

## Minutes

### CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

07 January 2026



HILLINGDON  
LONDON

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

#### **Committee Members Present:**

Councillor Heena Makwana (Chair),  
Councillor Ekta Gohil (Vice-Chair),  
Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE,  
Councillor Kishan Bhatt,  
Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead),  
Councillor Raju Sansarpuri, and  
Councillor Narinder Garg

#### **Co-Opted Member Present:**

Mr Tony Little

#### **Officers Present:**

Julie Kelly (Corporate Director of Children's Services) (virtual),  
Luisa Hansen (Head of Finance, Children's & SEND) (virtual),  
Helen Smith (Head of Service, Social Care Delivery Transformation),  
Donna Hugh (Assistant Director of Care Provision Services) (virtual),  
Abi Preston (Director of Education & SEND) (virtual),  
Kathryn Angelini (Assistant Director for Education) (virtual),  
Tehseen Kauser (Director of Children's Social Care) (virtual),  
Alex Coman (Director of Children's Safeguarding & Care),  
Laura Baldry (School Placement & Admissions Manager),  
Steve Muldoon (Corporate Director of Finance),  
Matt Davis (Director, Strategic & Operational Finance),  
James Rogers (School Place Planning Officer),  
Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)

#### **46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Tony Gill, with Councillor Raju Sansarpuri substituting.

#### **47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (Agenda Item 2)**

Councillor Jan Sweeting declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 as she was a governor at St Martins School.

Councillor Peter Smallwood OBE declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 as he was a governor at Whiteheath School.

Both Councillors stayed in the room for the discussion on those items.

48.	<b>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> (Agenda Item 3)
	<b>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed</b>
49.	<b>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE</b> (Agenda Item 4)
50.	<p><b>BUDGET &amp; SPENDING</b> (Agenda Item 5)</p> <p>Officers introduced the report.</p> <p>Month 7 performance showed little movement from Month 6, which was considered a positive sign. General Fund pressure remained unchanged at just under £6 million. A £1.9 million positive movement had been achieved from Month 6 in the in-year DSG position.</p> <p>Savings of £273,000 rated Amber related to children's homes and increasing residential provision. These savings were now more secure following registration of the six new children's homes.</p> <p>Members referenced the £6 million pressures and asked if this would be addressed through Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), or new government fair funding. This related to pressures around placement costs and Section 17. The current year overspend would require EFS, and next year's budget would not be balanced without EFS.</p> <p>Members commended officers for the progress on the DSG position but noted the remaining deficit. Members asked whether further EFS may be required depending on government treatment of DSG deficits. Officers noted that national guidance was expected and awaited. Government had not yet clarified how deficits up to March 2028 will be treated, though many councils faced even larger DSG deficits and this remained a national issue.</p> <p>Members asked if rising placement costs were driven more by complexity of need or by market conditions. Officers advised both. There were higher overall numbers of children in care with complex needs, and while specialist residential placements had not increased in number, they had risen in cost. In-house provision aimed to improve quality and reduce costs.</p> <p>Members referenced the £1.9m saving and asked if it could be broken down into savings from returning children to Hillingdon from out-of-borough placements, and reductions in funding to in-borough schools. This was difficult to establish currently as some savings will be from new in-year activity and some would be cumulative savings.</p> <p>Members asked and officers confirmed that MVF referred to Managed Vacancy Factor.</p> <p>Members asked whether 2026 savings relied on capital transformation funding. Only a small amount of capital funding had been previously used to support two project lead posts. No additional capital funding was being requested this year.</p> <p>On the topics of temporary accommodation and children's homes, Members referenced six new builds. Officers advised that these were two separate issues that must be</p>

	<p>distinguished:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Costs – relate to families with no recourse to public funds; this was about intervention and support, not building new units.</li> <li>• Children's Homes – the six new-build children's homes were new constructions for residential care. These homes were now registered, developed with DfE input.</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the 2025/26 Month 7 budget monitoring position.</b></p>
51.	<p><b>CABINET BUDGET PROPOSALS 26/27 (Agenda Item 6)</b></p> <p>Officers introduced the report.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been published just before Christmas, reflecting a challenging financial climate for local authorities, including Hillingdon. Primary cost drivers included rising demand for services; market pressure in social care and placements; and inflation that exceeded CPI inflation.</p> <p>Central Government's revised funding methodology had acknowledged that Hillingdon has been historically underfunded. Additional funding was forthcoming but would be phased over three years and will not be received until 2026/27.</p> <p>It was noted that financial reserves had been significantly depleted in recent years to sustain services. Hillingdon cannot balance the budget without EFS. It was noted that EFS was not free money – it required Government approval and had to be repaid.</p> <p>Savings identified within the report were owned by senior officers and services leads, and had been challenged through a series of 'challenge sessions' which included Corporate Directors, Cabinet Members and Finance colleagues. Savings were intended to be realistic, not aspirational. Some Directorates would be required to prepare detailed delivery plans, particularly for higher risk or high value savings.</p> <p>A six-week public consultation was ongoing until early February before the budget is considered by Cabinet on 19 February and Council on 26 February.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the reported £12.13 growth and sought clarification on whether this came predominantly from the new fair funding allocation from Government (spread over three years) or relied on possible EFS. No specific growth item was attributed solely to either Government funding or EFS. The Council did not segregate sources of funding in that manner.</p> <p>Members highlighted a saving proposed through "ceasing SEND key working" and asked for clarity on what would replace it, and how escalation to tribunals or complaints will be avoided. Officers clarified that the SEND key working service had already been discontinued this year. It was non-statutory. It was a 'nice to have' but not financially sustainable. An impact review had showed some impact but not sufficient to justify continuing. It was emphasised that families will not lose support as early help and SEND support was now embedded within the family help model; social care pathways; and a more integrated early-intervention structure. A small part-year saving had already been realised this year while the full year effect will materialise next year.</p> <p>Members asked how confident officers were that the new proposals were realistic</p>

rather than aspirational. Officers noted that this year's process was more rigorous than previous years. Service managers had been involved in the process. Growth was based on data, known pressures, and existing savings trajectories. Officers expressed high confidence but acknowledged some uncertainty inherent in social care demand. Monitoring will be continuous and monthly.

Members asked what impact growth in the Education, Health & Care Team will have. Officers advised that posts had been funded already through the capital transformation programme. This would enable establishment of an in-house tribunals team which was more cost-effective; more efficient management of increased caseloads; and improved ability to meet statutory EHC deadlines.

Members asked about the nature of the SEND brokerage role included in the growth proposals. Previously an agency role, the new growth funds a permanent brokerage officer to support negotiating placement costs; identifying appropriate and cost-effective settings for young people; strengthening commissioning intelligence; and monitoring placement quality and financial compliance. This role had recently been recruited.

Members asked about strengthening local provision and reducing out-of-borough placements, including how this will improve outcomes; how dependency on expensive out-of-borough placements will be reduced; and how this will be monitored. Officers highlighted several points in clarification: decisions were driven by ensuring value for money, quality of provision, improved outcomes through expanding in-house provision. On the fostering offer, new placements were reviewed regularly. There were continuous checks on suitability, outcomes achieved and financial efficiency. Governance structures included a Family Help Transformation Programme; strong partnership executive oversight; monthly outcome tracking; and external scrutiny from Ofsted and others.

Members asked about relationships between Directorates, and how leadership culture and staff capability were being aligned with these goals. The Corporate Directors of Children's Services and Finance described a relationship based on high challenge and high support, transparency, and joint accountability. Directors described a clear vision, widely understood across services and partners; staff who are passionate, motivated and committed to positive outcomes; weekly internal leadership meetings (e.g., SMT); and strong communication across a 600-person workforce, all while ensuring that there was no compromise on what was delivered for young people. There was a strong vision across Children's Services along with strong governance, high challenge and high trust. Officers asserted that better outcomes often correlated with lower costs. Evidence based decision making was being embedded throughout teams. Teams worked well together, find solutions together and celebrate achievements together.

It was noted that comments would be made to Cabinet, and that this budget was unlike others that had been considered previously. There were some unanswered questions about EFS and the deficit position at the end of the financial year. Officers were commended on their achievements but the comments should reflect being mindful of the unanswered questions.

Members thanked officers for their work.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee:**

- 1. Noted the draft revenue budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

	<p>proposals for 2026/27 to 2030/31 relating to services within the Committee's remit; and</p> <p><b>2. Delegated comments to Council to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead</b></p>
52.	<p><b>BI-ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 7)</b></p> <p>Officers introduced the bi-annual performance report, noting no major changes compared with previously presented annual report.</p> <p>Members asked for clarification on a quote that read: "Often children commit a subsequent offence before being directed to youth justice services". Officers advised that reoffending was measured only after a child had been found guilty of an offence. Hillingdon had very low numbers of first-time entrants into the youth justice system, a positive indicator reflecting effective early intervention. Because the cohort was small, percentages can appear disproportionately large. A review through the Youth Justice Partnership Board showed that where a young person had been referred to the Youth Justice Service, the number of subsequent offences significantly decreased. Additional initiatives included placing youth workers in custody suites to reach young people before they were charged. These early engagement outcomes would not appear in performance data for 12–18 months due to national reporting lags.</p> <p>Members commended strong performance and low expenditure, but queried two yellow indicators of 'Referrals' and 'Re-registrations for CPP' (child protection plans), asking if performance was close to turning green. Officers noted that rising referral numbers often correlated with increased complexity and risk. The Council was introducing new multi-agency child protection teams to strengthen oversight and early support. Some families needed further support, and the priority was ensuring safety. It was clarified that Hillingdon maintained low numbers of Child Protection Plans overall. Therefore, even a small number of new registrations produced a large percentage shift.</p> <p>Members noted the low expenditure and asked if there had been negative implications of this. Officers noted that better outcomes often costed less, though there were financial challenges. Decisions must be made about what was essential versus 'nice to have'. Officers were not seeing a negative impact on the outcomes for children.</p> <p>Members asked why Hillingdon's Early Years net expenditure was lower than the London average. This was due to significant Early Years expansion projects in progress as well as Lifelong Learning projects experiencing delays relative to other boroughs. As these programmes accelerated, particularly since Early Years had moved into the Education portfolio, expenditure will likely increase.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Noted the six-month performance report for 2025/26, as attached in Appendix 1; and</b></li> <li><b>2. Delegated comments to Council to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead</b></li> </ol>
53.	<b>FAMILY FIRST PARTNERSHIP (FFP) REFORMS - UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)</b>

Officers presented the report.

The Family First reforms were described as the most significant changes in a number of years. The programme involved close collaboration with the DfE and strategic partners including health, education, police, and voluntary sector agencies. Oversight was provided by an Executive Transformation Group, comprising senior leaders from multiple agencies, ensuring accountability across all workstreams.

A detailed delivery plan had been completed and submitted to the DfE, who the Council met with quarterly for feedback. Hillingdon also worked with other local authorities and was supported by the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance.

Quarter 1 involved extensive consultation with practitioners and staff. This phase was complete and the programme was now in delivery and transformation.

DfE grant funding had supported the recruitment of two part-time Participation Officers with lived experience to lead co-production with families, as well as the creation of a Data Analyst Apprenticeship, ring-fenced for a care experienced young person to reinforce the commitment and responsibilities as corporate parents.

The Family Help Service had gone live on 27 August, creating 11 locality-based teams aligned to family hubs and children's centres. Key workers and social workers had been integrated to create locality focused multi-disciplinary teams. Workforce capacity had increased, particularly among alternative qualified key workers, supported by additional service managers providing local leadership and quality assurance.

A New Beginnings team had been launched at the end of November, supporting families during pregnancy and early infancy. This was now supporting 11 families, and demonstrated good working relationships, particularly with midwifery colleagues. Demonstrating early success, one family had already been supported and safely stepped down from further intervention. A care experienced young person volunteered with the team. This model also had potential for preventing children entering care, reducing trauma and generating financial savings. The DfE had expressed significant interest in this work at the December quarterly meeting.

The Stronger Families Hub, co-located at the Civic Centre since 01 December, provided representation from Probation, Housing, Health, Education, Police, Youth services, Domestic Abuse specialists, and SEND services. This arrangement enabled multi-agency triage at first contact, improving signposting and support for children and families.

Eight Lead Child Protection Practitioners had been recruited, mostly internal promotions, to oversee the child protection journey in line with the family first reforms.

One of the key elements within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was around Family Group Decision Making and making that mandatory at pre-proceeding stage. However, Hillingdon had long practised this model, commissioning external providers for family group conferencing. Family Group Decision Making aligned well with the Family Help model and will be strengthened and integrated further.

The reforms introduced new data requirements. Officers were working with Digital & Intelligence teams to develop live Power BI dashboards for managers. These will improve real time monitoring of caseloads, outcomes and performance.

Hillingdon worked effectively with schools, particularly in early intervention. School leaders contributed at both strategic and operational levels within the safeguarding partnership and the Executive Transformation Group.

Officers explained that a Kinship Steering Group had been established, involving housing, education, psychology services, SEND, early help, the Virtual School and MAPS. A new local kinship offer was under co-production with families and professionals, with launch planned for March 2026. This offer will include financial support, housing support, education advice, clear minimum standards; and alignment with national expectations of kinship carer support. Officers acknowledged that without kinship carers, pressure on fostering and residential services would increase. National organisations were supporting the alignment of Hillingdon's kinship approach.

Members commended the initiative and asked if partnership working was functioning effectively. Officers highlighted strong strategic buy-in from police, health and schools. Challenges remained, partly because the Met Police covered 32 boroughs with diverse approaches. Operational relationships remained positive and consistent; partners were engaged in training and shared practice development. There was particular interest in the New Beginnings model, and health colleagues had been supportive of that.

Members asked how substantial the culture change would be, and what impact families would experience. The cultural shift was substantial. For example five teams of social workers previously did short term work, then handed cases on. Now they maintained involvement throughout the family journey, improving relationship building and consistency so that families had fewer points of change. Front door child protection decision-making will increasingly be shared across agencies, not LA-led. Families should experience fewer changes in worker, clearer, earlier access to support, better coordination through locality teams, and more relational, trauma-informed practice. Staff were highly supportive of the model and were seeing benefits in practice.

Members asked how schools were engaged, especially academies. Schools were highly engaged, with strong representation on the Executive Transformation Group and the Safeguarding Partnership Board. Participation was supported through designated safeguarding leads and school leadership networks. Education has had equal status in safeguarding governance for more than a year and the reforms built on this foundation.

Partner willingness was strong, especially from police, but some challenges arise due to system differences. The hub model was reducing stigma associated with statutory intervention and improving community-based support. Ongoing review would address any practical gaps.

Members asked how young people were engaged in decision-making, and how staff training was being managed. Family Group Decision Making ensured children and their families were engaged involved in decision-making and was embedded in day-to-day practice and will continue as a core component from first contact. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill made this mandatory at pre-proceeding stage. Hillingdon emphasised engaging fathers and wider networks, underpinned by trauma-informed practice. Staff had received trauma informed training, with further work underway through skills audits; team supervision; and reflective practice sessions. A strong foundation of relational practice already existed, while reforms aimed to deepen and standardise it.

Members noted that the report stated no financial implications, and asked how realistic this was given the scale of change. Members also asked if the DfE grant was sufficient. Given historic underfunding and high pressure, no grant was ever likely to be sufficient. However, the grant allowed increased capacity and supported transformation. It had also allowed officers to look at different ways of working. It was clarified that the grant was additional, not replacement funding; it enabled innovation and pilot testing. The Council would continue reviewing transformation to address any gaps as the model embedded.

Members asked if teams were located equitably across hubs. While the Civic Centre was the main base, teams were aligned within localities. Teams were expected to be out in the community working with families in homes, schools and libraries. Four teams covered the south east, four in the south west and three in the north of the borough, reflecting differing population and demand. This would be reviewed continuously.

Members commended the enthusiasm and hard work of the team.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the key developments and findings outlined in this report**

**54. PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLISHED ADMISSION NUMBER (PAN) OF FIELD END INFANT SCHOOL (Agenda Item 9)**

The Chair opened the item, noting that Field End Infant School was within their ward.

The proposal concerned reducing Field End Infant School's PAN from a three-form entry to a two-form entry, effective from September 2027. This change was intended to support the school's financial viability in the context of falling pupil numbers.

Members asked if the need to reduce PAN was driven specifically by Hillingdon's circumstances, or part of a broader London-wide or national trend. Falling pupil numbers were a national issue, with London experiencing a decline. Many London boroughs were already closing schools; Hillingdon was not at that stage. The Council was monitoring roll numbers and working closely with all schools, including through regular dialogue with headteachers.

Officers had been in discussion with Field End over the last year and monitoring their numbers in order to support them to continue being financially viable.

Several other Hillingdon schools were also expected to propose PAN reductions, with early conversations already underway.

Members highlighted that the consultation had received few responses, with only one respondent being a parent of a child at Field End Infant School. Members asked if this was typical, and if officers had gathered parental views beyond formal consultation. Schools shared consultation information before the summer holiday, including letters to both Infant and Junior School parents. Parents could also respond via links circulated by the school. Some informal feedback was likely provided directly to schools, but the Council had only received the formal responses noted in the report.

Members asked, if the Infant School reduced its PAN, what consideration had been given to impacts on the linked Junior School? Officers had been working closely with both schools and advised that the Junior School had initially approached the Council

regarding a reduction in its own PAN. Since both schools were closely aligned, discussions and consultations had taken place jointly. Parents from both schools had been consulted and made aware of the potential changes. The system was designed to remain flexible – if pupil numbers increase in future, both schools had capacity to open additional classes on request from the Council.

**RESOLVED: That the Children, Families & Education Select Committee:**

1. **Reviewed the proposal to reduce the Published Admission Number for Field End Infant School from 90 to 60;**
2. **Noted the 4 responses from the consultation on a PAN change to community primary phase;**
3. **Noted the proposals submitted to the Local Authority following formal consultations from non-community schools: Field End Junior School to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 90 to 60; St Martin's Church of England Primary School to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 60 to 30, and Park Academy West London to reduce its Planned Admissions Number from 180 to 150, all taking effect from September 2027; and**
4. **Delegated comments to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead**

55.	<p><b>LOWERING THE AGE RANGE OF WHITEHEATH INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL (Agenda Item 10)</b></p> <p>Officers introduced the report, which outlined the proposal to lower the school's age range to include two-year-olds. This related to the expansion of early years provision and would particularly benefit children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children from working families.</p> <p>Members asked if there were other schools in the borough offering places for two-year-olds, and if so, what was their experience, and could this be of reassurance to parents of Whiteheath pupils. Officers advised that Minet Infant School was an example of another setting who had lowered their age range and that this change had only received positive feedback such as that this had helped to facilitate school drop-offs.</p> <p>Members noted that there had been a difference in the opinions of parents to that of providers and asked how these were weighted. Officers clarified that all respondents were weighted equally. While parents were more likely to see the wider family perspective, providers would likely look more to the business perspective.</p> <p>Members asked about navigating more difficult disparities in views. This was about helping everyone to understand the benefits of the proposal. This proposal would benefit lots of families. It was noted that some of the concerns from other providers may be around increased competition to them, where families may choose to send their child to Whiteheath instead of, for example, a private childminder or different nursery setting. This proposal was about providing a varied offer for families to consider, and specific to the Ward.</p> <p>Members asked why the age range was stated as 3-11 and 2-11 when it was an Infant</p>
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	<p>School. Officers clarified that this reflected Whiteheat as a whole.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Noted the proposal and consultation taken place; and</b></li> <li><b>2. Delegated comments to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair and in consultation with the Opposition Lead</b></li> </ol>
56.	<p><b>FOSTERING REVIEW - DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS</b> (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>The Chair introduced the item on the fostering review, summarising that several witness sessions had taken place with officers, foster carers and young people with lived experience of foster care. The Chair thanked all participants, especially the young people, for their candour, openness and valuable insights.</p> <p>The Chair reminded Members to consider that two of the sessions had taken place in private.</p> <p>Members suggested a number of emerging themes, including:</p> <p><b><u>Communication and Information-Sharing</u></b></p> <p>Young people had reported occasions of being left 'in the dark' regarding decisions made about them, including decisions around entering care. There was also a desire for more age-appropriate, honest and timely information.</p> <p>There appeared to be a need for better communication between social workers, officers, foster carers and young people, as well as more inclusivity in decision-related information sharing where safe and appropriate.</p> <p>Members noted a perception that there was some sugar-coating to encourage people to become foster carers, and that young people were unaware of who they would be placed with.</p> <p><b><u>Matching</u></b></p> <p>Various witnesses raised concerns around matching, including the importance of cultural compatibility. Consideration should also be given to the existing household composition, including and other children or care-experienced young people already living there.</p> <p><b><u>Mentoring/ Buddy System for Foster Carers</u></b></p> <p>Witnesses had noted that there had previously been a buddy scheme but were not aware if this was currently happening. Foster carers would benefit from peer support for advice and guidance, emotional support, and learning from more experienced carers.</p> <p><b><u>Recruiting Specialist Foster Carers</u></b></p> <p>Multiple witnesses noted that foster carers may come with valuable professional skills or subject experience. This may help with the need for recruitment for specialist placements for young people with complex needs and adolescents.</p> <p><b><u>Family Contact</u></b></p> <p>There was a need to ensure that family contact was always in the best interest</p>

of the young person. There was a suggestion to review how family contact was planned, supervised and assessed.

#### Training and foster carers skills

Members highlighted that training was repeatedly requested by foster carers and young people and should include trauma-informed practice; behaviour management; cultural knowledge; LGBTQ+ awareness; and managing complex needs. Training should be expanded and standardised.

#### Starter packs

Members proposed a starter pack for young people entering a care placement, to include information such as their care plan, their rights, key contacts and advocacy services. This would help ensure continuity when placements change.

Officers noted this related to life story work and ensuring young people understand their care plan in accessible language. Officers also clarified that it was intended that young people will be aware of their plan. Young people also had access to advocacy services which were independent from the Local Authority. Young people also had an Independent Reviewing Officer. It was meaningful to hear this feedback from young people.

#### Sibling separation

Young people reported occasions of being split up from their siblings. Members suggested that sibling placement and sibling contact be strengthened, and that officers review how sibling groups can be better supported to remain connected.

#### Behaviour management and stability

Witnesses had indicated variations in foster carer's preparedness for challenging behaviours. Members noted the need for more consistent support for behaviour management; clearer guidance for new carers; and better placement stability monitoring.

#### Frequent social worker changes

Young people had noted high turnover of their allocated social worker and that this affected trust and relationships, and having to 'retell their story'. Members suggested improving workforce stability and communication.

#### Recruitment improvements

Concerns had been raised during witness sessions that recruitment materials such as the website were too static and did not reflect the real complexity or the reality of fostering. Suggested improvements included more stories, testimonials and videos; roadshows, workshops and community outreach; use of social media; honest messaging describing the intense but rewarding nature of fostering; avoiding 'sugar coating', and ensuring transparency about challenges and expectations.

#### Diversity of foster carers

Members suggested increasing recruitment efforts among religious and cultural communities (i.e. through places of worship); ethnic minority communities, LGBTQ+ communities and single carers.

#### Placement data

Members requested additional information on the number of children in foster

placements and turnover of foster carers. Members also noted a need to distinguish between young people in respite placements, and those who move placements due to placement breakdown – this will help assess systemic issues and improve placement planning.

Informal networking

Members highlighted that foster carers may benefit from informal networking; peer groups or drop-in sessions. These were suggested as low-cost but high-impact improvements to wellbeing which may also aid in respite.

Enrichment activities for young people

Members noted that young people valued enrichment activities such as KICA (Kids in Care Awards) and suggested more such opportunities. This could include formal civic experiences such as a Mayor's parlour visit, and broadening activities to foster belonging and positive memories.

Officers highlighted that the website included videos and testimonials of foster carers. It was emphasised that there was never an intention to deceive potential foster carers. There was a significant number of expressions of interest. The number who moved from expressions of interest to the assessment phased was reduced as it had to be the right person in the right condition in the right provision.

The assessment can be a difficult and intrusive process that looks at every aspect of a person's life, their circumstances, their motivation and their ability to be a foster carer. Once the assessment was completed, applicants would move on to the Fostering & Permanence Panel, which included representation from Elected Members. The Panel would make a recommendation to the agency decision maker who would sign-off on the final outcome. Officers reiterated the commitment to finding the right people for each young person.

Officers would share a template of the 'All About Me' profile, and further information on trauma-informed practice.

Officers recapped that the new fostering offer had been launched last year and early signs showed increased enquiries and recruitment. Officers acknowledged the need for specialist recruitment; diversity in recruitment; and strengthened carer networks. Some work on this was already ongoing. The Mockingbird scheme had been piloted with central Government funding and was planned to be re-launched in an updated form once fully reviewed.

**RESOLVED: That the Select Committee considered findings, conclusions and draft recommendations in relation to the review**

**57. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL (Agenda Item 12)**

Officers highlighted two inaccuracies within the minutes.

- The minutes noted statistics for take-up of initial health assessments (IHAs) and review health assessments (RHAs). It was clarified that these statistics reflected the ICB timescales and not the statutory timescales that the Local Authority is required to meet. The LA statistics are noted within the IRO report of the CPP agenda.
- The minutes stated that "79.7% of care experienced young people were in

	<p><i>education, employment or training, up from 76% in the previous year". It was clarified that this figure is for 17–18-year-old cared for and care-experienced individuals, and not just care-experienced individuals.</i></p> <p>These would be rectified before the minutes are presented for approval to the next Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Select Committee noted the minutes</b></p>
58.	<p><b>FORWARD PLAN</b> (<i>Agenda Item 13</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Forward Plan.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan</b></p>
59.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b> (<i>Agenda Item 14</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Work Programme.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the report</b></p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.20 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell on [democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk). Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.