

Minutes

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

24 June 2015



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Jane Palmer (Chairman), Teji Barnes, Tony Eginton, Duncan Flynn, Dominic Gilham, Becky Haggart, John Oswell, Jan Sweeting (Labour Lead) and Michael White.</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Vince Clark (Assistant Director, Children's Social Care), Nikki Cruickshank (Interim Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance), Dan Kennedy (Head of Business Performance, Policy & Standards), Tom Murphy (Head of Early Intervention Services), Laura Palmer (School Placement and Admissions Team Manager), Tony Zaman (Director Adult Social Services / Director Children & Young People Services (Interim)), Jon Pitt (Democratic Services Officer).</p>
3.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Nick Denys (Vice-Chairman), with Cllr. Dominic Gilham substituting, from Cllr Jem Duducu with Cllr. Michael White substituting, from Cllr. Peter Money, with Cllr John Oswell substituting and from Mr Tony Little.</p>
4.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THE MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>No Declarations of Interest were made.</p>
5.	<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>
6.	<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>
7.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 APRIL 2015 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Committee requested that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April be updated to reflect that Members had thanked the then Chairman of the Committee, Cllr John Hensley, for his contribution during the 2014/15 municipal year.</p>

Resolved: That:

1. Subject to the above addition, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

8. **TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2015**
(Agenda Item 6)

Resolved: That:

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

9. **SCHOOL ADMISSIONS UPDATE** *(Agenda Item 7)*

Officers provided an update on school admissions in the Borough. This updated the Committee on the allocation of primary and secondary places offered in Hillingdon for September 2015.

All applications for a school place for September 2015 had been made a reasonable offer of a place, including applications that had been received late. In response to a Member question, officers advised that the definition of reasonable was receiving an offer of a place for a school that was within three miles of a pupil's home or within an hour's travel time. In practice, pupils had been offered a school within 2.5 miles of their home, unless the applicant had expressed a preference for a school further away.

It was noted that performance had been good with a high proportion of parents having been offered one of their top three preferences. Hillingdon was 6% above the London average in terms of the number of pupils offered a place at their first preference school. Performance in Hillingdon had also been above average in previous years. There had been a 3.4% increase compared to 2014 in applications for reception places and a 2.9% increase in applications for secondary places. This equated to a total of 4,126 applications for a primary place and 3,044 applications for a secondary place. The national offer day for primary school places had been in April and there were currently around 400 places remaining.

Hillingdon had achieved the highest number of first preference offers and first to third preference offers for secondary school places of any local authority in West London. All admissions appeals for entry to community schools in the Borough during the 2014/15 academic year had been successfully defended. There had been 26 such appeals and it was noted that this figure was significantly lower than in other nearby local authorities.

Officers had started to make preparations for the 2016 admissions cycle and it was anticipated that publicity brochures would be available for September. Staff would attend school open days to inform parents about the admissions process. The main aim of this and other publicity was to increase the number of admissions made on time. Officers had presented to a Hillingdon Improvement Programme (HIP) meeting in April and had started work with the Access Channel Manager to enable the School Admissions service to be more pro-active. One example of this was encouraging would be parents to register for updates before their children had been born.

The Committee welcomed the school admissions performance and the improvements made. In response to a Member question, officers advised that over 90% of applications for school places had been made online, although some parents had submitted both electronic and paper versions of their applications.

Members asked whether the increased capacity had been fully utilised at schools that had already been expanded. It was confirmed that 11% of places in reception had been vacant for entry in September 2014 and that the figure for September 2015 would be 8%, excluding late applications. The Borough was broken down into a number of Primary Planning Areas and full capacity was being used in some of these, with some individual schools, such as John Locke and Lake Farm Park being full or close to full. There was a need to balance availability of places with demand. Successful balancing was reflected in the number of applicants offered their first choice.

Members questioned why the overall number of primary places available for September 2015 had fallen slightly. Officers confirmed that this was due to Nanaksar Primary reducing their published admission number to zero, over which the Council had no control. In the event that Nanaksar's published admission number had remained at 120, the total number of places available for reception applicants would have increased by 70. The Education Funding Agency had factored places that were expected to be offered by Nanaksar's into its funding calculations, which could cause difficulties if anticipated places did not materialise for 2016. In the event that places are offered at Nanaksar for 2016 there was a likelihood of some parents looking to move children from other schools.

Pupils living outside the Borough and attending schools within it did put some pressure on places, but this was balanced by pupils living in Hillingdon who travelled to school outside the Borough. A number of children commuted into the Borough to attend faith schools, but a number of others travelled out of Hillingdon to attend selective schools. 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.

The Committee questioned what action was being taken in relation to pupils not being offered a place due to the applicant not using their maximum number of preferences, or where an application was submitted for a school that the pupil was unlikely to meet the admissions criteria for. Officers responded that admissions staff attend open days to provide information about the admissions process. Literature had been provided to nurseries, infant and primary schools and a publicity video was being developed for the Council website. Parents that had submitted applications with limited or unsuitable choices were contacted to ask if they would like to reconsider their choices ahead of places being allocated. It was noted that Hillingdon had the highest percentage of any London Borough for the percentage of applicants offered their first choice of primary school.

The Committee asked whether there had been an increase in the number of applications to faith schools, for details of place availability across the Borough and for timescales in relation to school expansion. There was no noticeable trend with regard to faith schools. There had been a slight fall in applications for September 2014 entry, followed by an increase this year. There was, however, a noticeable trend towards applications for schools that had new facilities. In the north of the Borough there were 60 places available in Northwood and Harefield, while in the south of the Borough there were four secondary schools with a good availability of places. However, it was anticipated that there would be a pressure on school places within the next three years. This was particularly the case in the north of the Borough, due to there being fewer schools and therefore, fewer places available. This demand was being addressed in a number of ways. Plans were progressing for the rebuilding or expansion of Northwood, Abbotsfield and Swakeleys secondary schools and the possibility of expanding three primary schools.

sites was being investigated.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services had been briefed on the school expansion proposals. A feasibility study would be undertaken during the summer in order to facilitate the development of proposals in the autumn. It was noted that a number of secondary school sites were constrained in terms of the opportunity for expansion, especially as secondary expansion required more space than primary expansion.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The School Admissions Update be noted.**

10. **FURTHER UPDATE ON PREVIOUS REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AS CORPORATE PARENT** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Officers introduced a brief update on Recommendation 8 of the previous Committee review, 'Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent.'

Recommendation 8 of the review had been "Instruct officers to investigate the viability of building education, residential and respite accommodation alongside the future development of schools in the Borough and report findings back to Cabinet in due course."

Officers had previously advised the Committee that work was taking place to clarify the recommendation. Members were informed that the issue was under consideration as part of the Resources Sufficiency Strategy. The Strategy, which outlined planning for children in care, was due to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board at its July 2015 meeting.

Resolved: That:

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

11. **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY HELP IN HILLINGDON IN THE PREVENTION OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES** (*Agenda Item 9*)

The Committee was presented with a draft scoping report for the Committee's first major review of 2015/16. The proposed title of the review was "The Effectiveness of early help in Hillingdon in the prevention of negative outcomes for families."

Some Committee Members expressed concerns that the words "poverty" and "neglect" that had featured in a previous version of the title had been removed. The Members felt that these issues were key and that it was important that they be included in the title of the review. Members referenced the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment that contained a variety of information in relation to these issues and which they felt emphasised their importance in Hillingdon. It was suggested that the Assessment would be a key source document for the review. The Members requested that the review should consider the differences between the north and south of the Borough and investigate the number of children affected by neglect and poverty locally. There had been pockets of relative poverty in the Borough for a number of years and the Members felt that the review should seek to address these.

Officers advised that the terms 'neglect' and 'poverty' had not been included because the work of early intervention services was broad. Inclusion of such terms in the title

could, therefore, have the unintended consequence of other factors not being fully considered by the review and there would also be a danger of the focus of early intervention being overlooked.

Other Members felt that the review would be a lot broader than the issues of 'poverty' and 'neglect' and that it would, therefore, not be appropriate to include them in the title. A Member also raised concerns about use of the word 'poverty', due to the negative stereotypes that it could portray. There was also a discussion about whether the word 'vulnerable' should be included in the review title. Some Members felt that it was important to make this distinction, while others felt that this could lead to issues affecting other families not being considered. The Chairman reflected that the issue of poverty would be considered during the review regardless of whether it was included in the title. In response to a suggestion that a working title could be adopted and later changed, the Chairman stated that her preference would be for the title to be agreed at the current meeting.

Officers suggested that the title of the review could be more positive and that "prevention of negative outcomes" could be altered to "promote positive outcomes."

The following review title was proposed for consideration by the Committee, "The effectiveness of early help to promote positive outcomes for families." The proposed title was moved, seconded and upon being put to a vote was agreed by five votes to four.

It was agreed that the draft scoping report would be amended to make specific reference to poverty within the terms of reference and also within the aims and background to review section of the document.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The title of the major review was agreed as "The effectiveness of early help to promote positive outcomes for families."**
- 2. The scoping report be revised to make specific reference to poverty within the terms of reference and within the aims and background to the review.**
- 3. Officers to arrange for appropriate witnesses to attend the meeting of the Committee due to be held on 9 September 2015.**

12. **FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 10*)

Members asked for confirmation that the School Improvement Plan would be going to Cabinet in July 2015. Officers advised that a Plan would be considered by Cabinet in July. This would be followed by the submission of a more detailed Commissioning Plan in September 2015.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The Forward Plan be noted.**

13. **WORK PROGRAMME 2015/2016** (*Agenda Item 11*)

Members asked whether a topic had been selected for the Committee's second review of 2015/16. Officers advised that the Committee had previously identified alternative education provision as a possible review topic. This would be brought to the Committee for consideration later in 2015.

The Committee asked for a progress update in relation to recruitment of staff as part of the Children's and Young People's Services Improvement Plan. The number of permanent management posts within children's social care that had been filled so far was ten. Officers advised that letters had gone out for Team Manager posts and that recruitment to other posts would follow in the autumn.

It was noted that a full update would be provided to the Committee at the July 2015 meeting.

Resolved: That:

- 1. The Work Programme be noted.**

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00pm, closed at 8.05 pm.

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.