

# MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair), Colin Elliott, Octavia Holland, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Hilary Moore, Jacq Paschoud and Lionel Openshaw; and Lilian Brooks (Parent Governor - Primary Schools), Monsignor N Rotheron (Catholic Church Representative) and Clive Caseley (Parent Governor - Secondary Schools)

APOLOGIES: None.

ALSO PRESENT: David Austin (Director of Corporate Resources), Emma Aye-Kumi (Scrutiny Manager), Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance) (Cabinet Member), Councillor Bill Brown (Chair of Overview & Scrutiny), Councillor Sophie Davis (Vice Chair Overview & Scrutiny), Pinaki Ghoshal (Executive Director for Children & Young People), Matthew Henaughan (Community Resources Manager), Lucie Heyes (Assistant Director of Children's Social Care), Angela Scattergood (Director of Education Services, Education Standards and Inclusion), Salena Mulhere (Assistant Chief Executive), Charlotte Dale (Interim Overview and Scrutiny Manager) and Kathy Freeman (Executive Director for Corporate Resources)

## 1. Confirmation of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Manager opened the meeting and invited the committee to confirm the appointment of Cllr Luke Sorba as Chair and Cllr Caroline Kalu as Vice Chair.
- 1.2 It was RESOLVED that Cllr Luke Sorba be confirmed as Chair and Cllr Caroline Kalu as Vice Chair of the CYP Select Committee for the municipal year 2020-21.

## 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020

It was RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

## 3. Declarations of interest

It was RESOLVED that the following non-prejudicial interests be noted:

1. Cllr Jacq Pashoud is a Trustee of the Ravensbourne Project and a Trust Governor (not appointed by the local authority) of the Brent Knoll and Watergate Trust. Both bodies are short breaks providers within the borough.
2. Cllr Luke Sorba is a Lewisham council appointee to the Council of Governors for the South London and Maudsley Trust.
3. Cllr Liz Johnston-Franklin is the Lewisham Council representative on the Youth First Board.

#### **4. Responses to Referrals from this Committee to Mayor and Cabinet**

4.1 No responses were considered.

4.2 It was noted that a referral made by this committee regarding ICT provision had been considered by the Mayor and Cabinet after the agenda and papers for this meeting had been published. The response would be presented at the next meeting.

#### **5. Select Committee work programme**

5.1 The Scrutiny Manager invited Members to consider the draft work programme and in particular to consider whether to schedule any items in for January, which was currently blank.

5.2 Members made the following additional suggestions of topics for the work programme:

- Elective Home Education – there was concern that the pandemic had prompted an increasing number of families to home educate, and, particularly in the case of secondary age children, without the required skills and knowledge to do so effectively. It was suggested that this be included in the information report on unregulated education settings.
- SEND – transition between young people's and adults' services
- The effect of using Assessed Grades on post-GSCE and post-A Level destinations of children in Lewisham
- CAMHS – invite Norman Lamb, Chair of SLaM NHS Trust to address the committee.
- Young Mayor and Advisors consultation.
- BAME school attainment, including BAME representation on governing bodies.

5.3 Officers confirmed that whereas an internal restructure had brought the Youth Offending Service within the remit of the Children and Young People Directorate, scrutiny responsibility would remain with Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee. Members called for a closer relationship between the two committees to ensure that scrutiny by the two committees dovetails effectively. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Chair of Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee.

5.4 It was RESOLVED that:

1. The following topics would be added to the work programme:
  - a. BAME school attainment, including BAME representation on governing bodies
  - b. An information report on Elective Home Education, including unregulated educational settings
  - c. SEND – transitioning between young people's and adults' services
  - d. CAMHS – invite Norman Lamb, Chair of SLaM NHS Trust
  - e. An information report (not for discussion at a Committee meeting) on the impact of using Assessed Grades on post-GCSE and post-A level destinations of Lewisham children.
  - f. Young Mayor and Advisors consultation.

2. The Chair would write to the Chair of Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee to formally request that matters within the remit of that committee that affect children and young people, be jointly scrutinised.

## **6. Financial stabilisation - budget update and medium term plan**

6.1 David Austin, Director of Corporate Resources, introduced the item.

6.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. Members stressed the need for caution when considering cutting spending on preventative services.
2. COVID-19 and the recession was hitting families hard. The number of children eligible for Free School Meals had increased significantly since the start of the lockdown.
3. A balance needed to be struck between making cuts and cost shunting to other services.
4. Budget lines which were underspent were a result of COVID-19 preventing the delivery of some activities. On the whole, the service was overspent.
5. Universal services could not be considered less important than targeted services. Schools were given as an example of a crucial universal service.
6. One Member highlighted the problem of digital poverty and the need to address it, particularly if a second lockdown required schools to close or move to blended learning. Central Government funding for schools to buy additional IT equipment during the pandemic had been insufficient.

6.3 It was RESOLVED that

1. The report be noted
2. Officers be asked to note the views of the committee.

## **7. Children's Social Care Post Ofsted Report**

7.1 Lucie Heyes, Director for Children's Social Care, introduced the report.

7.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. Overall, services were improving although for 6 out of the 12 months since Ofsted last inspected, COVID-19 restrictions had been in place, which had slowed improvement.
2. By December 2020 it was expected that 85% of staff would be permanent employees. There was a live recruitment drive currently, and Members were encouraged to tweet about it to raise awareness.
3. The timeframe for a monitoring visit was unknown. Best guesses suggested it could be between January and April 2021, but it could happen at any time.
4. MASH thresholds had been raised due to COVID-19. These were being revised downwards but the intention was not to lower them to pre-COVID levels. Instead, a temporary Family Information and Support Service had been created to redirect families, where safe to do so, rather than to automatically escalate referrals to statutory services unnecessarily.

5. Corporate Parenting and services for Looked After Children had taken a back seat as there had been no permanent Head of Service **until recently**. Improvement in these areas needed driving forward.
6. There continued to be challenges with recruiting in-house foster carers.
7. Lack of suitable studio or 1 bedroomed independent accommodation for care leavers was placing a strain on the budget as many care leavers were having to take up semi-independent accommodation, which was costly.
8. Work was underway to better align Housing and Children's Social Care to reduce costs.
9. Two Members had questions specific to their casework. The Director of Children's Social Care invited them to email their queries directly to her after the meeting.
10. Members indicated that although scrutiny of Children's Social Care improvement was next scheduled for March, should additional stresses arise, or should there be an earlier Ofsted visit, additional scrutiny may be requested in the interim.

7.3 It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **8. Early Help presentation**

8.1 Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director for Children and Young People, made a short presentation and tabled a set of slides.

8.2 The following was noted in discussion:

1. One Member explained that, prior to the appointment of the current Executive Director for Children and Young People, they had repeatedly requested a joint service needs analysis (JSNA) for early years services but this had not happened.
2. The motivation behind broadening the Children's Centre offering to create Family Hubs was not financial. The intention was that the hubs would cater for families with children over 5 as well as under 5s. These hubs would be delivered from a range of community venues, potentially as a 'hub and spoke' arrangement.
3. The approach to wider family work was being informed by best practice from other boroughs and nationally.
4. Officers were working to a tight timetable and testing a range of scenarios with families.
5. One Member was concerned about progress to date with targeted youth. It was explained that work was needed to better define what 'targeted youth' meant. Officers were in discussion with Youth First and a session was arranged in October which would provide clarity, it was hoped. There was concern from Members that changes to the contract specification would be destabilising for Youth First.
6. It was AGREED that a meeting be arranged between the Chair, Vice Chair, Cllr Johnston-Franklin and the Executive Director for Children and Young People so that this could be discussed in more detail.
7. There were plans to create a steering group or coalition to include members of different BAME communities and statutory services including schools to work together to improve Black Caribbean academic outcomes and to address the

gross overrepresentation of Black Caribbean children – boys especially – in the criminal justice system.

8. Work had already started in schools to look at inequalities and racism in schools.
9. One Member requested that when COVID-19 restrictions allow, Member visits to hubs and other relevant site visits to look at best practice be arranged.

8.3 It was RESOLVED that:

1. A meeting be arranged between the Chair, Vice Chair, Cllr Johnston-Franklin and the Executive Director for Children and Young People to discuss Youth First and potential changes to contract specifications.
2. When COVID-19 restrictions permit, that Member visits to children and young people hubs both within Lewisham and examples of best practice elsewhere, be arranged.

The meeting ended at 9:15pm

Chair:

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Date:

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