

Minutes

**Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy
Overview Committee
Thursday, 4 January 2018
Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



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Members Present:

Councillors Scott Seaman-Digby (Chairman)
Richard Mills (Vice-Chairman)
Beulah East
Jazz Dhillon
Wayne Bridges
Duncan Flynn
Raymond Graham
Robin Sansarpuri

Apologies:

Henry Higgins

Officers Present:

Gemma McNamara, Finance Manager for Transformation, CEO and Finance
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer
Iain Watters, Financial Planning Manager

Also Present

Ms Sarah Rose, Senior Account Manager, Stonewall
Mr Colin Tucker, Headteacher, Ryefield Primary School

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Henry Higgins.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2017 were approved as a correct record.

45. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that all items would be considered in public.

46. 'HOMOPHOBIC, BIPHOBIC & TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING' REVIEW

Ms Sarah Rose, Senior Account Manager at Stonewall, and Mr Colin Tucker, Headteacher at Ryefield Primary School, were in attendance at the meeting to speak to the Committee as part of the review's witness session.

Mr Tucker noted that the issue of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying is far more nuanced than in previous years, as children are more likely to identify themselves differently, and schools must ensure that they are well equipped to deal with changing times and opinions. Mr Tucker confirmed that bullying does happen at every school, but is not prevalent at Ryefield Primary School. With regards to HBT bullying, there were not cases of this, although the term "that's gay" is sometimes used; however, the phrase is used much less today than in previous years and is not heard much at all anymore. It was noted that this term is used more commonly among years 5 and 6, although it is not necessarily always used in a homophobic manner.

Responding to Members questions, Mr Tucker confirmed that his school does teach children that all people are different, and respect and inclusiveness is used in the subject matter that is taught. Primary Schools historically have not addressed these issues as it is not included in the curriculum and it was not possible to teach children about LGBT rights until 2003 (section 122 of Local Government Act 2003), but the topic would not be pushed aside if it was raised, and is now welcomed by teachers. Different families should be reflected in schools (e.g. same sex parents) and Ofsted now have a focus on the issue, supporting a better understanding of LGBT rights among pupils.

The Committee heard that it was important that children were taught about relationships and friendships, as well as their body in primary school; this does not necessarily mean sex education though, which is taught in secondary schools. Members agreed that the younger children understand that all families are different, the more accepted these perceived differences are as the societal norm. It was noted that children are more aware of relationships, differences and related topics at an earlier age now as it is more visible, either on TV or film, or through social media and the internet.

With regards to sex education, Mr Tucker confirmed that 9-11 year olds were taught about sex, as per the curriculum, focussing on the scientific aspects of the topic in a loving relationship. This does not explicitly reference LGBT sex, but does not exclude same sex couples who are in relationships. Ms Rose noted that from 2019 onwards, relationship education would be made compulsory in every English primary school, and relationships and sex education would be made compulsory in every English secondary school.

Mr Tucker was asked whether parent involvement was required as the influence at home is stronger than from school, and confirmed that in many instances children make the changes first, and then ask parents to change, which often leads to changes in the home as well.

The Committee heard that 40% of trans people between the age of 18-25 knew they were trans before the age of 11, but it is not legal to medically transition before the age of 16. Ms Rose also noted that there were case studies that included children as young as three years old who believed they were a girl, although they were born a boy, and it was important that the topic was not ignored in schools, as primary school pupils may come into contact with other children who feel this way from a very young age.

Mr Tucker confirmed that his school follow a bullying policy which has a section regarding HBT bullying, and although other school's policies may have something similar included in them, all policies were different so that could not be confirmed. Members noted that it was important that any policy was proactive, and not reactive, and any bullying issues need to be eradicated early due to concerns for the mental health of the victim. The Committee noted that Mr Tucker believed most schools would likely find it very useful if the Council released a template or some guidance which helped schools form anti-bullying policies that included best practice regarding dealing with HBT bullying. Schools could then use this guidance or template and adapt it to suit their own schools' needs. Councillors commented that if such guidance was put together, it was important that the victim of the bullying was supported, but there should also be a focus on the bully - bullying takes place due to ignorance, and it can help reduce bullying by educating the perpetrators on the issue. Members noted that it was vital the local authority could support and help teachers to address the issues with parents too.

The Committee confirmed that in addition to guidance regarding bullying, schools may also benefit from some guidance regarding gender in PE and sport at school.

Ms Rose commented that Stonewall's "No Bystanders" campaign focused on how others (who were not victims) act towards bullies and instances of bullying, and other London Boroughs had been involved in this campaign.

The Committee suggested officers look into the possibility of becoming a "Stonewall accredited" Council, as it would be another useful step to support schools, and could help with training for schools on these topics. It was noted that headteachers' conferences could be a good platform for speakers or further training.

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee that a survey on combating HBT Bullying was to be sent to all the schools in the Borough, and Mr Tucker offered to help advertise the importance of the survey at primary school forums.

The Committee thanked Ms Rose and Mr Tucker for their time and input, which was very useful for the review.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the evidence from the witnesses, and agreed to progress the review to the next stage.

47. 2018/19 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF CORPORATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

The Finance Manager for Operational Finance and Financial Planning Manager for Strategic Planning were in attendance to discuss the item with the Committee.

Responding to Members' questioning, Officers confirmed that £7m of savings were outlined in the budget report to Cabinet, and this information would be included in the report to the February Committee meeting, and that £250k allocated for the Uxbridge Police Station was kept aside until there was agreement on the matter with the Mayor of London.

The Committee asked for confirmation on the number of Council houses that had been built, and how these figures compared with the Council's target, and officers confirmed that they would confirm the figure with the Committee via a written answer before the next meeting.

Officers informed Councillors that the £200k additional funding for Counter Fraud Activity which has not all been allocated, but some has been earmarked for an officer from Border Control to work within the team.

RESOLVED: That the budget proposals for services within the remit of Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee were noted.

48. 'EMPLOYEE INDUCTION & RETENTION' REVIEW

The Committee was presented with a draft copy of the 'Employee Induction and Retention' review.

Members commented that they were happy with the draft report, but noted that the recommendations were more weighted towards staff retention. The Committee expressed a wish to include one further recommendation regarding staff induction, and expressed their support for the suggestion that a recommendation be added requesting Human Resources facilitate an informal meeting for new starters at the organisation to give them the opportunity to introduce themselves to other new starters who worked outside the department.

The Committee confirmed that they were happy with the report, and agreed to delegate authority to finalise the report, subject to the addition of the additional recommendation.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. A recommendation be added to the review, to request Human Resources facilitate an informal meeting for new starters at the Council to give them an opportunity to meet other new starters who worked in a different department at the organisation; and**
- 2. The Committee delegated authority for the drafting of the Committee's final report to the Clerk and Workforce and Organisational Development Manager, under consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.**

49. FORWARD PLAN

Councillors requested further information, by way of a written response to the Committee, on the Council's Print Contracts regarding how the tender would be structured.

RESOLVED: That the forward plan was noted, and a written response from officers regarding 'The Council's Print Contracts' was requested.

50. WORK PROGRAMME 2017/2018

RESOLVED: That the work programme was noted, subject to the following changes:

- The Work Programme for 2018/19 be added as an item to the March agenda;
- That the meeting in January 2019 includes an item on potential review topics; and
- That the meeting in March 2019 includes a further item on review topics.