

Minutes

RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

3 November 2020



Meeting held at VIRTUAL - Live on the Council's YouTube channel: Hillingdon London

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Wayne Bridges (Chairman), John Morgan (Vice-Chairman), Allan Kauffman, Devi Radia, Stuart Mathers, Paula Rodrigues, Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead), Colleen Sullivan and Alan Chapman</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer), Paul Richards (Head of Green Spaces, Sport and Culture), Dan Kennedy (Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing), Laura Palmer (School Placement and Admissions Team Manager), and Debbie Scarborough (Adult & Community Learning - Service Manager)</p>
23.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE <i>(Agenda Item 1)</i></p> <p>All Members were present.</p>
24.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING <i>(Agenda Item 2)</i></p> <p>None.</p>
25.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ALL ITEMS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT ANY ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE <i>(Agenda Item 3)</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be considered in public.</p>
26.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING <i>(Agenda Item 4)</i></p> <p>Councillor Morgan confirmed that he had submitted a list of queries and suggestions regarding the Licensing Policy discussed at the previous meeting. The officer's responses had been circulated to all Committee Members accordingly.</p> <p>Regarding the request for detail of Member Enquiries by Ward, the Committee was advised that it could source this data from the Group Offices, who received such data as part of a monthly report. Some Members reiterated their desire that such data be brought to the Committee in a written document, to aid public transparency, and it was agreed that the clerk would look into the matter further.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.</p>

27. **INFORMATION ITEM ON THE ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE**
(Agenda Item 5)

Debbie Scarborough – Adult and Community Learning Service Manager, introduced the information report on the Adult and Community Learning Service, before receiving questions from the Committee, including:

In December 20019, Ofsted gave the service a ‘good’ rating. What was being done to improve to ‘outstanding’?

It was accepted that bridging the gap between ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ was a significant challenge. Ofsted had identified three areas for the service to focus on:

1. Inconsistency in addressing grammar, spelling and punctuation. This was being addressed through additional training for staff.
2. Data capture for how people progressed between classed and achieved their goals. The service’s data systems were due for renewal in the next six months
3. Support and challenge from officers and Members. Officers were working hard to provide this additional support together with the new Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Youth Services.

What was the reason for the disparity between learners in the north of the Borough versus the south of the Borough?

Two thirds of learners were from the south of the Borough. This was likely due to the fact that the area had a proportionately higher number of lower skilled or unemployed residents, who were attempting to upskill with the aim of further job prospects or career development. Learners in the north tended to be an older group that chose to take up more courses focussing on personal or social development, particularly during retirement. In addition, this older group were often less comfortable using online meeting tools, and so numbers had fallen during the pandemic.

How did the service measure achievement or numbers versus statistical neighbours?

The service worked with peers across London to compile annual self-assessment reports which include details of achievement. Current pass rates within Hillingdon for the last year were approximately 90%, despite the impact of the pandemic. Numbers were harder to accurately compare, due to differences in population or funding. It was highlighted that Hillingdon had the third lowest funding in West London.

How was the service working to address potential reductions in fee funding?

Risks had been identified, such as EU learners being unable to complete settlement forms post-Brexit. To address this, forms had been simplified and support was available to help residents complete the paperwork successfully.

Older residents less comfortable with online tools had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, through an inability to attend classes in person and a reluctance to join them online. The service was therefore instigating additional digital skills paths in order to reach these learners. It was expected that there would be a large reduction in funding through fee income, potentially due to the pandemic.

What provision was in place for those residents with disabilities or mental health issues, particularly during the pandemic?

The service had introduced an optional wellbeing self-assessment health self-assessment for learners, which was to be refined and moved to an online form. Completion of this online assessment had proven popular, likely due to the additional privacy afforded to learners. Once received, the team was well placed to provide support and target interventions, where necessary.

Tutors had received additional training on how to support those with learning difficulties to learn online, while overtures were being made to parents and carers on how to help their dependants to learn online through use of equipment or online meetings.

What additional funds were available through the Government, the Mayor of London, or the Council?

The GLA had recently granted an additional £100k for courses focussing on employment due to increased threat of redundancy due to the pandemic. However, the funding came with the caveat that qualifications were required, and so the service was trying to balance this requirement with the needs of residents.

£25k had recently been given for new equipment, with £77k approved for remainder of equipment, with the aim of increasing lending stock of chromebooks and laptops, among other resources. At times, procuring sufficient equipment from suppliers was difficult, due to overall marketplace demand.

Government funding levels were allocated to different boroughs based on historical figures, and had not been reivied in many years. The GLA could potentially be reviewing funding in the future. It was highlighted that the service had been overdelivering against funding targets for the past 3 years to meet demand and make a case for increased funding.

Members discussed whether the topic should be selected as the Committee's next review.

Some Members were opposed, and considered that as the service had been rated as 'good' by Ofsted, and had adapted to the pandemic well, it was therefore felt that a review into the service was premature or unneeded. On the matter of additional funding for the HACL, it was suggested that Cabinet could plug any gaps in funding during the pandemic. Instead, it was suggested that Youth Services should be the subject to the next review.

Other Members suggested that the topic should be selected, and highlighted some of the areas such a review could focus on, including how the service was focussing on re-training or preparing residents to re-enter employment following loss of employment due to Covid-19, the impact of increased demand, a review of current courses and potential for new courses, cultural diversity within learner groups and how the service was engaging with ethnic minorities, and how the service was helping the public to manage stress and mental health within its cohorts.

The matter was put to a vote, and it was agreed that the topic be selected as the Committee's next review, by a vote of 6 to 2. (Councillor Morgan did not vote on the item due to a loss of connection during discussion.)

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That the Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning service be selected as the Committee's next review topic.
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28. MINOR CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CRITERIA (Agenda Item 6)

Laura Palmer – School Placement and Admissions Team Manager, introduced a report detailing proposed minor changes to the school admissions criteria.

The Committee was informed of the proposed changes, comprising:

- a.) the removal of nodal point criteria for Deanesfield Primary School;
- b.) a higher priority for children of staff working at a school versus children living nearby;
- c.) a change of the terms detailing medical or psychological conditions, from 'psychological' to 'social', to enable consistency with terms set out in the School Admission Code 2014; and
- d.) a reduction in the Planned Admissions Number (PAN) for Ruislip Gardens Primary School.

It was confirmed that, if approved, the proposed amendments would be implemented in September 2022. Of the three responses to the consultation received so far, all were in favour of the proposed changes, bar one who was opposed the change to staff children/distance criteria.

Members asked a number of questions, including:

Regarding the change of wording to 'social', what would this cover, and who decided whether such grounds were sufficient to grant a school place?

The term would cover a broad variety of medical and psychological issues, as well as family circumstances. Regarding rulings on submissions made under this criteria, this would be through an independent appeals panel.

Why was it being proposed to reduced Ruislip Gardens' PAN? Were the declining numbers due to the quality of the location, and were there plans to develop the school further?

Low entry numbers had been seen for several years, predominantly due to parental preference, with many parents citing traffic issues as the reason for choosing alternate schools. The school itself was performing well, with Ofsted giving a rating of 'good' at its most recent inspection, and the school remained popular with children living very close by. Regarding development, the school remained on the capital programme, with some work already completed, and with more to come. Feedback from parents regarding the school buildings had not been negative.

Ruislip Gardens had an expanded PAN in 2013, but since then, pupil numbers had not exceed its original PAN. Were too many places put in? With the reduced PAN, would there be too little capacity, should demand increase?

Forecasting was not an exact science. At the time, forecasting showed a demand for increased places at the school. Should there be an increase in demand following the reduced PAN, additional places could be implemented.

Why was Ruislip Gardens given a permanent increase in PAN, rather than a bulge class?

At the time, forecasting would have shown a demonstrable need for increased spaces, and would have sought to avoid bulge classes or temporary classrooms.

Members requested that the quarterly school places planning report, to be considered at the January meeting, include full details of all 14 education planning areas.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

29. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (Agenda Item 7)

Consideration was given to the Cabinet Forward Plan. It was highlighted that, since the publication of the meeting papers, the proposed site for the new Free School had been published to the Plan.

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

30. WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

It was confirmed that the quarterly school places report, to be considered at the January meeting, would now include a specific section relating to surplus school places. To accommodate this larger report, the ASBET report had been moved to the April meeting.

In addition, the request that the Early Years item be brought forward to January had been withdrawn, as the agenda for January was very full. The item would remain on the agenda for the February meeting. It was requested that the report include detail of how the service's restructure had been received, what the service would look like moving forward, and what was being proposed to sustain and develop progress.

Members requested that an information item on Youth Services, and in particular the service's response to Covid-19 and future strategy, be brought to the April meeting.

It was requested that the clerk confirm when the item on SEN Strategy would be brought to the Committee.

The Work Programme was noted.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.20 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser on 01895 250636. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

