

Minutes

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

30 July 2013

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



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chairman), Judith Cooper (Vice-Chairman), David Benson, Lindsay Bliss, Brian Crowe, Jazz Dhillon (Labour Lead), Dominic Gilham, John Hensley and Tony Little</p> <p>Also Present: Josephine Mee (Participation Worker), Tom Murphy (Head of Early Intervention Services), Sarah Rayner (Children's Rights Co-ordinator) and Howard Griffin (Sports Development Manager)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Merlin Joseph (Director of Children & Young People's Services), David Fry (Interim Head of Children's Services), Paul Hewitt (Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance), Laura Palmer (Team Manager, Admissions), Peter Malewicz (Group Finance Manager) and Meng Pocock (Corporate Parenting Manager)</p>
18.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
19.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THE MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Councillor John Riley declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor of Field End Infant School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p> <p>Councillor Judith Cooper declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was a Governor of Charville, St Andrews and the Hillingdon Virtual School. She was also on the Children's Board at Charville and her husband was a Governor at St Mary's School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p> <p>Councillor Dominic Gilham declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor at Pinkwell Primary School and Hillingdon Primary School.</p> <p>Councillor David Benson declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor of Uxbridge High School and lectured at further and higher education colleges. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p> <p>Tony Little declared a general non-pecuniary interest as he was a Governor at Pinkwell Primary School and Harlington Community School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussions.</p>

20.	<p>TO SIGN AND RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 26 JUNE 2013 (Agenda Item 3)</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting dated 26 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record.</p>
21.	<p>MAJOR REVIEW: STRENGTHENING THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AS A CORPORATE PARENT - THIRD WITNESS SESSION (Agenda Item 6)</p> <p>It was noted that an informal session with Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers had taken place earlier in the day. This had been attended by Councillors Cooper and Dhillon and Mr Tony Little. The following summary points from the session were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The children and young people had seemed to be so affected by the instability of their pasts that they were extremely anxious about any changes in their lives. This included the sometimes regular changes to foster carers and social workers and, on leaving care, changes to the Borough in which they lived. ▪ It was apparent that the issue of consistency for these children and young people was extremely important. This was highlighted by the suggestions for improvement that were made that focused on creating stability. ▪ A number of the children and young people had raised concerns that communication with their social workers was often poor. This led to uncertainty about what was going to happen to them in the future. ▪ A number of the children and young people had noted that there was a lot of bureaucracy when it came to obtaining paperwork and forms. This was especially problematic when social workers were on leave and non-urgent decisions could not be made without them. <p>It was acknowledged that the points raised in the above summary were mainly negative but that the children and young people had also praised the Council for the improvements to the service.</p> <p>Witnesses</p> <p>To assist Members with the review Tom Murphy, Head of Early Intervention Services; Josephine Mee, Participation Worker; Sarah Rayner, Children's Rights Co-ordinator; and Howard Griffin, Sports Development Manager were present to provide evidence.</p> <p>A summary of the evidence provided to the Committee is set out below:</p> <p>Early Intervention</p> <p>The Committee heard that the Council engaged with LAC placed outside of the Borough through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tracking education, employment and training outcomes; ▪ Working to support and advocate better services provided to Hillingdon's LAC in partner local authorities; ▪ Using the personal adviser network to provide support to all LAC in and out of Borough; and ▪ Developing a key worker model to encourage a more holistic approach to the support of all of Hillingdon's LAC. <p>It was noted that the engagement of out-of-Borough LAC was a challenge to the service that required further work.</p>

Officers and witnesses advised that one of the primary objectives of the Council's support to LAC was to place them in foster care as this most replicated 'normal' life. Consequently, the Council tried to empower foster carers to act as parents and to encourage LAC to take part in regular sporting, social and other events based on their interests. However, it was noted that, the more complex the child's needs, the more problematic it was to get them to engage in such activities. Nonetheless, the Council undertook work across its departments to engage these children and provide them with consistency in their lives.

Although there had been a request within one of the LAC's written submissions that a youth club be developed for LAC in the Borough, there was a sensitive balance to be struck between providing LAC with opportunities to interact with one another and not separating and stigmatising them. It was noted that the Council did work to provide choice to LAC based on their individual needs and that there were opportunities for children who wanted to share their experiences with those in similar situations and for those who did not. To assist with this choice, the Families' Information Service provided a Family Information Directory (4YOU). This was a useful resource for LAC as it provided information on what services and activities were available in the Borough.

It was agreed that the usage data relating to the Family Information Directory (4YOU) website would be circulated to Members should this be possible.

With regard to inducting children into care, witnesses advised that this role was largely devolved so that foster carers and residential care workers explained to LAC what to expect. This was part of carers' daily lives and they could, therefore, be responsive to the specific needs of each child. It was also noted that the quality of care and induction of LAC was monitored by Independent Reviewing Officers who were consistent figures in these children's lives. If these officers were informed of any issues, they would work to resolve them and support the child.

It was noted that all LAC's participation in education was monitored. Where this was low, Personal Advisers and the Virtual School were able to provide additional support.

Participation work with LAC

Witnesses noted that the Council worked to give LAC the confidence to use universal rather than targeted services as this was what they would be experiencing in their independent and adult lives. However, where children did want to interact with others in care, this was provided to avoid them feeling isolated in their experiences.

Officers emphasised the importance of providing both transition for LAC into independent living and environments in which experiences could be shared and friendships made. It was suggested that the Council could do between four and six social events each year for the children to enjoy themselves and celebrate their success. The Kids in Care Awards were commended but it was felt that an event for all LAC rather than just those receiving awards would be beneficial.

Witnesses advised there was a perception that the Council over consulted young people on their experiences and that not enough was done to communicate what was done as a result of this feedback. This led to them feeling under valued by the Council and unable to effect change. It was suggested that the Council could communicate more clearly with LAC what they had suggested, where suggestions had gone and how this had been acted upon / changed. However, it was emphasised that officers were both honest and clear with the young people concerning the limitations to what could

be done.

It was noted that an internet forum or an app for a mobile device would be a good way to communicate with and engage LAC as this was how they tended to communicate themselves. Although great care would have to be paid to safeguarding issues and the financial viability of this technology, it was emphasised that it would greatly improve how and what the Council could communicate to LAC.

It was noted that the peer mentoring scheme had just begun and that there was hope that it would have a positive impact on the experiences of LAC in the Borough. This involved care leavers being trained to mentor those in care and the first cohort had been trained in June 2013. Although there had not yet been many referrals for mentees, those that had been referred were in the process of being matched with a mentor.

Access to sport and leisure

Witnesses advised that the Council sought to keep young people involved in sport irrespective of their situation. This meant that most of their work was not specific to LAC. However, work to communicate to LAC what sporting and leisure activities were available was taking place and information had recently been provided at the Health Sub Group of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The viability of providing reduced admission fees for LAC at the Council's sporting and leisure facilities was discussed. Witnesses noted that there would be significant cost implications with such a scheme and that the Council would have to reimburse the operators of leisure facilities for any additional use. A voucher scheme was suggested as a more viable option but this too would have significant cost implications.

Members asked whether it would be possible to collect data on the use of leisure facilities by LAC. Witnesses noted that this might be possible but that the mechanics would have to be worked out. Officers advised that this would be investigated.

A number of Members noted that they did not want to provide free use of facilities but access with significantly reduced fees. A further suggestion was made that taster sessions be put on in the Borough's leisure facilities for LAC to introduce them to sports and activities.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. Steven Maiden to investigate whether data is available on the Family Information Directory (4YOU) is available and circulate it to Members if possible.**
- 2. Howard Griffin to investigate the viability of collecting data on LAC use of sporting and leisure facilities. Steven Maiden to circulate findings to Committee Members outside of the meeting.**

22.

BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING SERVICES 2014/15 (Agenda Item 7)

Officers introduced the report and informed Members that the report set out the main financial issues facing Children & Young People's Services and the work being undertaken to address these issues. Points raised included:

- Local Government funding being cut in the recent Comprehensive Spending Review.

- The estimated savings for the Council in 2014/15 were £17m.
- The Council held £30m of balances which was seen to be a healthy position.
- The Children and Families Bill 2013 was expected to present challenges to the Council's budgets although details were not yet fully known.
- There had been significant changes to the Ofsted regime which was expected to have an impact across Education and Children's Services, including the Borough's schools.

It was agreed that the "Single Inspection Framework for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers" referred to in the report would be circulated to all Committee Members outside of the meeting.

The Deputy Director, Children and Families advised that an outline agreement had been reached with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) for a Gateway 2 agreement with the four gateway authorities of Hillingdon, Solihull, Croydon and Kent. She noted that discussions were ongoing but that on the following day she was attending a meeting with the UKBA and that the minutes from this meeting would be circulated for information.

It was agreed that the Group Finance Manager would attend the meeting on 09 October 2013 to provide further information to Members.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **Steven Maiden to circulate the "Single Inspection Framework for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers" to Committee Members.**
2. **Merlin Joseph to provide minutes from her meeting with the UKBA regarding Gateway 2. Steven Maiden to circulate to Committee Members.**
3. **Steven Maiden to invite Peter Malewicz to the meeting to be held on 09 October 2013.**

23. **SECOND ROUND SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Officers provided an update on the late applications for places in the Borough's schools in which it was noted that all 189 late applications to secondary schools had received a place. There was a comfortable surplus for secondary school places across the Borough. It was noted that there had been 411 applications to the Borough's primary schools of which only 22 had not received a school place. This was due to unexpected delays with the approval of two Free Schools set to open in the Borough. However, since the agenda for this meeting had been circulated one of the free schools had been approved.

Members asked what was meant by children being offered a "reasonable" offer. Officers advised that for primary schools this meant that the school was within 2 miles of the child's home and for secondary schools it meant that the school was within 3 miles walking distance or 1 hour on public transport.

A Member asked whether there would be significant surplus of reception class places. Officers advised that there was a small surplus but that this was spread throughout the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Second Round Schools Admissions Update.

24.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan.</p>
25.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Steven Maiden add “Consideration of the Budget Planning Report” on to the Work Programme for 09 October 2013. 2. The Committee noted the dates of the meetings and the Committee’s future meetings.
	<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 Steven Maiden on 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.