

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EDUCATION BUSINESS PANEL

Present: Councillor Brown, Councillor Bernards, Councillor Campbell, Councillor Codd, Councillor Millbank, Councillor Powell, Councillor Muldoon, Councillor Sorba, Councillor John Paschoud

Also present: Councillor Bonavia

Apologies: Councillor Curran, Councillor Davis

1. Minutes

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record

2. Declarations of Interest

No interest were declared

3. Decisions made by the Mayor on February 10 2021

The consideration taken to Mayor & Cabinet was that of Lewisham Determined Admissions Arrangements 2022/23 - Nursery, Primary, and Secondary and Sixth Form Admissions arrangements for 2022/23.

Councillor Sorba, Chair of the Children and Young People's Select Committee presented this item. He discussed the consultation that took place before it went to decision- he asked whether it was usual for such a consultation to receive zero responses over the 6 week period. He questioned whether this was because the changes are routine, if the pandemic had distracted the stakeholders or was there something missing from the process that caused lack of commentary.

The Executive Director for Children and Young People responded that the uncontroversial changes and also where there were no significant changes being made may have been reasons for no comment or opposition to the consultation.

The matter of parents wanting to send their children to schools out of the borough was also raised. It was asked whether there had been any steps taken to encourage parents to keep their children in Lewisham borough schools. The Executive Director for CYP responded that there are less admission demands due to the pandemic. Some specific promotion had been done this year, particularly around secondary school admission. The advantages and strengths around Lewisham schools was highlighted and in the long term, this will increase further.

Regarding admission reductions, the Executive Director for CYP stated that the birth rate is going down in the borough and there is an uneven distribution across Lewisham, so the Council is in ongoing conversations without schools about the

planned number of admissions for schools. What is being done as far as possible is negotiating with schools, particularly in areas where there are dips or excess in numbers.

Councillor Sorba asked how the finances of Forest Hill School will be impacted by the changes, and to what extent is the result of the Referendum impacting the drop of demand. The Executive Director responded that it is difficult to speculate on the impact of Brexit on school places. One of the reasons Forest Hill was eager to reduce their pan was because they do not have a lot of excess places within the school with which they would not be operating at capacity if they did. The removal of excess capacity makes room for more efficient learning in the classroom within the school. If there is an increase in numbers within that part of the borough, the school has the capacity to educate more children, and at a later date it can increase its pan. The view that the government took was better to be close to full with a reduce pan and provide better learning than have excess places within the school. A co-opted Member pointed out that it was quite a reluctantly taken decision- decreasing capacity over time is not overall efficient but there is hope that after the pandemic things may look more ambitious.

The report was noted

The meeting finished at 7.25pm