

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 16 March 2022 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair), Hilary Moore, Jack Lavery and Jacq Paschoud, and Monsignor Nicholas Rother (Catholic Church Representative)

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillors Colin Elliott and Octavia Holland, and Clive Caseley (Parent Governor - Secondary Schools)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Liz Johnston-Franklin and Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance), and Rev Erica Woof (CofE Representative)

ALSO PRESENT: Pinaki Ghoshal (Executive Director for Children & Young People), Angela Scattergood (Director of Education Services, Education Standards and Inclusion), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager, Access, Inclusion and Participation), Sandra Roberts (Director Lewisham Learning), Vicky Rogers (Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) and Beate Hellawell (Scrutiny Manager)

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 26 January 2022 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising:

1.1 The Chair confirmed that an informal visit to a Nurture provision took place on Tuesday 1 February 22 at Forster Park Primary School. The Nurture provision is a time-limited intervention where children learn about emotional regulation and where specialist activities are provided to encourage school readiness. Members commented that the visit was an inspiring experience and that the provision was especially important where home life is challenging for children. It would be useful to have Nurture introduced in many other schools.

1.2 An informal virtual meeting with some apprentices took place on 10 February 22. It was very encouraging to hear the positive feedback around placements and the support they were receiving. Unfortunately, in the current climate there aren't enough job opportunities for all apprentices to then move into permanent employment.

1.3 An informal meeting with the Young Mayor and her advisors took place on Monday 21 February 22. Members commented on the positive impact the new temporary unit in the Lewisham Shopping Centre had. The young people were urging the committee to find ways to further develop meaningful participation opportunities. Members of the committee also learned about some of the initiatives young people were leading on, including an example where students from

Sydenham School were linking with Forest Hill School to explore issues around respect.

1.4 The chair confirmed that following a request from the committee, two virtual meetings were offered to all ward councillors to be updated on the Play Strategy. It was fascinating to learn about the breadth of the review beyond youth clubs and adventure playground provisions and there will be opportunities at future meetings to further scrutinise proposals.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Sorba declared an interest in item 5 as he is a member of the SLAM Trust.

3. Responses to referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

There were no responses.

4. Annual school standards report

4.1 Angela Scattergood, Director of Education and Sandra Roberts, Director Lewisham Learning introduced and summarised highlights of the report. Ruth Griffiths was also in attendance.

4.2 The following comments and clarifications were made in response to members' questions:

- i. Lewisham Learning focusses more time on the few schools in Lewisham that still require improvement (RI) according to current Ofsted judgements. All schools in this position have very clear targets overseen by a rapid improvement board and receive targeted support. Schools are very grateful for any support provided by Lewisham Learning and are fully engaged in the process. Due to delays in Ofsted inspections, interim reports on the school improvement journey are important evidence to consider.
- ii. Attainment data to be released for this academic year will need to be compared with the 2018/19 attainment data as no comparable data are available for the intervening years.
- iii. Reasons why Lewisham schools don't achieve similar results as many independent schools include differences in class size, availability of resources, quality of teaching and students' home life. It is also worth noting that the most recent teacher assessments might not have been as rigorous in independent schools and therefore make comparisons less favourable.
- iv. Children on SEN support have not made as good progress as those with EHCPs and this may be due to children with EHCPs generally having been in school during the national lockdowns.
- v. The attainment gap in secondary schools compared to neighbouring boroughs is not due to a specific area of concern. Identified issues vary from school to school and from year to year.
- vi. The significant gender attainment gap is being looked at, but it is a national issue. Teacher assessed grades seem to have contributed to the growing gap.

- vii. Whilst a number of children in Lewisham move to out of borough selective secondary schools, this year Lewisham had to find an additional 240 places to accommodate in-borough preferences.
- viii. Members of the committee commented that the equality of esteem between vocational qualifications and academic qualifications should be reflected in the way these achievements were reported.
- ix. Members commented on the excellent digital inclusion task and finish group report and its important recommendations.
- x. The forthcoming Lewisham Education Strategy will outline an updated school improvement framework focusing on peer-to-peer as well as evidence-informed support. The strategy will also focus on race, gender and other equalities and is currently at the consultation stage with teachers and parents.
- xi. Members heard that all schools had a range of extra-curricular offers as this was now expected by Ofsted.
- xii. The chair thanked officers in attendance and other staff contributing to the report. It was encouraging to hear all the positive work that is taking place.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the report be noted.
- 2. That future committee meetings continue to receive regular school standards reports.

5. Children Social Care improvement plan

- 5.1 Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director Children & Young People's Services introduced the report. Vicky Rogers, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance was also in attendance.
- 5.2 The following comments and clarifications were made in response to members' questions:
 - i. The significant rise in demand for services is not out of step with other authorities. In Lewisham it has not resulted in an increased number of children being taken into care due to improved early intervention work. Rising demand has probably slowed down some improvement work as caseloads are currently higher than what best practice would suggest. Appointments of additional agency workers have been made and recruitment of many newly qualified social workers is a good long-term investment, although it may add additional pressure in the short term.
 - ii. The 2-bedded residential unit is intended for very vulnerable young people. It is deliberately only a very small unit and an investment to develop provision in Lewisham that avoids having to potentially move individuals into unregulated placements at extremely high costs. Members welcomed the establishment of a Lewisham-based provision.
 - iii. Signs of Safety continues to be developed as Lewisham's practice framework. There is a need for ongoing training for new members of staff and relevant training is also being rolled out to the Family Thrive service. There is additionally a need to develop a bespoke approach for looked after children.

- iv. Connected Carers is part of the sufficiency strategy. Family conferencing approaches are used to try to facilitate a solution for the child or young person within the extended family and friendship network.
- v. Decisions whether children come in or out of care is overseen by the court, not the local authority. The court system is slow at the moment and this means that some decisions might be delayed.
- vi. The chair thanked the presenting officers for the positive trajectory outlined in the report and noted how highly the committee has valued the contribution Lucie Heyes, Director of Children Social Care has made to this.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That future committee meetings continue to receive regular updates of the improvement journey.

6. CYP Select Committee work programme report

- 7.1 The Chair introduced the report and requested that members make recommendations for the work programme of the future CYP select committee.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That future items to be considered at the CYP select committee should include reports on the ongoing CSC improvement journey; school standards; progress made in embedding race equality in schools; the impact of the Mental Health School Teams; the Education Strategy; and responses to the Climate Emergency in schools.
3. That there should be close scrutiny of the Play Strategy; regular reporting of progress made relating to the digital inclusion task and finish group recommendations as part of the schools standards report; and a regular item on school places, place allocation and preferences.
4. That further consideration should be given on how to facilitate the involvement of the Young Mayor and advisors in Council decision making processes.

7. Closing remarks

- 7.1 The chair concluded the meeting by thanking three outgoing members of the committee.

7.2 Cllr Octavia Holland was thanked as an advocate for Early Help and for mental health services and has personally contributed to increasing the popularity of secondary schools.

7.3 Cllr Colin Elliot had highlighted issues around elective home education (EHE) and his concern for digital inclusion is finally receiving the attention that it deserves.

7.4 Cllr Caroline Kalu was an important voice for homeless families and the enduring mission for race equality. She was also in regular attendance at site visits.

The meeting ended at 8:58pm

Chair:

Date:
