

Minutes

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

15 April 2015



Meeting held at Committee Rooms 3 & 3a - Civic
Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8
1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Hensley (Chairman), Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman), Nick Denys, Jem Duducu, Tony Eginton, Duncan Flynn, Peter Money, Jane Palmer, Jan Sweeting (Labour Lead) and Tony Little.</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Vince Clark (Interim Assistant Director Children in Care, Permanency and Children's Resources), Nikki Cruickshank (Interim Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Dan Kennedy (Head of Business Performance, Policy and Standards) and Jon Pitt (Democratic Services Officer).</p>
73.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>No apologies for absence were received.</p>
74.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THE MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>No Declarations of Interest were made.</p>
75.	<p>MATTERS NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OR URGENT (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>No matters had been notified in advance or as urgent.</p>
76.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED PART 1 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all agenda items were Part I and would be discussed in public.</p>
77.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2015 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">In relation to Agenda Item 6, it was requested that the word "consistently" be removed from the following sentence of the minutes: "In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the percentage of cases consistently meeting 'good' standards currently stood at 35%."In relation to Agenda Item 6, it was requested that a sentence be added to the minutes to reflect that the Ofsted Action Plan had not been provided in a clear and concise way.

Resolved: That:

- 1. Subject to the amendments requested above being made, the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 March 2015 be agreed as a correct record.**

78. UPDATE ON THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN (Agenda Item 6)

Officers introduced a progress report on the development of improvement activities that had been incorporated into the Children and Young People's Services Improvement Plan (SIP).

The SIP, that was designed to deliver sustainable improvement through good social work practice, contained seven high level workstreams. Delivery was being monitored on a monthly basis by the Senior Management Team within Children and Young People's Services. Workforce development would be a key element of the plan, with service delivery being based around the needs of children and young people.

The SIP was a dynamic document that would change on a daily basis. Benchmarking had been undertaken against statistical neighbours and national averages.

A flatter management structure was being implemented that would result in a ratio of six social workers to each manager. This was part of a wider workforce plan designed to ensure good practice management, training and supervision.

Members commended officers on the work undertaken to date and questioned whether the SIP had been agreed by the Council Leader. Officers confirmed that the Plan had been agreed and that the service was now moving forward with implementation.

The managed service Skylakes team was being continued until recruitment of permanent staff improved. The budgets were now in place to facilitate this with initial recruitment activity focusing on team managers. Expressions of interest had been received from agency staff that wanted to become permanent. This was being encouraged. Once this process had been completed, action would be taken to fill remaining vacancies.

A Member felt that the proposed start date of April 2015 for activities within the SIP was disappointing as officers had previously advised that this would take place early in the New Year. Officers advised that work was being undertaken with providers to set out requirements and that the Council was in the position to offer potential staff a good employment package, particularly in terms of working conditions and caseloads.

The Committee asked whether recruitment agencies would be used for the recruitment of new staff and whether officers were confident that suitable people were available to employ locally. Officers advised that the main recruitment activity would be undertaken in-house and that agencies would only be used to assist with marketing. To help ensure the successful recruitment of staff, it was important that Hillingdon was seen as being a good place to work.

The role of the social worker had been broadened in terms of the variety of work

available and it was felt that this and the reduced turnover of staff would help to increase the appeal of working for the Council. The Chairman noted that details of the employment offer were available via the Council website.

It was acknowledged that communication with staff had not always been as good as it could have been. A staff meeting was due to take place the week following the Committee meeting to help address this.

Members asked whether the Plan would be submitted to Ofsted and requested that the measures and milestones that were to be used within the SIP be circulated to the Committee. Officers advised that the measures and milestones could be provided once the SIP was fully in place. There had been a focus on statistical measures. Some local measures still needed to be tested and there were data sets that would need to change. The measures would all be included in the SIP and could be provided as a separate sheet if requested by the Committee. It was confirmed that the Plan would be submitted to Ofsted.

The Committee sought clarification in relation to the meaning of the acronym ASYE. It was confirmed that this stood for Assessed and Supported Year in Employment.

On behalf of the Committee, The Chairman expressed recognition and thanks for the work undertaken so far and requested that officers relayed this message to staff.

Resolved: That:

- 1. A detailed progress report in relation to delivery of the SIP be presented to the Committee at its July 2015 meeting.**
- 2. Quarterly progress reports on delivery of the SIP be provided to the Committee.**
- 3. The report be noted.**

79. **QUARTERLY CHILD SOCIAL CARE AUDIT UPDATE 2014 - 2015** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Officers introduced a brief update report on audit activity undertaken over the previous quarter and the audit programme for 2015/16. The un-moderated audit results for March 2015 were tabled at the meeting. These showed that the number of cases graded as good had increased from February to March 2015. There had been a general downward trend in the number of cases graded as inadequate, but it was noted that there had been an increase in inadequate cases between February and March 2015.

Members asked what the reasons were for the increase in inadequate cases. Officers stated that they were not particularly concerned by this increase as the general trend was downwards, although it was acknowledged that further improvement was required. The increase could have been due to an increase in cases or due to a specific part of the service or small element of the case. QA mentors worked with the relevant social worker and team manager to review all inadequate cases. Officers would need to investigate further in order to establish the precise reasons. In response to a separate Member question, officers advised that ungraded audits were cases that were still in the process of being audited.

It was noted that the Audit Programme for 2015/16 had been finalised. This would include monthly single agency audits, Thematic Audits and Multi-Agency Audits.

An electronic audit tool would be introduced in April 2015, covering all monthly, thematic and multi-agency audits. The tool would provide better management oversight and facilitate easy access to specific information.

The Committee questioned which organisation had lead responsibility for multi-agency audits. Officers advised that these would be completed in partnership with the Hillingdon Children's Safeguarding Board (HSCB). The HSCB Business Manager led these audits and the timescales were co-ordinated by the HSCB Board.

Committee Members reflected that overall, they were satisfied with the progress made and thanked officers for the work undertaken.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The report be noted.**

80. **REVIEW OF LEAVING CARE GRANT** (*Agenda Item 8*)

The Chairman introduced a report in relation to a review of the Leaving Care Grant. The Corporate Parenting Board and the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services had requested that the Committee give consideration to the value of the grant payable to care leavers.

A review of the grant had been undertaken in 2012 / 13 that had resulted in the grant having been increased from £1,000 to £1,500 or £1,800 in exceptional circumstances. Department for Education guidance now recommended that local authorities paid a minimum Leaving Care Grant of £2,000.

Officers advised that funding was available to enable the Leaving Care Grant to be increased to £2,000 for all eligible care leavers within Hillingdon. The increase would be incorporated into existing service budgets and would therefore not require separate Cabinet approval.

Committee Members raised concerns that a grant of £2,000 would only be in line with the nationally recommended minimum and that it might be anticipated that a London Borough would provide a higher level of grant. It was also questioned whether officers would have discretion in exceptional circumstances. It was confirmed that exceptional circumstances would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The Chairman reflected that the proposed increase represented a 25% increase in the payment to be made for non-exceptional cases and noted that the Committee could discuss the level of grant payable again at a future meeting, if it so wished.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The report and verbal update provided be noted.**

81. **QUARTERLY SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 9*)

Officers introduced the Quarterly Schools Place Planning Update to inform the Committee about the demand for school places in Hillingdon.

Thursday 16 April 2015 was the national offer day for primary school places, with admission figures being due for release at 5 PM. Within Hillingdon, there had been a seven percent increase in applications for primary school places compared to the previous year. A total of 4,145 admission applications had been made for primary school places.

85% of applications for September 2015 admission to primary schools within Hillingdon would be offered their first choice, which was above the national average. There was remaining residual demand in three parts of the Borough. These were Northwood, the Coteford/Warrender area and Ruislip / South Ruislip. As a consequence, work was taking place at three primary schools in the north of the Borough to identify the potential for future expansion. The Committee asked what the timescales were for site visits to be undertaken to the three primary schools. It was confirmed that the visits were likely to take place within the next six to eight weeks in order to inform options for expansion.

The admissions situation at secondary level was similar, with every child having been offered a place. The offers for admission in September 2015 had been made in March. There had been a year on year increase to 74% in applications awarded their first preference. Hillingdon was also 6% above the London average for offering a school place within the applicant's top three choices.

Significant expansion was being undertaken of secondary provision in Hillingdon. It was proposed that three local secondary schools be expanded. These were Northwood School, Swakeley's School and Abbotsfield School. Confirmation had been received from the Secretary of State that a planning application in relation to the expansion of Northwood School could be submitted for consideration by the Council's Planning Committee. The expansion plans would create a total of an additional 5.5 forms of entry, but there would still be a requirement for a further circa 21 forms of entry. Expansion of five other schools was under consideration. It was forecast that the expansions would result in the demand for places being met over the next five years.

The Council made use of population projections and house building data to predict the demand for school places. These predictions were updated each summer. In Hillingdon, every child had been offered a school place and this would not be the case in several areas across the country.

The Committee questioned whether the nomadic nature of the local population made predicting the demand for school places more challenging. It was also asked whether the place predictions took into account the likely number of pupils living outside the Borough but attending schools within it. Officers confirmed that this and the fact that house building could not be factored into predictions until planning permission had been given meant that it was difficult to predict demand for places more than five years ahead with precision. Migration from other Local Authority areas for places at Hillingdon Schools presented a challenge, particularly in the north and east of the Borough. Population projections, which were available up until 2030, were used to help forecast the demand for places and adjustments were made to reflect the likely demand from pupils living outside the Borough. The actual place offers that had already been made for secondary schools and were in the process of being made for

primary schools, would be compared to predictions made previously. This would enable refinements to predictions in future forecasts.

A Member asked whether the Council had been successful in its bid for basic need funding in 2015. This Government funding was provided to local authorities each year to help them fulfil their duty to ensure that there were enough school places available in the local area. It was confirmed that Hillingdon had been allocated circa £6 million for 2015/16. This was not a bid that officers had made but had been based on assessed need by the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency. This compared to neighbouring Harrow that had been allocated circa £30 million.

The Committee raised concerns that Harrow appeared to be getting a better deal in terms of the basic need funding and that the funding did not always properly reflect where people lived. Officers advised that as the allocations were based upon current need, Hillingdon's small allocation was reflective of the relatively small gap in places in Hillingdon. The Council had been allocated more funding in previous years because there had then been a greater need for additional places that had attracted a high share of funding.

It was questioned why Hertfordshire was experiencing a shortage of school places. Members asked whether this was due to parental preference, underperformance by schools in Hertfordshire or whether there were geographical factors. Officers advised that Hertfordshire had been refining and continuing to develop their forecasting model that demonstrated need in the South Oxley area. It was understood that house building in this area was also having an effect on the demand for places in Hertfordshire. This had a knock on effect on demand in the north of Hillingdon.

It was noted that there would always be situations in which school places became available after initial allocations had been made. In September 2014, for example, some children had not arrived at their allocated school on the first day of term. This had been due to their parents not having informed the Council that they no longer required their allocated place (e.g. they had moved or made alternative arrangements for education).

The Officer's report stated that families were moving into Planning Primary Area 3, Cotefield, which was helping to fuel demand for places. The Committee asked where these families were moving to the area from. Officers advised that the families were moving into Hillingdon, which included families moving from inner London.

In relation to Planning Area 5, Ruislip / South Ruislip, it was questioned whether there was currently a shortage of provision in Harrow and Hertfordshire. Concerns were raised that expanded provision in the north of Hillingdon would have the unintentional consequence of meeting the increased demand for places caused by the house building taking place in South Oxley, Hertfordshire. It was noted that there were some place shortages in these areas but that Harrow was undertaking a large programme of school expansion. Parents from outside the Borough were also able to apply for places at schools in the Borough even if they lived more than two miles from the relevant school. This was due to parental preference.

Officers confirmed that no decision had yet been made in relation to the expansion of schools in the north of the Borough. This work was currently at the options and appraisal stage. Each application for a school place was considered against specific criteria and it was noted that although distance from school was a factor, it was not possible to prioritise applicants living within Hillingdon over those from outside the

Borough who lived closer to a particular school.

It was confirmed that appeals in relation to the allocation of places had to be made to the Local Education Authority of the area in which the applicant resided (if this is the Admissions Authority) or to an Academy School as appropriate. The Committee asked what would happen in the event that a pupil from outside the Borough applied for a place within Hillingdon and all places had been allocated. Officers advised that in these circumstances, the application would be referred back to the local authority in the area that the pupil lived. This local authority would then be required to find the pupil a place.

Officers advised that a meeting was due to be held in May 2015 between Hillingdon Council and the Education Funding Agency to discuss future funding arrangements for school expansion. The purpose of the meeting was to enable officers to fully understand the criteria for the funding available in 2016. It would also help ensure that the Agency was aware of home to school travel patterns and future expansion requirements across the Borough.

The "Greenwich judgement" was referenced by Committee Members. This [and the subsequent "Rotherham judgement"] had clearly established the right of a parent to apply for a place for their child at any school, regardless of the distance they lived from the school. However, the distance that a child lived from a particular school was only one of a number of admissions criteria. The priority status that siblings of existing pupils at a school were given by the admissions criteria was likely to be one of the causes of the pressure on places in the north of the Borough. It was anticipated that this pressure would decrease over time.

It was noted that, compared to the previous year, there had been a 3.49% in applications made on time for school admissions in September 2015. Officers felt that this was, in part, due to the Council being more proactive in its communication with parents. One example of this was the contacting of parents who had children in nursery that were due to start school. This was to make them aware that they needed to apply for a school place for their child. This was important because parents sometimes wrongly assumed that their child attending a nursery that was attached to a school would automatically result in their child being allocated a place at that school.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The Report be noted.**

82. **UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST REVIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE** (*Agenda Item 10*)

The Committee was provided a paper that gave an update on the recommendations made by three previous reviews.

The review topics included:

- Elective Home Education
- Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training
- Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent

In relation to Recommendation 2 of the review, 'Strengthening the Council's Role as a

Corporate Parent', a Committee Member expressed surprise that not all looked after children were registered with a GP. Officers advised that work was undertaken to ensure that the number of unregistered children was at a minimum, but exact figures were not available. Some cases of unregistered children were caused by unaccompanied child asylum seekers arriving from overseas. The Council did not always know where these children were, which could result in them not being registered with a GP.

In relation to Recommendation 8 of the review, 'Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent', the Committee questioned what actions were being taken to clarify the recommendation. Officers advised that a response would be provided to the Committee.

Resolved: That:

- 1. An update in relation to Recommendation 8 of the review 'Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent' be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.**
- 2. The Corporate Parenting Board be asked to review the health outcomes of looked after children at a future meeting.**
- 3. The report be noted.**

83. POTENTIAL REVIEW TOPICS OR IDEAS FOR FIRST MAJOR REVIEW OF 2015/16
(Agenda Item 11)

The committee was provided with a list of suggested topics for the first major review of the 2015/16 municipal year.

The Chairman informed the Committee that a joint review of CAMHS (Child and Mental Health Services) was under discussion. If agreed, it was anticipated that a joint working group would be established. The group would include representation from the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee, External Services Policy Overview Committee and also from the Corporate Parenting Board.

There was a short discussion about potential review topics for the Committee to consider undertaking in 2015/16. It was agreed that the provisional title of the first major review of the new municipal year would be 'Review of the early help systems in Hillingdon to ascertain their effectiveness in the prevention of neglect and poverty.' It was noted that the selection of this topic would be subject to the agreement of the Committee at the June 2015 meeting.

Other potential review topics considered included a major review of fostering and adoption processes and a single meeting review on alternative education provision. These ideas would be considered at a future Committee meeting.

Resolved: That:

- 1. Subject to the agreement of the Committee at its June 2015 meeting, the title of the first major review of 2015/16 would be 'Review of the early help systems in Hillingdon to ascertain their effectiveness in the prevention of neglect and poverty.'**
- 2. That Officers develop a draft scoping report for the first major review to be considered at the June 2015 Committee meeting.**
- 3. That the list of potential review topics for 2015 / 16 be noted.**

84.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 12</i>)</p> <p>Resolved: That:</p> <p>1. The Forward Plan be noted.</p>
85.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15 (<i>Agenda Item 13</i>)</p> <p>The following additions to the Committee's draft 2015/16 Work Programme were noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An update on the implementation of the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy would be brought to the October 2015 meeting. 2. A detailed progress report in relation to delivery of the Children and Young People's Service Improvement Plan (SIP) would be presented at the July 2015 meeting. 3. Quarterly progress reports on delivery of the SIP would be provided to the Committee. 4. Subject to agreement of the Committee at the June 2015 meeting, the first major review of 2015/16 would be added to the Work Programme. <p>Committee Members thanked the Chairman for his work during the 2014/15 municipal year.</p> <p>Resolved: That: subject to the above amendments, the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.30 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Jon Pitt on 01895 277655. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.