

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE
Thursday, 25 November 2021 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Liz Johnston-Franklin, Jack Lavery and Hilary Moore, and Monsignor Nicholas Rothon (Catholic Church Representative) and Rev Erica Wooff (Church of England Representative)

ALSO JOINING THE MEETING VIRTUALLY: Councillors Caroline Kalu (Vice-Chair) and Octavia Holland

APOLOGIES: Councillors Maslin (ex-officio), Colin Elliott and Jacq Paschoud, and Clive Caseley (Parent Governor - Secondary Schools)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Chris Barnham (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and School Performance), Pinaki Ghoshal (Executive Director for Children & Young People), Angela Scattergood (Director of Education Services, Education Standards and Inclusion), Sara Raman (Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning, Children and Young People), Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager, Access, Inclusion and Participation), Matt Henaughan (Head of Business Infrastructure and Compliance), Spike van-der-Vliet-Firth (Jobs and Skills Programme Lead), John Bennett (Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships), 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 22 September 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 22 September 2021 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

The Chair formally welcomed Rev Erica Wooff as the newly co-opted Church of England representative.

Matters arising:

The Chair reminded the Committee that they had been invited to the forthcoming Housing Select Committee meeting on 9 December 21. The Committee will be considering an item on support for families with children in education impacted by homelessness in response to a suggestion earlier in the year from this Select Committee.

The Chair reported that there had been no initial response to an invitation for nominations for the Primary Parent Governor co-opted member to the Committee. The deadline had been extended to 3 December 2021 and the Committee would be kept updated.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr Hilary Moore declared an interest in Items 4 and 6 as she is the Mayor's representative on the Lewisham College Board.

Cllr Luke Sorba (Chair) declared an interest in Item 5 as he is a member of the Brent Knoll and Watergate Trust.

3. Responses to Referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

There were no responses.

4. Elective Home Education (EHE) Report

4.1 Ruth Griffiths (Service Manager for Access, Inclusion and Participation) introduced the report, which was summarising events and actions of the EHE service during the pandemic period up to August 2021. There had been a significant rise in the numbers of electively home educated (EHE) pupils, but this has now dropped back to steady numbers as families have become more comfortable again with sending their children to school. The EHE service has received a lot of support from the Attendance team to manage these Covid-related fluctuations. As well as Covid-related reasons for choosing EHE, there has been a rise in anxiety and mental health needs as stated reasons for withdrawing from schools. The EHE officer was able to effectively communicate with many families via WhatsApp or MS Teams during lockdown and this will be continued. Closer relationships with the SEN team, social care teams and Lewisham College in particular were also forged. One positive outcome is that more young people who are EHE can now complete their GCSEs in the borough. Another is that families are better supported to identify alternatives for post-16 education.

4.2 The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee:

1. A recently released report on EHE from the Association of Directors of Children Services highlighted that many families choose EHE for philosophical reasons or because of lifestyle choices, and this is likely to also be the case for some families in Lewisham. If there was a compulsory national registration process, it would be possible to ask for detailed reasons for choices made. The EHE service uses a questionnaire for the families they are in touch with regarding their motivations.
2. The LA doesn't operate a voluntary registration scheme, but schools are on board and notify the LA when families choose de-registration. Whilst there was no obligation to do so, it is hoped that private schools in the area know about the EHE service and will engage in notifications also.
3. It was suggested that the EHE service provide families with signposting information to the school nursing team and food banks run by local schools to ensure that EHE children and young people (CYP) have access to support. This would also address some of the safeguarding concerns. Although officers were sometimes able to signpost families to charities and other organisations who might be able to support families financially and practically, this was beyond the remit of the service and not always possible.
4. The service is aware that some of the CYP who are EHE are the most vulnerable and that EHE may be a diversion tactic where

behaviour, emotional wellbeing, attendance or the shadow of exclusion needs to be addressed. This is particularly the case where CYP are educated in out of borough schools. There are no available monitoring data that confirm how many of those who choose EHE have previously been on managed moves, have been excluded or were at risk of exclusion, but it was not believed to be a significant number. The service allocates most of their efforts to those vulnerable CYP, monitors their progress very closely and provides early interventions where possible, including by working with social care and the SEN team. Where a CYP leaves a school and then the family re-applies for a school place, the practice is to offer a place at the original school to pre-empt possible diversions.

5. Whilst some families provide exceptional quality of education, the LA has very little power to monitor and improve where this is not the case. Where there are significant concerns, enforced attendance proceeding can be put in place. The service also encourages families to network with each other for support and to share resources. Whilst remote technology has generated improved contact with families, this has not necessarily supported improved quality of education. A home visit is likely to be more effective and should be continued.
6. When families choose to EHE, it is made clear to them that there isn't a financial package available from the LA to support this decision and that costs, including for exams, need to be borne by the family.
7. The missing statistics on ethnicity on page 23 of the report should have highlighted that 20/21 figures state that there were 64 White British, 40 Black Caribbean, 27 Black African, 27 Black Other, 40 Unknown and 32 Information Yet to be Obtained records, as well as many smaller and overlapping categories. As the information has not yet been obtained for a significant number of CYP, it is difficult to complete a detailed or meaningful analysis. The information will also need to be mapped against the Lewisham school aged population in order to be useful, and this was requested by the Committee for future reports.
8. The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and the informed responses to questions and comments.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the EHE service considers some of the suggestions made by the Committee and that they will map EHE ethnicity data against school population data in future reports.
3. That the call for an over-due national register for EHE is endorsed by the Committee, emphasising that the devolved duties to LAs would need to be adequately funded by central government.

5. School Places Planning and Children going out of Borough Report

- 5.1 Matt Henaughan (Head of Business Infrastructure and Compliance) introduced the report which details the current position on pupil numbers

and mitigating action planned to address the current and projected oversupply of places as well as the high number of CYP with EHCPs educated outside the borough. It was pleasing to note that 100 additional first preferences for Lewisham Secondary schools were received in the most recent application round.

5.2 The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee:

1. Lewisham is still a 'high' exporter' of Secondary pupils, with around 35% of young people currently choosing schools mainly to the east and south of the borough boundaries, but this is a reducing percentage. The Committee welcomed this trend. Lewisham's experience is similar to some other authorities, for example Greenwich, whereas Bromley holds on to a large number of their pupils.
2. The falling roll in Primary schools is not going to be an issue for Secondary schools in the next few years and could be offset if the trend of more first-preferences for Lewisham Secondary schools continues. Schools are working hard to promote their offers of a comprehensive quality education.
3. The decline in the forecast number of school places began before the pandemic and Brexit, and it is too early to say if this will be a long-term drop or is of a more cyclical nature. It will need close monitoring.
4. There has been sustained activity to promote Lewisham schools to its residents. A dedicated communications officer identifies and promotes good news stories daily via social media and a new promotional video has been produced which can be shared with the Committee. The School Fair will be re-instated and the launch of the Lewisham Young Leaders Academy will further contribute to the drive to promote Lewisham schools for Lewisham's children. Cllr Holland was thanked for all the work she had done for promoting Lewisham schools. **Action:** Scrutiny Manager to send link of promotional video to Committee members.
5. There are currently a number of pilot projects to mitigate against the number of students with EHCPs being placed out of borough. Whilst some of these are capital projects, others require small up-front investments but will result in savings longer term. Schools have been approached for expressions of interest to offer additional resource bases to allow for more CYP with EHCPs to remain in the borough. There is a lot of interest from schools and the Committee will be kept updated on progress made.
6. The Nurture pilot project was discussed. **Action:** Scrutiny Manager to set up visit to one of the Nurture provisions in Lewisham schools.
7. The Chair thanked officers for the report and the positive information contained in it.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.

6. Apprenticeships Report

- 6.1 Spike van der Vliet-Firth (Jobs and Skills Programme Lead) introduced the report which provides a comprehensive overview of the various apprenticeships and internship programmes as well as levy transfer programmes to ensure that available funding remains in Lewisham. The Mayor's apprenticeships programme has supported the creation of 695 apprenticeships for Lewisham residents so far and despite the challenges of the pandemic is on track to achieve its 2022 target. The compilation of more comprehensive monitoring data is currently being developed and destination data needs to be further disaggregated to provide more meaningful information. This is a priority for the new service lead. The service has been pro-active in supporting Kickstart placements and a dedicated Youth Hub employment service.
- 6.2 The following was noted in response to questions from the Committee:
1. Whilst nobody on the apprenticeship programmes was furloughed, contract extensions were offered in order to give additional completion time. There were only a couple of non-completions due to the sustained offers of support and professional advice given to those on the schemes.
 2. There are many apprenticeships in the construction sector and developers are obliged to report on a monthly basis in relation to targets set, times spent on site and the types of jobs that were completed by Lewisham residents on apprenticeship schemes. The Committee requested more detailed monitoring data from construction sites for future reports of this nature, particularly around ethnicity.
 3. Whether applicants are previously looked after or have an EHCP is only known if it is declared by applicants. It is known that the Council struggles to attract care leavers to apply for Council apprenticeships and that there needs to be specialised care leavers support to facilitate their own aspirations. The Kickstart programme offers guaranteed interviews for any care leavers and this could be replicated for all programmes.
 4. The low uptake on apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds with EHCPs might be explained by the need for a L2 English and Maths qualification to access the programme. Cllr Moore offered her professional expertise to explore this issue further.
 5. The Committee noted the work done to enable more young people with EHCPs to access internships and apprenticeships and noted the role of Lewisham College in this endeavour.
 6. The Committee requested an informal meeting with some of the successful apprenticeship candidates. **Action:** Jobs and Skills Programme Lead and Scrutiny Manager

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That an informal meeting with apprenticeship candidates will be arranged.

7. Select Committee Work Programme Report

- 7.1 The Chair introduced the report and highlighted that a Budget Cuts Proposals report had been added to the 26 January 2022 Committee agenda.
- 7.2 The Chair confirmed that an informal meeting with the Young Mayor candidates was held on 13 October 2021. He thanked those members who attended the meeting. The candidates and their advisors had suggested further informal meetings and the Committee agreed that this would be a useful and informative activity. **ACTION:** Chair and Scrutiny Manager
- 7.3 The Chair confirmed that the annual Information Report on Attendance and Exclusions will be circulated shortly. This could be discussed as part of the Embedding Race Equality in Lewisham's Schools report scheduled for the 26 January 2022 Committee. **ACTION:** Scrutiny Manager
- 7.4 The Chair reminded the Committee that they had been invited to the forthcoming Housing Select Committee meeting on 9 December 21. The Committee will be considering an item on support for families with children in education impacted by homelessness in response to a suggestion earlier in the year from the CYP Select Committee.

RESOLVED that the work programme be amended to reflect the following:

- 1. A Budget Cuts Proposals report will be considered at the 26 January 2022 Committee.
- 2. The annual Information Report on Attendance and Exclusions will be circulated shortly.
- 3. A further informal meeting with the Young Mayor and their advisors will be arranged for the Spring term.
- 4. Members are encouraged to attend the Housing Select Committee meeting on 9 December 21 to consider a report on support for families with children in education impacted by homelessness.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair:

Date:
