Minutes

HILLINGDON
LONDON

FAMILIES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING SELECT COMMITTEE

27 July 2021

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

	Committee Members Present: Councillors Philip Corthorne (Chairman), Heena Makwana (Vice-Chairman), Judith Cooper, Becky Haggar, Kerri Prince (Opposition Lead), Nicola Brightman (Paula Rodrigues), Jan Sweeting **Co - Opted Member:** Tony Little **LBH Officers Present**: Kate Kelly-Talbot (Director of Service Delivery – Adult Social Work), Alex Coman (Chair of the Children Safeguarding Partnership Board), Darren Thorpe (Head of Business Delivery & Support), Sasha Jeffries (Community Development Manager), Iain Watters (The Head of Finance – Financial Planning, Capital, Treasury & Systems), Dan Kennedy (Corporate Director for Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services), Sarah Phillips (School Place Planning Project Manager) and Anisha Teji (Democratic Services Officer)
15.	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS** *(Agenda Item 1)* Apologies were received from Councillor Paula Rodrigues, with Councillor Nicola Brightman substituting.
16.	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING** *(Agenda Item 2)* None.
17.	**TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** *(Agenda Item 3)* **RESOLVED: That the minutes from the meeting on 3 June 2021 be approved subject to the addition to minute 11 referencing the Committee's intention to consider how Assisted Living Technology was spread geographically across the Borough in its major review.**
18.	**TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART I WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED AS PART II WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE** *(Agenda Item 4)* It was confirmed that there were no Part II items and that all business would therefore be conducted in public.

19. **SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING - QUARTERLY UPDATE - JULY 2021** *(Agenda Item 5)*

The Corporate Director for Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services and the School Place Planning Project Manager introduced the report and provided an overview of the latest quarterly update on school places.

It was noted that the Covid -19 pandemic had had a local and national impact on school planning. Key points of the report were highlighted, with particular reference made to the fact that Hillingdon school rolls remained the seventh highest in London with 52,350 total pupils on roll on the January 2021 school census from nursery to sixth form. Most secondary schools and half of all primary schools were full, all special schools and special resourced places in mainstream had filled up given the rise of Education Healthcare Plans (EHCP) over the past year and although nursery numbers had declined the sixth form number had risen.

Following Member questions, it was confirmed that the Council had a series of structured consultations with schools and schools were aware of the Council's priorities and contributed to them. There were termly meeting with the Primary Forum including primary heads and secondary with secondary heads, and as necessary with individual school leaders and governors. During lockdown there had been more engagement with schools as this could be done virtually. The standard process for new free schools was explained to the Committee with reference to Bishop Arden. This was led by the Department for Education (DFE), and although there had been a drop in primary school places for a number of reasons including Brexit and the impact of pandemic, due diligence checks had to be made to ensure that such an investment was needed. To date, the DfE had agreed that the current and future demand required a new school, noting that the original demand and bid was for north of the A40, but parents choose secondary places across the Borough and beyond, so any new school had to be well located for its whole lifetime to maximise value and serve residents.

Concerns were discussed about the extent current secondary schools were full without the DfE recommended 5% margin of spare capacity and that 16 % of unfilled places in primary schools had become challenging causing budget issues.

Members questioned whether there had been too many primary school places put in place. It was explained that there had been a continuous demand for primary school places in different areas and the Council had invested heavily to expand schools to keep pace with the rising demand up to 2018. There would be some reductions to Published Admissions Numbers to improve operational management, this was normal, as were temporary increases where they were required, and over time the margins could reduce to better reflect parent demand. It was noted that Cabinet would consider the specific cases for reductions in primary school published admission numbers in October 2021 and it was requested that this information be shared with the Committee.

However, the changing picture was significant with factors such as families moving out of the Borough due to Brexit and Covid, economic changes, birth rates decreasing and new housing developments all had an impact on school places. The Council needed to work closely and flexibly with schools to coordinate admission numbers in light of the changing position. It was explained that many vacant physical spaces were used by schools for other purposes to benefit pupils and also improved facilities for children with additional needs.

It was recognised that the school places for secondary schools were limited, but the planned expansion of Harlington school in the south was underway, though there had

	been challenges in finding a suitable site for a new secondary school The Committee was informed that the proposed free school would be subject to detailed consultations on its operation and policies and its application for planning permission from late 2021 into 2022.. The Committee sought clarity on the number of children that had ECHPs awaiting a school place and it was confirmed that as applications were continuous through the year there was often an active waiting list of around 20 children. The Committee would receive further information on ECHPs and special needs at the next meeting. In response to questions about repurposing empty primary classrooms for extra special school places to meet the rise in demand, , many of these were unsuitable due to practical design reasons or did not have the scale of empty spaces needed. Options were being explored such as creating offsite units of existing special schools where those already established schools managed the running of the schools and recruited suitably skilled staff. It was noted that parental preference was significant, as that was how pupils actually joined schools, and parents were becoming more likely to travel across, or out of the borough for good and outstanding schools . It was noted that three faith secondary schools served the whole of the Borough. It was reported that September 2020 had the highest intake of sixth formers. There had been an increase in elective home education, but it was not clear if some of these pupils would return to school when the pandemic receded. Figures of the number of home-schooled children would be provided. The Committee considered school places planning to be an area of complexity and challenge and there were variables and flexibility that needed to be taken into account. The Committee recognised the challenges in planning school places whilst considering the changing position and pandemic. It was encouraging to see the success in making offers with so many preferences in the Borough and officers were commended for their work. **RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the update and actions underway to support parents and schools and questioned officers about the update.**
20.	**HILLINGDON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021** *(Agenda Item 6)* The Chair of the Children Safeguarding Partnership Board and the Director of Service Delivery – Adult Social Work introduced the report on the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2020 – 21. An outline was provided on the work and activities undertaken by the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership (HSP) to support and safeguard adults with support and care needs and vulnerable children and their families. The Committee was informed that effective safeguarding arrangements had ensured that residents remained safe during the pandemic. All the HSP partners had worked collaboratively to ensure that the changing needs of residents had been met. All agencies had seen increased levels of mental health issues, domestic abuse and the impacts of isolation. The Executive Leadership Group commissioned an independent scrutiny of the safeguarding arrangements in place for adults and children. The scrutiny found that partnership was strong, had strong leadership and continued to promote good practice enabling learning and progressing the safeguarding priorities.

Although the report was commendable and the positive actions being taken were clear, the Committee discussed the impacts of targets being met and whether this had improved the lives of residents that needed safeguarding. It was explained that work had been done around ensuring good practices, ensuring appropriate and relevant training was available and focussing on partnership work. The Committee was provided with an example of the 'neglect' priority where multi agencies case audits had been undertaken and this led to commissioning of training and practice developments across the partnership. Members requested that case examples and information be included in future reporting to enable proper scrutiny.

In response to a question on how the pandemic had impacted the number of services users, schools and parenting, it was highlighted that a new task and finish subgroup was being established by the HSP to specifically address education related concerns and how support could be provided to parents, children and schools..

Members discussed the HSP's role in overseeing children that had been excluded from school. It was noted that children at home would have other professionals working with them and home visits would take place..

It was confirmed that the HSP had information in relation to areas of deprivation in the Borough and this was taken into account in various activities like for instance the implementation of stronger families.

It was noted that nationally there had been an increase in mental health issues for younger people during the pandemic. There had been changes in demand across the country and Hillingdon had experienced similar issues. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children were a big factor in Hillingdon and a sub group, chaired by UK Border Agency continued to meet during the year to address issues around exploitation and trafficking. The subgroup reviewed initiatives in place and how well different agencies worked with trafficked children. A guide is being created for airlines to raise awareness on how to identify potentially trafficked children and how to escalate these concerns.

It was reported that the whole sector had seen an increase in the number of referrals in relation to neglect and physical abuse. Resources had been deployed to ensure that demand was met. Concerns were raised regarding missing children becoming invisible during the pandemic and Members were informed of the processes in place for children returning from being missing.

Additional data was requested on the suicide rates and the suicide prevention strategy in future reporting.

The Committee welcomed the report and endorsed the prevention services and the work with multiagency teams. The Committee was keen to ensure that learning was shared and applied in the HSP's approach. Notwithstanding the work that had been undertaken during the pandemic, Members agreed that the report recommendations should be amended to read 'to the extent possible, the Committee is reassured that residents coming into contact with safeguarding remained safe during the year'.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. **to the extent possible is reassured that Hillingdon residents coming into**

	contact with safeguarding service remained safe during the year. **2. is updated regarding the way in which the partnership has responded to the challenges posed to Safeguarding by the Covid 19 Pandemic.** **3. is informed of the strategic priorities for safeguarding for 2021-22.**
21.	**REVIEW OF ASSISTIVE LIVING TECHNOLOGY** *(Agenda Item 7)* The Committee heard an update on the witness session plan for the review, with the suggestion to include Hillingdon4all as a potential witness. Members were keen to hear from different sectors including the voluntary sector. It was agreed that a site visit would take place to an extra care home and supported living unit and Democratic Services would liaise with Members regarding suitable dates and times. The Head of Business Delivery & Support and the Community Development Manager presented the report on Assistive Living Technology (ALT) and delivered the first witness session. It was noted that mapping and geographical spread sat alongside the wider digitalisation agenda where connectivity speed was being tested. There were some areas in the Borough that had low connectivity speed and it was agreed that this could be explored further. ALT was generally described as a range of equipment technology that supported people to live independently and have greater control over their health and welling. It was highlighted that the review considered the Council's current offer of ALT for the benefit of residents and what further developments could be used to ensure the promotion of self-management, independence and the management of demand on social care budgets. The report had detailed information regarding the current offer and data regarding service users. It was highlighted that Hillingdon had a core offer of Telecare and associated products for the remote monitoring of resident well-being. Alongside this the Council provided a responder service 24 hours per day, seven days a week for residents without suitable contacts. The core offer included pendants/call buttons, sensors for movement, gas & fire sensors and GPS tracking technology. It was noted that there were more opportunities available now to support residents with supported living with the increase in range of products on the market. The Committee heard information on Hillingdon's demographics including statistics on the number of people that had dementia and the number of residents that had taken up the Telecare offer. The Committee heard how ALT was implemented in different care settings, noting that care homes had not been big users of the technology. Members discussed the barriers to using ALT services and were keen to explore this further with service users and providers and noted the action plan. It was considered that the action plan would inform Members' engagement with service users and partners to enable the Committee to create practical recommendations. In response to Member questions, further information regarding the B12 take-up would be provided.

	RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the current position regarding the local ALT offer and agreed the action plan and future aims.
22.	**2022/23 BUDGET PLANNING REPORT FOR SERVICES WITHIN THE REMIT OF FAMILIES, HEALTH AND WELLBEING SELECT COMMITTEE** *(Agenda Item 8)* The Head of Finance – Financial Planning, Capital, Treasury & Systems introduced a report detailing the budget setting for services within the remit of the Committee. Key points from the report were highlighted, including details of the financial pressures generated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the additional funding received from government, together with earmarked Council reserves, in order to manage such pressures. The impact of such pressures on social care was recognised as a national issue faced by most councils, while investment in school budgets still faced significant challenges where demand was outstripping government funding. The Council was working on a recovery plan with the Department for Education (DFE) to bring that position back into balance in the medium to long term. Next steps were confirmed to be the formal presentation of the budget to Cabinet in December 2021, requesting approval of the budget proposals, followed by a return to this Committee in January 2022 to discuss the proposals further. Whilst the same report was being reported to all the Select Committee, it was noted that the report provided a financial context for the budget setting. Members queried a number of points as a result of the report. In response, the Committee was advised that, government grants as a result of Covid 19 had been spent wisely meeting set criterias and it was unlikely that this would need to be paid back. The report referred to multiyear savings rather than yearly, the Council was working on a special education needs plan with support from the DFE and it was anticipated that there would be a deficit recovery plan by February 2022. Concerns were raised regarding the budget management of special education needs transport and questions were raised around the measures taking place to manage budgets. It was acknowledged that this was a harder area to forecast and further information would be provided. **RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**
23.	**TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** *(Agenda Item 9)* The Committee noted the report. **RESOLVED:** **That the Committee:** 1. **Agreed to amend the Terms of Reference to enable the Corporate Parenting Panel to hold meetings quarterly (as set out in Appendix A);** 2. **appointed Councillors Nick Denys, Heena Makwana & Kerri Prince to be the Elected Members on the Panel on the basis of political balance (2 Con: 1 Lab);**

	3. **appointed Councillors Judith Cooper, Becky Haggar and Jan Sweeting to be named substitutes; and** 4. **confirmed Councillor Nicky Denys as the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Councillor Heena Makwana as the Vice-Chairman.**
24.	**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MINUTES** *(Agenda Item 10)* The minutes from the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting on 27 May 2021 were noted. Members present at the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting on 26 July 2021, provided an overview of the meeting noting that the annual report for looked after children and care leavers was presented to the Panel, performance data was received and a presentation was provided from Members of the Children in Care Council with different activities. **RESOLVED: That the Families, Health & Wellbeing Select Committee noted the Corporate Parenting Panel minutes.**
25.	**CABINET FORWARD PLAN** *(Agenda Item 11)* Members requested further information on the Consultation on Changes to School Admission Arrangements report that is due to be considered by Cabinet on 14 October 2021. **RESOLVED: Subject to the further information request on the Consultation on Changes to School Admission Arrangements report, that the forward plan be noted.**
26.	**WORK PROGRAMME** *(Agenda Item 12)* It was noted that the report on Promoting Healthy Lifestyles (Sports and Physical Activity) had been deferred to February 2022 as the service was due to draft a new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy in August and this would be completed by December 2021. Any earlier update to the Committee would be premature. The Committee was keen to receive the report on Access to Education HealthCare Plan's for Children with SEND at the next meeting. **RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.**
	The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 9.40 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Anisha Teji on Tel: 01895 277655 Email: ateji@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

The public part of this meeting was filmed live on the Council's YouTube Channel to increase transparency in decision-making, however these minutes remain the official and definitive record of proceedings.