

## Minutes

### CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

18 February 2015

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



	<p><b>Committee Members Present:</b> Councillors John Hensley (Chairman), Nick Denys, Jem Duducu, Tony Eginton, Duncan Flynn, Dominic Gilham, Peter Money, Jane Palmer, Jan Sweeting (Labour Lead) and Mr. Tony Little.</p> <p><b>Also Present:</b> Georgie Bhad (Chairperson, Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum), Wendy Caine (Treasurer, Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum).</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b> Vince Clark (Interim Assistant Director Children in Care, Permanency &amp; Children's Resources), Jackie Wright (Head of Disability Services), Alex Bowman (Disability Services - Programme Manager) and Jon Pitt (Democratic Services Officer).</p>
51.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman), with Cllr. Dominic Gilham substituting.</p>
52.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THE MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>No Declarations of Interest were made.</p>
53.	<p><b>MATTERS NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OR URGENT</b> (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>No matters had been notified in advance or as urgent.</p>
54.	<p><b>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</b> (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that items marked Part 1 would be heard in public and those marked Part 2 would be heard in private.</p>
55.	<p><b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b></p> <p>The Chairman announced that the Labour Lead and he had recently attended a meeting of the External Services Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Family Law Reforms, part of the Children and Families Act 2014. The session, which was attended by Her Honour, Judge Judith Rowe QC, the Designated Family Judge for West London, provided information in relation to the recent legislative changes. The session had been positive and it was noted that there had been a significant improvement in</p>

	<p>the number of incidents going before the courts.</p>
56.	<p><b>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 JANUARY 2015</b> (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>It was requested that further information be provided in relation to attendance at the Hillingdon Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) meetings. Attendance figures had previously been requested during the relevant agenda item at January 2015 meeting of the Committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2015 were agreed as a correct record.</b></li> <li><b>2. Officers were requested to provide more detailed LCSB attendance figures.</b></li> </ol>
57.	<p><b>SINGLE MEETING REVIEW - HILLINGDON'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) REFORMS - WITNESS SESSION</b> (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>A witness session was held to enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of its Single Meeting Review of Hillingdon's Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms. This followed on from a separate witness session that had taken place outside the Committee with the headteacher of a local secondary school.</p> <p>Witnesses attending the session included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Georgie Bhad, Chairperson, Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum</li> <li>• Alex Bowman, SEND Programme Manager, LBH</li> <li>• Wendy Caine, Treasurer, Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum</li> <li>• Jackie Wright, Head of Disability Services, LBH</li> </ul> <p>Officers introduced the Single Meeting Review of Hillingdon's implementation of the reforms. The Scoping Report, which had been agreed by the Committee in January 2015, set out the key areas to be considered as part of the review. These included challenges in relation to the SEND Local Offer and also the transfer from Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans).</p> <p>The SEND reforms had come fully into force on 1 September 2014. The Council had met its statutory obligations, but it was recognised that more work needed to be undertaken in relation to consultation on the content and functionality of the local offer. The consultation was due to commence in the near future. A range of information had been published on the Council website, but it was recognised that improvements were needed in order to make the presentation and interface more user friendly.</p> <p>The representatives from the Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum had been involved from early on in the implementation of the reforms. It was felt that initial plans were not robust enough, but that core workstreams had since been developed, with effective communication having taken place. The representatives felt involved in the process and that their views were taken into account, although it was considered that there was scope for further improvement.</p> <p>The external witnesses stated that the Local Offer met user needs and that this had</p>

been tested. The offer was reasonably easy to navigate, although it was suggested that further work could be undertaken to make the information provided more user-friendly and that links provided on the website could be structured in a more coherent and logical way. Officers reflected that the accessibility of the database containing information on the SEND offer could be improved.

Members were reassured that there was a perception that Hillingdon was ahead of where it needed to be in terms of implementing and communicating the SEND reforms, but concern was expressed that an officer's written statement had referenced a period of tension. The officer stated that this was in relation to working with external agencies and it was felt that the situation had improved markedly in recent months. It was recognised that the Council and its partners needed to work together effectively in order to implement and communicate the changes. A shared understanding had developed in relation to the work that was required. It was stated that there was a need to work in more person centred and outcome focused ways and to ensure that frontline practitioners had all the relevant information to enable them to engage effectively.

The Committee questioned whether funding was available to facilitate the transfer to EHC Plans. It was confirmed, that while the transfer from SEN Statements to the plans was challenging, some funding was available. Children with a SEN Statement or EHC Plan were normally entitled to top up funding, which was allocated to the child's school.

Officers advised that parents had been actively involved in the transfer to the new plans. Feedback would be obtained from families with experience of the plans, but the numbers with experience of them was currently too small for this to be a beneficial exercise at present.

Witness sessions previously held as part of this review and as part of a separate review had identified issues around the referral of young people with mental health issues to Hillingdon CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). It was questioned how these difficulties were being overcome. Officers advised that work was underway with the NHS to look at pathways where specialist support was required.

In summary, it was recognised that good progress had been made on implementation of the reforms. More work, particularly around engagement with parents and communication of the offer would be required.

The Committee thanked the witnesses for attending the witness session and for the information provided.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. The evidence provided be noted.**
- 2. The draft final report be developed and presented to the Committee at the March meeting.**

58. **ADDITIONAL NEEDS STRATEGY - IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 7*)

Officers introduced an update on progress made towards implementation of the Additional Needs Strategy. The Strategy had been approved by Cabinet in November 2014.

Special schools and Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRP) were largely full to capacity and the child population within the Borough was rising. A significant number of

pupils with special educational needs were travelling to schools outside the Borough. The Strategy aimed to enable as many children and young people as possible to attend local schools. Receiving their education within the Borough could be beneficial to the welfare of the child and would also help to minimise home to school transport costs. The Strategy aimed to be as inclusive as possible. SRPs would be developed to enable places at special schools to be reserved for those with the most complex needs.

A number of reasons were noted to explain the variation in the number of young people with special educational needs attending mainstream schools in Hillingdon. Demographics were a factor, but there were other reasons behind the differences. These included differing parental perceptions of schools and there being no moderation process governing how schools classified pupils with special educational needs. This permitted each school to classify pupils in a different way, thereby directly impacting the recorded numbers at each school.

In future there would only be one category of need, other than those with a statement or EHC Plan, which would help to address discrepancies in the number of pupils classified as having special educational needs. Although the reasons behind the differing numbers could be investigated further, it was felt that this would not be an effective use of resources given the changes to the categories.

In order to improve the capacity of special schools in the Borough, Pentland Fields free school opened in January 2015 with 32 pupils (28 are from Hillingdon). Pupil numbers would increase to 70 in September 2015 and to 140 in September 2016. Three SRP's were due to open between April 2015 and January 2016. These were at Lake Park Farm, St Martin's and Cherry Lane. The latter would take all ages of pupil, while the other schools would open in stages as the initial intake of pupils in reception progressed through the school.

It was acknowledged that the capacity and location of SRPs and outreach support needed to be considered further. It was also noted that the number of children with autism was rising, so there needed to be provision available for those with the most complex needs.

It was noted that the SEN (Special Educational Needs) funding provision had previously been determined by an amount per school, rather than by the specific needs of the pupil. A new funding model had been designed and agreed by the Schools Forum. This would ensure that, for pupils with the new Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans, that funding was based more upon pupil needs.

Vyners School has special provision for those with hearing impairments. A site survey had been undertaken and a new modular building would expand SRP provision from September 2015.

Work was underway with Uxbridge College in relation to further education provision for those with more complex needs. This would aim to prevent such students from having to attend colleges outside the Borough. Discussions were taking place between Uxbridge College and another provider to explore joint working options, with the possibility of specialist provision being available from September 2016. Uxbridge College was also investigating Project Search, a nationally recognised project. This involved colleges and employers working together to support young people with complex needs to develop skills for employment. The young people on the programme developed skills and worked in a range of departments across a business.

The Committee was advised that the work being undertaken would make a difference to those with additional needs. However, much of the work was ongoing and would take time to be fully implemented and embedded.

Members asked whether data collection in relation to pupils with special educational needs was straightforward and whether changing needs would be recognised. Members asked whether the Council was reliant on schools for the collection of data. It was also questioned how the changing needs of pupils would be recognised and how the culture was being improved amongst schools that were seen as being less inclusive.

Officers advised that the Council maintained a database of pupils with Special Educational Needs. However, the database did not always reflect changes to the needs of individual pupils. In addition, secondary needs were not listed. Work was being undertaken with the SEN Team to address these issues and with the provider in terms of improvements to the database. Outreach support and training for the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOS) would help in relation to the issue of inclusion. Specific issues raised regarding individual schools would also be followed up.

Members expressed concern in relation to the capacity issues at Meadow and Hedgewood Schools and questioned whether any new accommodation would involve the provision of temporary or permanent buildings. Officers advised that Priority School Building Programme funding was available for Meadow School and that further work was required with both schools to consider the available options. Work was also needed to investigate the wider provision of schools for pupils with severe and moderate learning disabilities.

The Committee expressed thanks to officers for all the work undertaken to date.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. The Board noted the progress made on implementation of the Additional Needs Strategy.**

59. **MAJOR REVIEW - REDUCING THE RISK OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGING IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR - DRAFT REPORT** (*Agenda Item 8*)

The Chairman introduced the Draft Final Report of the Major Review into 'Reducing the Risk of Young People Engaging in Criminal Activity and Anti-Social Behaviour.'

It was noted that some observations had been included in the report in addition to the formal recommendations. This was due to the fact that some of the information and suggestions received by the Committee during the course of the review related to issues that the Council had no direct control over. It would therefore not have been appropriate for these issues to be included as part of the report's recommendations. There was a discussion in relation to how the report would be shared with partner organisations in order to ensure that they were fully aware of the recommendations and observations. It was confirmed that this would be considered further, subject to the approval of the report by Cabinet.

A working draft of the report had included a recommendation around investigating the feasibility of establishing a programme of court visits for local schoolchildren. This had

been excluded from the draft final report due to legal restrictions that could prevent such visits. As an alternative, a more general recommendation had been made for interventions to be investigated that were designed to deter young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. It was noted that one possible initiative referenced in the report was magistrate visits to local schools.

A Member suggested that it might have been useful for more Members to have attended witness sessions held with young people and parents as part of the review. While it was acknowledged that this may have been beneficial, it was also recognised that there was a fine balance to be achieved. This was because it was felt that witnesses may not have been so forthcoming with the information shared if more Members had attended the sessions.

In relation to recommendation number two contained in the report, the Committee felt that the methods used to communicate the establishment of any parenting forums or networks would need to be carefully considered. This was to ensure that parents became aware of the sessions and that the sessions would not be perceived as being critical of them as parents.

The Committee Members thanked the Chairman and officers for their work on the draft report, which was felt to be comprehensive given the information available.

**Resolved that:**

- 1. That the Committee agreed the Draft Report as presented by the Chairman.**
- 2. That the Chairman would present the Draft Report to Cabinet on 19 March 2015.**

60. **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AUDIT FRAMEWORK – CHILDREN'S SERVICES**  
(*Agenda Item 9*)

Officers presented a verbal update on the Quality Assurance and Audit Framework - Children's Services. It was noted that the officer responsible for providing the written report had recently left the authority. A verbal updated was provided and it was agreed that a written report would be brought to the March meeting of the Committee.

The Committee was informed that only 31% of case file audits had been completed by managers in June 2014. There had been a significant improvement since, with the figure having increased to 100% by January 2015. The percentage of 'good' audits had increased from 6/7% in September 2014 to 22% in January 2015.

In response to a Member question expressing concern with regard to the high percentage of cases requiring improvement, it was recognised that this area would require a robust response. A number of changes had already been implemented and evidence to help facilitate improvements had been gathered from a number of agencies. Officers advised that issues had been caused by high staff turnover, both of managers and of practice staff. Vacant first line management posts had been filled in August and September and it was anticipated that this would help to achieve a target of 80% of posts being filled by permanent staff.

It was questioned whether 100% audit compliance would continue. Officers acknowledged that audits were time consuming. The caseload for each social worker had previously been in the high 20's and this had been reduced to 16 per social worker. Consequently, workloads had become more manageable and balanced and a culture

of improvement had been fostered. More social worker posts had been filled, although it was acknowledged that the majority of these were agency, rather than permanent staff.

A Member questioned how it would be possible to improve the percentage of 'good' audits from the current 22% to a target of 80% by October 2015. Officers advised that the reductions in caseloads, service improvements and the filling of posts would help. In addition, training was being improved and a learning cycle developed. This included training in relation to child protection, children in care and the implementation of a three day training programme. Full details would be provided in the report to be presented to the March 2015 meeting of the Committee.

It was questioned how the proposed improvements could be sustained given that the service relied on such a high number of agency staff. Officers confirmed that recruitment activity for permanent staff was planned for next month. It had not been possible for this to take place sooner as it was important that remedial action was taken within the service prior to permanent staff being recruited.

The Chairman reflected that some people would only want to work as agency staff and that therefore a target of 100% permanent staff would not be realistic, but that 80% could be achievable.

The officer presenting the report advised that there was a staff ratio of one manager to every six social workers. It was felt that this provided an acceptable balance between providing effective oversight, while not being too top heavy. The caseload for each manager was currently 90.

Members acknowledged the improvements made to date and questioned how much of the work was outsourced. It was agreed that adequate supervision and support was required to ensure that staff stayed in post. Officers felt that the frontline staff to management ratio and use of the Quality Assurance Framework would help to sustain existing improvement and foster it in the future.

It was confirmed that some work was outsourced but that this was seen as being a temporary measure as the Council would be recruiting permanent staff. It was advised that systems were being established to prevent caseloads from building up. Overall, 45% of staff within Children's Services were permanent staff and 55% were agency staff. Amongst social workers, the figures were 20% and 80% respectively.

**RESOLVED: THAT:**

- 1. The Committee noted the verbal update provided.**
- 2. A written report on the Quality Assurance and Audit Framework - Children's Services be brought to the March meeting of the Committee. It was requested that this include information on staff numbers and a breakdown of quartiles in relation to the audit figures presented at the February 2015 meeting.**

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

Members noted a potential discrepancy in relation to a date provided within an entry in the published Cabinet Forward Plan. This stated that it was proposed to establish new Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) at Cherry Lane Primary from January 2015. As noted during Item 7, the Additional Needs Strategy - Implementation Update, it was

	<p>suggested that this date should be September 2015. Officers advised that this would be investigated outside the meeting.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Forward Plan be noted.</li> <li>2. That the proposed opening date of the Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) at Cherry Lane Primary be investigated outside the meeting.</li> </ol>
62.	<p><b>WORK PROGRAMME</b> (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>The following changes to the Committee's Work Programme were noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A written report on the Quality Assurance and Audit Framework - Children's Services would be brought to the March 2015 meeting. This followed on from the verbal update provided at the February 2015 meeting.</li> <li>2. The update on the implementation of recommendations from a past Committee review into Elective Home Education would be moved from the March 2015 meeting to the April 2015 meeting. This would enable it to be considered at the same meeting as updates on other previous Committee Reviews.</li> <li>3. That updates on two previous reviews, 'Strengthening the Council's Role as a Corporate Parent' and 'Improving Outcomes for Care Leavers Not in Education, Employment or Training' be added to the work programme for the April 2015 meeting.</li> </ol> <p><b>RESOLVED: That: subject to the above amendments, the Work Programme be noted.</b></p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.00 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.