

Minutes

RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

27 January 2021



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, Paula Rodrigues, Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead), Colleen Sullivan, Alan Chapman, Scott Farley (In place of Stuart Mathers) and Mr Tony Little</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Neil Fraser (Democratic Services Officer), Dan Kennedy (Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing), Marcus Briginshaw (Finance Manager - Capital and HRA), Graham Young (Lead Finance Business Partner - Schools/DSG), Laura Palmer (Head of Access to Education), Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager), Debbie Scarborough (Adult & Community Learning - Service Manager)</p>
31.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Mathers, with Councillor Farley present as their substitute.</p>
32.	<p>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Mr Tony Little declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of agenda items 7 and 8, as he was a Governor at Harlington School.</p>
33.	<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 were marked as Part I, and would therefore be considered in public.</p>
34.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Consideration was given to the updated draft minutes, circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Members requested an update on the Committee's previous request to receive details of Member Enquiries by Ward. The Committee was advised that Democratic Services staff had separately been in contact with Councillor Janet Duncan of the Labour Group on this matter. In addition, the Committee was reminded of the advice given at the previous meeting, which was that Councillors could source such data from their</p>

respective Group offices. It was suggested that the Chairman could discuss the matter further with his colleagues, in an effort to determine whether the requested data could be approved for publication.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 03 November 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

35. **REVIEW SCOPING REPORT - HILINGDON ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE** (*Agenda Item 5*)

Consideration was given to the draft scoping report for the Committee's next review. The Committee was advised that this was a working document intended to help provide additional background information and to highlight potential areas of focus for the review. It was requested that Members make suggestions for further consideration.

Suggestions for further areas of focus included:

- How the service could further stimulate demand and uptake of courses;
- How the service could further promote the use of online learning tools;
- Witnesses who could highlight areas of improvement in the service;

About witnesses and information gathering sessions, it was confirmed that Members could suggest attendees, or topics to be considered, via the clerk. It was agreed that, following the meeting, Councillor Sweeting would liaise with the clerk on suggested topics for consideration at the forthcoming witness sessions.

RESOLVED: That the scoping report be approved.

36. **CHANGES TO THE ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION POLICY** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Laura Palmer, Head of Access to Education, introduced the report detailing proposed changes to the Council's Elective Home Education Policy, to update the policy in line with the Department for Education's latest guidance and to better support parents within Hillingdon.

Proposed changes included revisions to the layout of the policy, information on dedicated social care involvement and support, and the introduction of a flowchart detailing procedure.

The proposed changes had been submitted for consultation with stakeholders but no responses had been received.

The Committee noted that the policy set out the responsibility of head teachers to notify the Council of a child being home educated, and sought further information on how children would be identified if regularly moving in and out of the Borough. Officers advised that a safeguarding task and finish group was now in place, with attendees including partners such as the Police, to identify such cases and provide support to parents.

Other Members noted that there had been a 43% increase in the number of children being home educated within the Borough, likely due to parents choosing to keep children at home rather than send them to school during the pandemic. It was suggested that the service could require additional funding to support this increase. Officers advised that additional funding could be forthcoming from central government

in the future. It was agreed that the Opposition Lead would discuss the matter with their Group Leader and the relevant policy officers.

Members made a number of suggestions for further revisions to the policy, including:

- Ensuring that language used within the policy was gender neutral and easy to understand,
- Provide for alternative ways parents can discuss their choice to home educate their child without involving the school's head teacher,
- Contact signposting, particularly within the introduction,
- Links to relevant background information for parents.

Officers advised that the suggestions would be considered, subject to legal approval.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the report be noted;**
2. **That the suggestions for further amendments to the policy be considered for inclusion;**
3. **That the comments of the Committee be included in the Cabinet report, to be presented in February 2021.**

37. **QUARTERLY SCHOOL PLACES PLANNING REPORT** *(Agenda Item 8)*

Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager) and Dan Kennedy (Director - Housing, Environment, Education, Performance, Health & Wellbeing) introduced the most recent quarterly update on school places planning.

The Committee was informed that primary enrolments had slightly reduced, likely as children were being home educated or had moved out of the Borough due to the ongoing pandemic. Secondary school enrolments had increased in line with projections, and it was expected that there would be sufficient places available to meet the need for Year 7 pupils applying in 2021.

It had been acknowledged that the pandemic had resulted in greater pupil movement in and out of all year groups and schools, and as a consequence, previous trend analysis and forecasting was no longer wholly accurate. Schools had offered additional places without the need for temporary classrooms, and computer matching and further forecast analysis would mean that it was expected that 95% of pupils would be offered one of their preferred schools.

Members sought further information on a number of points, including:

Would schools have their Planned Admission Numbers (PANs) reduced in light of reduced demand for places?

Some schools could have their PANs reduced, and this was under review. Officers were not in a position to confirm which schools would have PANs reduced at this time, particularly as academy schools would progress proposals themselves for changes.

What information could be provided around potential bulge classes?

The DfE only allowed bulge classes in schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Conversations with schools were ongoing, with the aim of securing sufficient places to

meet demand without retaining too many empty places. Offers to accommodate bulge classes had been received from several schools, not all of which were being taken up, though this could change based on future demand. Bulge classes should mean that parents received more places at their preferred schools.

Many families were experiencing financial hardship during the pandemic. Was the Borough providing free school meals?

If eligible, families were being given food vouchers, or pupils were receiving catering at their school. Feedback was that parents preferred to receive vouchers.

Was there available information regarding demand for places and potential expansion at Special schools?

It was acknowledged that the number of pupils with an Education and Healthcare Plan had increased significantly. Officers were working with SEN colleagues to ensure that school place panning was sufficient to meet demand at relevant special schools. Most new free schools now had planning permission, though some were still to go through the planning process. It was expected that new schools would begin opening from 2022-23.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

38. 2020/21 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF REESPOC (Agenda Item 7)

Marcus Briginshaw – Finance Manager (Capital and HRA), and Graham Young – Lead Finance Business Partner (Schools/DSG), presented the report which laid out the draft budget for the services within the remit of the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee for the financial year 2021/22.

Members sought further information on the Council's application to the DfE to reclaim monies from the schools budget to help provide High Needs support, and whether the Schools Forum supported this proposal. The Committee was advised that the Schools Forum did not support the proposal, which was currently awaiting response from the DfE. It was confirmed that, if approved, this would reduce the total funds to allocate to schools, though there would remain a per-pupil increase over previous years. If not approved, the Council would need to set a deficit DSG budget, and schools would be allocated all the schools block funding.

Labour Group Members raised concerns regarding the budget, and particularly the fact that the services under the remit of REESPOC appeared to be taking the majority of reductions in funding, which were significant. Concerns were raised regarding the Council's intention to raise fees and charges and reduce funding for services such as theatres, museums, adult learning, youth services, and car parking, in a time of financial hardship for many residents. The potential negative impact of the proposed budget on street traders and the Borough's high streets was highlighted. Residents were also to be asked to pay for the Fiesta programme, which previously had been free, in a time when community services and sport to help improve resident's mental health was of even greater importance. On this basis, the Labour Group Members confirmed that they were unable to support all of the savings proposed within the budget.

Additionally, Mr Tony Little expressed his concerns over the proposal to divert funds

from the schools budget to address the High Needs deficit.

During the discussion, it was noted that several figures within the report appeared to be erroneous. It was agreed that officers would provide updated figures to Members following the meeting. It was therefore agreed that, upon receipt of these updated figures, the Chairman would draft the comments on the budget on behalf of the Committee, in consultation with the Opposition Lead.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee note the report;**
- 2. That the Chairman draft the comments on the budget on behalf of the Committee, in consultation with the Opposition Lead.**

39. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 9*)

Consideration was given to the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Members sought further information on the forthcoming Cabinet items: 009 - Government Planning Consultation (due to for consideration at Cabinet 18 February) and 017 - Standards and Quality in Education (due for consideration at 22 April Cabinet).

Officers advised that the Planning Consultation item was a complex issue, but information could be provided to the Committee if requested. Regarding the Standards report, it was expected that the report would focus heavily on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools and pupil performance.

It was agreed that the clerk would source further information on item 018 -Borough Wide Weed Control (decisions expected April 2021) regarding the impact of weed control on wildlife and water.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That the requested information on the forthcoming Borough Wide Weed Control item be circulated to the Committee.**

40. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 10*)

Consideration was given to the Committee's work programme.

Members requested that officers drafting the forthcoming CIL report be reminded to include detail of CIL spend by Ward. The Clerk advised that officers had been requested to provide as much detail as possible.

It was requested that an information report on road and footway repair, including how surfaces were selected for repair, how petition on the subject were dealt with, and costings of works undertaken, be added to the programme for consideration at a future Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Forward Programme be noted;**

	2. That an information item on road and footway repair be added for consideration at a future Committee meeting.
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.48 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Neil Fraser on 01895 250692 . Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.