False economies – cuts led to pressure on staff which led to higher absence which led to spending on cover
- Employment of consultants and PFI.
- While the local authority was not involved in the day to day running of schools, Mr Kerr felt that it could learn from other authorities.
- Coventry and Nottingham City Council had devised Fair Workload Charters (FWC) which served as a kite mark.
- A FWC in Lewisham would show that the local authority took recruitment and retention of school staff seriously.

5.3 A discussion followed in which the following points were noted:

- Excessive data collection was a contributing factor to increasing workloads. As many as 6-8 data sets per pupil per subject per year were being gathered. Too much focus on statistics meant that creative, interesting one-off staff were not being pushed out.
- Performance Related Pay and performance management targets within schools focused on staff outputs and not on the children, and added to workload.
- Increasing pupil numbers was also a factor, with some A-Level classes having close to 30 pupils.
- Mr Kerr did not believe the European Working Time Directive was being adhered to and warned that the council as the employer would be liable if a claim was made.
- The DfE data regarding working hours was across term time only. Hours would be much reduced in holidays, but there would still be some work required in the holidays.
- Mr Kerr highlighted two tasks which, in his opinion, were not a productive use of time, namely photographing children participating in activities and preparing end of year reports. It was Mr Kerr's view that if an activity did not benefit the child then stopping it could be an easy workload win.
- However, there was support among parents and school governors for both photographs and reports.
- It was highlighted that in England teachers work 20% longer than in other OECD countries, but spend the same amount of time in class.
- Some staff 'churn' was good as it meant that staff were developing and moving on.

5.4 **RESOLVED:**

1. That the report and the evidence of James Kerr be noted.
2. That officers liaise with Teach First to establish what data they could provide that would be helpful to the review.

The time being 9:20pm, it was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Committee business to continue.

## **6. SEND provision, including ASD, transport, short breaks**

6.1 Warwick Tomsett and Ann Wallace presented the report. The committee heard that since the report had been written, officers had been working with Drumbeat to find alternative options to delivering the extended services provision. Current provision will continue into the autumn term until a decision is reached. The report to Mayor and Cabinet that had been scheduled for consideration in July will be postponed.

6.2 The Chair invited Nigel Kersey, a parent of a child at Drumbeat, to address the committee. Mr Kersey presented parental impact statements to the committee. He explained that the impact statements, while harrowing, were typical of the experiences of the parents using the extended services provision. Mr Kersey stressed the need for the council to offer alternative specialist after school and full-day holiday provision to enable parents to work.

6.3 A discussion followed and the following was noted:

- The importance of the provision on families is fully understood.
- Many families known to the council will still get provision through the short breaks service.
- Those not currently known to the council could be assessed upon request.
- Other special schools in the borough do not have after school and holiday clubs available to them despite working with children with the same or higher level of need, and parity of access was a consideration for the council.
- The hourly running cost of Drumbeat was almost double that of Rockbourne of Ravensbourne, both of which work with children with similar needs. This needs to be considered when exploring alternative models of service.
- Between April 2016 and June 2017 the number of children receiving school transport reduced by 60. A very small number of appeals had been successful.
- The council is not looking at whether the reduced transport was placing additional pressure on after school provision.
- Some parents felt that the Lewisham guidance on travel assistance for special educational needs was ambiguous when read in conjunction with the statutory guidance, particularly as regards distance criteria. Officers noted this but are clear that the Lewisham policy incorporates the statutory guidance and does not conflict with it.
- KS4 was not currently provided for at New Woodlands School (SEMH). There were plans to move the primary PRU so a new site to enable the provision of KS1-4 at New Woodlands. The site of the new primary PRU was yet to be decided.
- More work needed to be done to understand employment and higher education outcomes for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- There were concerns that Cyberzone demand may be artificially low due to its low profile.

#### 6.4 **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

### 7. **Attendance and Exclusions Annual Report**

7.1 Ruth Griffiths presented the report. Officers were pleased to advise that exclusions had reduced by 30-40% from June 2016. The following was noted in discussion:

- Persistent absence was higher than the national average.
- Officers were working with families where attendance dropped below the 15% target.
- Absence from school was often a symptom of neglect and parental addiction and therefore acting early to get a Team Around the Child (TAC) was necessary.
- Attendance rates for Looked After Children (LAC) were better than ever thanks to attendance monitoring through Welfare Call.
- The ethnicity of the excluded pupils was proportionate to the overall pupil population.
- Permanent exclusion was not used in cases of persistent absence. Instead a range of interventions was employed to support children in that situation.
- 13 out of the 46 permanent exclusions were either entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) or their entitlement to FSM was 'not known'.
- The aspiration was to reduce exclusions but no defined target existed.
- Managed moves had worked extremely effectively to avoid exclusion and give pupils a fresh start.

#### 7.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

### 8. **Work Programme report**

8.1 The Scrutiny Manager introduced the work programme. The Committee heard that:

- Visits to Haberdasher Aske's Hatcham College and to Nottingham had been arranged for the purposes of gathering evidence for the in-depth review of recruitment and retention of school staff. Members were invited to attend.
- Due to the timing of the visits, evidence for the in-depth review would not be available in time for the second evidence session in July.
- Officers had requested that an additional item – Lewisham Learning Partnership – be added to the work programme for consideration at the July meeting.

8.2 **RESOLVED:** that

1. The work programme report be noted.
2. The second evidence session for the in depth review of recruitment and retention be postponed until September and the final report until November.
3. An additional item “Lewisham Led Partnership” be added to the work programme for consideration at the July meeting.

**9. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet**

No referrals were made.

The meeting ended at 10.47 pm

Chair:

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Date:

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