

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 October 2018 at 7.00 pm

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

ALSO PRESENT: Sara Williams (Executive Director, Children and Young People, Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Jackie Jones (Service Manager for School Improvement and Intervention), David Austin (Head of Corporate Resources), Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for School Performance), Liz Brooker (Road Safety & Sustainable Transport Manager), Catherine Bunten (Commissioning Manager), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access Inclusion and Participation), Matthew Henaughan (Service Manager, School Place Planning), Simon Moss (Service Group Manager, Highways and Transport) and Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2019

- 1.1 The minutes were approved subject to the following amendments:
- 1.2 Cllr Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for School Improvement, was in attendance.
- 1.3 At paragraph 7.2.1 after “outcomes” add “and impact”.
- 1.4 The committee heard the following matters arising from the minutes:
 - The timescale for the CAMHS report that was being drafted by Cllr Holland had slipped (through no fault of Cllr Holland) but was expected to be available in time for the 6 December meeting.
 - The secondary exam results, which had yet to be validated, would be circulated to the committee offline on a confidential basis.
 - Officers had investigated the previously reported high rate of fixed term exclusions from the borough’s special schools and discovered a grave administrative error in the reporting system of New Woodlands school which had erroneously inflated the figures. In 2017/18 a total of 59 sessions had been missed through fixed term exclusions from Lewisham’s special schools, and not 164 as recorded on www.gov.uk. The committee would be provided with a full set of accurate figures in due course. Officers gave assurances that the school was working to rectify the recording error and prevent similar inaccuracies going forward.

RESOLVED that the minutes be signed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings subject to the following amendments:

Add Cllr Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for School Improvement, to the list of attendees.

“7.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. Members felt the overview was helpful but wanted more information to help the committee understand the balance between different provision, for example, enabling parents back into work and child development. To do this the committee would need precise information on outcomes and impact, including levels of support available, the number of families using children’s centres, etc. More detail would be needed to feed into the next contract.”

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 Members declared the following interests:

Councillor John Paschoud declared the following interests relevant to the consideration of Item 4 – Budget Cuts:

- member of the Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL) children and young people steering group in a personal capacity, and not as a representative of Lewisham council
- Lewisham’s representative on the London Road Safety Council.

Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared an interest relevant to Item 4 – Budget Cuts. She is a Trustee of the Ravensbourne Project and of the Brent Knoll and Watergate Trust.

Councillor John Paschoud also declared his spouse’s interests, as described above.

Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin declared an interest in respect of Item 8, as the Council’s representative on the board of Youth First.

Kate Ward, parent-governor representative for secondary schools, declared an interest in respect of Item 4 – Budget Cuts, RES19 School Crossing Patrol. Kate is the Vice Chair of Governors of the Leathersellers Federation, which includes the Prendergast schools.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

None due.

4. Budget cuts

4.1 David Austin, Head of Corporate Resources, introduced the report and highlighted which proposals had been allocated to the committee for scrutiny, namely CYP 1-5. CYP 7 and RES 19. The Chair asked that the committee also consider proposal COM 12 – Cut to Main Grants budget as some of the organisations in receipt of Main Grants funding were providing support for families, children and young people. The committee was advised that whereas COM 12 had been allocated to Overview and Scrutiny to scrutinise on account of its crossing cutting nature, there was nothing to prevent this committee from considering the proposals.

- 4.2 The Chair invited Mark Drinkwater, Policy and Communications Officer for Voluntary Action Lewisham (VAL) – an organisation currently in receipt of main grant funding – to address the committee.
- 4.3 Mr Drinkwater explained that around 10 years ago a fully funded children and young people-specific post was set up within. This post was currently vacant and the work split between a number of staff. He advised that the reduction of Main Grants funding would result in the loss of this work, impacting on several hundred groups. At the current level of funding, VAL was able to provide governance advice, run a quarterly CYP forum, offer safeguarding and generic training etc. Mr Drinkwater anticipated that the loss of this funding would mean a reduction in staff.
- 4.4 The committee was of the view that more data was needed for the committee to fully consider the impact on VAL if this proposal were to be approved.
- 4.5 The Chair thanked Mr Drinkwater for his input.
- 4.6 The Committee scrutinised the remaining proposals and the following was noted:
1. The risks associated with CYP 1-5 were to do with failure to deliver the savings rather than providing a lesser service. Increased demand and inflated unit costs had driven the need for greater efficiency.
 2. Officers were reminded to have in mind the cumulative loss of early help services through previous budget cuts, citing school nursing as an example.
 3. Members felt that CYP 1, 2, 3 and 5 were aspirational and had concerns about their deliverability.

CYP 1 – More efficient use of residential placements

4. This was an efficiency saving rather than a cut. Outcomes for children and quality of provision would remain unchanged, rather block purchasing and smarter working with providers would result in reduced costs.
5. A breakdown of placements by ethnicity would be supplied in the Children's Social Care Sufficiency Strategy, which was scheduled for consideration by the committee at a later date.

CYP 2 – Improved placement process and more efficient systems with rigorous control through operating model and IT

6. Members were not convinced that the current IT arrangements had capacity to offer the support needed to deliver this proposal.

CYP 3 – Systematic and proactive management of the market for independent fostering

7. The needs of the child would be at the forefront of any decision making. If a child was thriving or was highly vulnerable, it would not be appropriate to move them. Independent Reviewing Officers provided an additional protection for children/ young people's rights.
8. The council has a contract with CORAM to advocate for young people.

9. This proposal would impact in 2020/21 whereupon the committee would be able to scrutinise the impact.
10. Currently all residential accommodation and independent fostering was outsourced to external providers. Moving to in-house fostering would be a cheaper option, without resulting in lesser quality placements.

CYP 4 – Commission semi-independent accommodation for care leavers

11. This was already happening therefore Members had some confidence in the deliverability of this proposal.

CYP 5 – Residential framework for young people – Joint South East London Commissioning Programme

CYP 7 – Early Help Redesign

12. This would result in reconfiguring existing provision for £800,000 less.
13. Members expressed concern that without detail of what the redesigned service would look like, they could not properly considering the cut.
14. The proposals to cut Early Help were made reluctantly but reflected the reality of local government budget cuts. Compared to other boroughs, Lewisham had done well to protect its services as much as it had.
15. The committee was not being asked to take a view on the impact of this proposal not, but needed to be aware that there would be a service reduction.
16. The overall early help budget currently stood at around £5m.
17. There was concern that cuts to early help services would lead to greater cost pressures than the value of the cuts further down the line, for example in acute services.
18. Members felt that this proposal was at odds with the projected increase in demand for services.

RES 19 – School crossing patrol

- 4.7 Simon Moss - Service Group Manager, Highways & Transport summarised the proposal.
- 4.8 In response to questions from the committee it was noted that:
 1. it was not possible to deliver school crossing patrols as a volunteer-led service. This had been tried elsewhere and successfully challenged by the union.
 2. 28 staff would be affected by this cut of which most would be women rather than men. Many staff would have protected characteristics as they spanned a range of ages and ethnicities, the oldest being 81 years old. 21 patrol staff were white, and 7 were BAME.
 3. Members felt strongly that cutting the patrol would conflict with the council's objectives around reducing obesity, improving road safety, improving air quality.
 4. Members also felt that the loss of the patrol could have more impact on disadvantaged families whose children were more likely to take themselves to school at a younger age in primary school. Even within more affluent

areas, it was suggested that the more disadvantaged children would be more likely to be affected in this way.

5. The committee heard that provision of a school crossing patrol was a condition of planning permission for at least one school, and therefore to remove the patrol would breach the permission.
6. Although green man crossings could be successful on main roads, crossing staff were 'eyes and ears' in the community having been trained in counter terrorism and child protection.
7. The committee rejected all options on the basis that:
 - a. The dangers of a reduced service outweighed any benefit
 - b. To do so would be to breach council objectives
 - c. No increased risk of harm to a child was acceptable
 - d. Planning permission would be breached as a result.

4.9 It was RESOLVED that a referral be made to Mayor & Cabinet via PAC to inform them that:

CYP 1: More efficient use of residential placements

CYP 3: Systematic and proactive management of the market for independent fostering

CYP 5: Residential framework for young people – Joint South East London Commissioning Programme

The Committee noted the proposals, and supported them in principle, but was concerned that that the savings were aspirational rather than deliverable.

CYP 2: improved placement process and more efficient systems with rigorous control through operating model and IT

The Committee was not satisfied that the shared IT service had the capacity to support the intended process improvements, and therefore considered that the saving would be unachievable.

CYP 4: Commission semi-independent accommodation for care leavers

The Committee felt more positively about this proposal as there had to date been some success in achieving better value for money in commissioning semi-independent accommodation for care leavers.

CYP 7: Early Help Redesign

The Committee noted the proposal but feared that cuts to early help services would result in greater cost pressures elsewhere that would exceed the value of the saving.

The Committee was unable to properly assess the impact of the cut without information on what the redesigned service would look like. No such information had been supplied.

RES 19: School Crossing Patrol

The committee rejected all options outlined in the proposal in the strongest terms, citing the following reasons:

- *Any increased road safety risk to children was unacceptable*
- *The service enables older primary children and families to walk to school. Removal of this support could result in more car journeys to school, which would negatively impact on delivery of the council's road safety, air quality and public health objectives*
- *Removal of the school crossing patrol would result in a breach of planning conditions in at least one instance that the committee knows of.*
- *Loss of the school crossing patrol would likely impact disproportionately on various groups with characteristics protected under the Equalities Act.*

4.10 The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm for 5 minutes to allow a brief comfort break.

5. In-depth review: exclusions from school - first evidence session

- 5.1 The committee heard evidence from Ruth Griffiths, Service Manager – Access, Inclusion and Participation relating to the legal framework and the role of schools, head teachers, governing bodies and the local authority in relation to exclusions, and verbal evidence from Geeta Subramaniam-Mooney, Head of Public Protection and Safety, of a recent visit to Glasgow. A summary of this evidence is attached to these minutes.
- 5.2 Committee was also shown a short video excerpt providing an insight into the work of a nurture room in a Glasgow school.
- 5.3 The committee discussed the evidence put forward by the Service Manager – Access, Inclusion and Participation and noted the following:
1. There was no easy way of establishing whether off-rolling was happening in a school but some things could be used as an indicator, such as high levels of elective home education (EHE).
 2. Ofsted was focusing on off-rolling when inspecting schools. Robust systems were in place in Lewisham to minimise the risk of off-rolling, such as preventing young people being removed from school to be electively home educated in Year 11, tracking Y11 pupils.
 3. In most cases EHE was not about coercion from the school but families wanting to try something different for their child. Therefore Ofsted was concerned with looking at whether EHE was in the child's interests or the school's ie to improve exam results.
 4. Around 80% of the 380 Child Missing from Education (CME) cases were closed very quickly.
 5. Managed moves could be arranged between schools, through the Fair Access Panel (FAP), and could be arranged with schools out of the borough. Sometimes schools forget to report the move and therefore the information the council holds is not always accurate. Lewisham takes steps to track and support managed moves and would challenge a school if make students were leaving a particular school on a managed

move but that same school was not receiving pupils on a managed move.

6. As part of the exclusion process, parents are invited to the meeting of the governing body to make representations. They are allowed to bring a representative. The council is usually represented too. Both the school and the child/parents have the opportunity to make representations.
7. The placing of children on managed moves at primary school level is done forensically looking at numbers. For secondary pupils, the decision lies with the school. Schools are generally willing to take managed moves and therefore it has not been necessary to direct a Lewisham school to take a managed move.
8. Schools are expected to have started EHCP assessments for children at risk of exclusion to ensure that no underlying issues have been missed for children that find school difficult.

5.4 It was RESOLVED that the report and evidence be noted, and that further discussion be deferred until the next meeting.

5.5 It was MOVED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that standing orders be suspended to allow for the completion of committee business.

6. School place planning

6.1 Owing to the late running of the meeting, there was no introduction to this item. In the course of a brief discussion, the committee noted:

1. There are two pre-approved Free School bids for the borough; the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education sponsored 8 form of entry Secondary School (with autism unit), and the Harris Academy sponsored 3 form of entry Primary School. However sites have not been identified for either.
2. There was a surplus of secondary school places in Lewisham and more widely across London.
3. Members felt that a review of the whole school system was needed to ensure sufficient provision for the needs of children with social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) as well as those with additional needs relating to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), who were comparatively well provided for in Lewisham.
4. Mayor and Cabinet had approved decisions to extend provision for children with SLD at Watergate and Greenvale schools. There is also an expectation that Brent Knoll School will widen its scope to accommodate children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) as well as ASD to ensure a peer group for each child.
5. The council had recently reduced the number of Primary Place Planning Localities (PPPL) from 6 to 4 (as part of the 2017-22 Place Planning Strategy) to enable greater flexibility and equity in place planning across the borough, as well as providing Localities for schools to work together on a local level regarding admissions and place planning.

6.2 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Primary to Secondary Transition

7.1 The Service Manager – School Improvement and Intervention briefly introduced the report. The following was noted:

1. Recommendation 11 – primary schools were sharing all statutory information with secondary schools. However the additional booklet with pupil information about their likes/dislikes/hopes/fears etc had been stopped. This decision would be reviewed in 2019.
2. Recommendation 10 – anecdotally the Service Manager was aware of secondary school learning mentors or SENCOs attend TAF meetings. No concrete figures were available on uptake of this recommendation.
3. There was a typo in paragraph 5.12.1 of the report which should have read “Experience is showing that it is primary schools who are best places to help parents...” and not “nursery schools” as published.
4. Uptake of open days and open evenings had been huge this year.
5. ParentEngage had helped to arrange coffee mornings for secondary heads to talk to parents. This enabled parents to go into schools and see them at work.

7.2 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. Update on Youth First

8.1 Catherine Bunten, Service Manager - CYP Joint Commissioning, was in attendance.

8.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. One of the stated aims of the service was good geographical spread of youth provision. Some members felt there were areas, particularly in the east of the borough, that were lacking in provision as well as other areas that were dependent on use of independent sites.
2. Officers were encouraged to think about the kind of provision that 16-18 year olds would use, such as space to do homework. It was felt that youth provision for this age group played an important role in diverting young people from care and therefore falling user numbers indicated that the provision was not meeting young people’s needs, rather than not provision not being necessary.
3. Officers were also urged to provide more information on impact and outcomes, for example, employment, signposting, young people’s views. Members of the committee felt that more information on impact was needed to justify the proposed funding levels for this non-statutory service in the current economic climate.
4. The committee requested more data on usage by young people with disabilities.
5. The committee praised the work and commitment of Mervyn Kaye and Youth First staff.
6. The committee supported the proposed extension of the Youth First to 2020.
7. The committee requested more data on disability.
8. More information would be provided in the Youth First/ Futures report.

8.3 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. Select Committee work programme

9.1 This item was not discussed, given the late running of the meeting. The Committee noted that addition of an item for the next meeting on cuts to the Health Visiting Service.

9.2 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted and that an item on cuts to the Health Visiting Service be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

10. Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

No referral were made to Mayor & Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.55 pm

Chair:

Date:
