

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

02 February 2023

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

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| | <p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Heena Makwana (Chairman), Roy Chamdal (Vice-Chairman), Kishan Bhatt, Tony Gill, Rita Judge, Peter Smallwood, and Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Co-Opted Member Present: Tony Little</p> <p>Officers Present: Alex Coman (Director of Safeguarding, Partnerships and Quality Assurance), Debbie Scarborough (Service Manager Adult and Community Learning), and Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)</p> |
| 58. | <p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>No apologies were received.</p> |
| 59. | <p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p> |
| 60. | <p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. an amendment to the sentence “It was acknowledged that this was a good news budget in incredibly tough times and circumstances”, to now read “A Member of the Committee acknowledged that this was a good news budget in incredibly tough times and circumstances”;ii. to include “Members questioned whether the proposed 30% increase in fees for Early Years Centres would have any bearing on the centres remaining open. Officers clarified that the proposed withdrawal of the subsidy for Early Years Centres did not pre-judge the decisions around the future of the centres”; andiii. an amendment to the wording of the attendees so that the Co-Opted Member is listed correctly. |

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| 61. | <p>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 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items would be heard in Part I.</p> |
| 62. | <p>LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON (LBH) RESPONSE TO NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING REVIEW (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that the Chairman had requested that this item, previously presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel, be brought to the Committee.</p> <p>Officers outlined the report into Hillingdon’s response to the National Safeguarding review. In October 2022, the Child Safeguarding Practice Panel published Phase 1 of its review into the safeguarding of children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential special schools which are also residential homes. It looked specifically at the experiences of 108 children and young adults from 55 local authorities at three specialist residential settings between 01 January 2018 and 21 March 2021. The settings were located in Doncaster and run by the Hesley Group. As the report uncovered serious findings, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel asked Directors of Children’s Services to initiate urgent assurance actions about children placed in similar types of provisions. Directors of Children’s Services were asked to report the findings of their review to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel. It was noted that this report was brought to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 24 January 2023 and was also presented at the Safeguarding Children’s Board on 11 January 2023.</p> <p>The first part of the review was an assessment of the care provided within the residential special schools. It was noted the independent review was conducted by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Hillingdon had three children within similar types of residential settings, and that there were no concerns over the care received.</p> <p>The second part of the review was to identify if any such residential settings were based in Hillingdon and, if so, conduct a review over any allegations that had been made in relation to the care provided to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). As none of the residential settings were based in Hillingdon, no review was required.</p> <p>The third part of the review was to report these findings to the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and to the Corporate Parenting Panel. These actions were completed as described above.</p> <p>Members commended the report, and highlighted the table in paragraph 2.1, on page 10 of the report, where one provider had an Ofsted care rating of ‘requires improvement’ and questioned what was being done to improve this. Officers clarified that they were already aware of the standard prior to the visit and were working with the provider on this. Members also noted the ‘good’</p> |

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| | <p>Ofsted rating of the other listed schools and asked about ways in which good providers can strive to be excellent. Officers referenced Regulation 44 visits as a critical part of management monitoring.</p> <p>Members referenced paragraph 2.2, on page 10 of the agenda, which stated “A’s placement Requires Improvement for Care”, while the Table stated a ‘Good’ care rating. Officers clarified that the sentence should have read “A placement Requires Improvement for Care”, as it was referring to Initial C in the table. Additionally, Members questioned, and officers clarified that the last sentence of paragraph 2.4 should read “C is described...”, not “A is described...”.</p> <p>Members questioned what was included in the quality and safety review, and how much notice was given in advance of the provider visits. Officers clarified that Ofsted visit without notice; referred to Regulation 44; and in terms of this review, the IROs spoke to staff, parents and children in collating their responses.</p> <p>Members also questioned the possibility of looking into young people who had previously used the system. Officers clarified that the national review was ongoing – Part 2 of the review was due to be published in November 2023, and that the review included looking at historical placements.</p> <p>Members noted that the review looked at a relatively small number of cases. Officers noted that the sample included all Hillingdon children who met the criteria of the request.</p> <p>Members asked about contact with young people placed at greater distances and officers clarified that Hillingdon tried to keep placements within the Borough, or where possible, within 20 miles. However, it was noted that sometimes it was necessary to place young people further afield. Contact with family members was promoted where it was safe to do so, and professional visits also took place.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the content of the report and the outcome of the review.</p> |
| 63. | <p>LEARN HILLINGDON ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2021-22 (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the Self-Assessment Report from Learn Hillingdon. Officers noted that this was not a legislative requirement but was expected by the Council and by Ofsted. The report gave a flavour of how well the service was performing and was measured against the Ofsted framework.</p> <p>Members questioned how areas were prioritised as areas for development. Officers clarified that this was done through the impact on learners. Officers further noted that learning outcomes were often measured on courses without formal qualifications, which had previously led to some inconsistencies. However, applying more scrutiny had since led to fewer discrepancies,</p> |

although the achievement rate had dropped as a result of this. It was noted that the drop in achievement rates were not a major concern as having more scrutiny meant that standards were maintained.

Members asked how the data was looking for the current financial year and officers noted that it was roughly on par, if slightly under, but that this was a national pattern – there were fewer enrolments in adult education nationally. It was noted that some potential learners did not have the time or capacity to enrol; that some learners finished a Level 2 course and went straight to work without enrolling in a Level 3 course; and that officers were not unhappy with the current performance. There were also lingering concerns over COVID.

Members noted that learning was for life, not just in early years, and questioned the gender breakdown noted in the report. The high proportion of female learners was noted, and that classes were often timetabled around school day times to encourage enrolment. It was further noted that a large number of female learners were studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Officers further noted that it had historically been more difficult to enrol male learners, and that this was partly due to a perceived vulnerability in asking for help. A former programme working with football clubs for numeracy help was noted, but this only attracted very small numbers. Male learners had enrolled for mental health reasons.

In terms of marketing and sustainability for the Council, the service used brochures to advertise their courses, however it was noted that as the availability of courses and the type of courses running updated regularly, brochures soon became out of date. The costs required in regularly printing new brochures was noted and officers stated the going forward, printed brochures would not be used.

Officers noted that there were barriers in terms of access and signposting, although the service was very good at supporting next steps. The service played a key role in encouraging people into learning where they otherwise would not enrol. Learners often had a range of needs to support, and the service was good at identifying these. An issue with capturing progression was noted – when people left the service it was not easy to know where they went on to.

Members thanked officers for the report and noted a previous major review into the service. Officers noted that the services did not receive an equal share of GLA funding as this was based on an historic figure, but the service was good at finding alternative funding pots, while the GLA was supportive. Additional funding for the next three years through the Multiply project (an informal maths/ numeracy programme) was received due to Hillingdon being one of the top providers in London. An application for more baseline funding had been made, with officers due to find out the result of the application in March 2023.

Members referenced the table at the bottom of page 21 of the agenda and asked why data was given for four years for enrolments and achievements,

and three years for retention rate and pass rate. Officers noted that this was just a matter of presentation within the report itself. Officers noted that the report presented four years of data to show a decline in enrolments going into COVID, and a subsequent recovery in numbers.

Members asked about an age and cultural breakdown of the figures. It was noted that younger adults were more engaged with the service. Officers noted that a more detailed age and cultural breakdown could be provided outside of the meeting.

Members also noted the effect of children seeing their parents use the service and noted that it may be more likely for someone to engage if a friend or relative already had.

Officers noted that it was important to choose the right vocational areas to focus on, and that there was a complex background of information going into planning, such as identifying achievement gaps and retention of those with mental health issues or dyslexia, for example. It was noted that there was currently no achievement gap in relation to age, gender, or ethnicity, but that these gaps were always evolving.

Members asked about how women with no formal education were engaged with and officers clarified that they would go out into the community and engage with community groups. This often helped people feel more safe to take the first steps into engaging with the service. It was noted here that the service had a designated person for targeted outreach.

Members questioned the effect of some courses being moved into the Civic Centre from the Brookfield centre. It was noted that there were positives and negatives to this. Brookfield was a useful brand name for the service, however being in the Civic Centre meant there was now access to a cookery room, and the corporate communications team were very helpful with online support. It was also noted that as the change took place after courses had finished, informing the learners was not possible while classes were still running. Changes at the Harlington centre were also noted, with there now being fewer but larger rooms (five instead of seven). It was noted that some classes remained at the Ruislip Manor centre, however, due to the lifts not working here, some classes had been moved out anyway, so the impact or the re-location was reduced.

Members asked if there was any evidence of effective partnership working. Officers noted that there was partnership working with carers and other departments within the Council. It was also noted that there was partnership working with Hillingdon Women's Centre, Hillingdon MIND and Age UK, and with hotels around Heathrow in relation to asylum seekers. Work with the Early Years team was also noted.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report and questioned officers on the report.

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| 64. | <p>SCOPING REPORT FOR PROPOSED REVIEW ‘THE STRONGER FAMILIES HUB: OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS – EXPLORING PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND SATISFACTION (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that there were two upcoming witness sessions, witness session four: the voice of providers, and witness session five: partnership working. Regarding witness session five, it was noted that work to invite representatives from schools was ongoing. Members raised having witness sessions in the evening and it was noted that the witness sessions with young people and parents (witness sessions two and three) needed to take place outside of the recorded Committee meeting for reasons of safeguarding. However, it was noted It was noted that witness session four was open to all Members, and that witness session five would take place during the next Committee meeting on 14 March.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee commented on and noted the updated scoping report.</p> |
| 65. | <p>CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE MEMBER VISIT TO THE UXBRIDGE FAMILY HUB (VERBAL UPDATE) (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>A verbal update was given by the Chairman in relation to a previous invitation in July 2022 from the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education for Committee Members to visit the Uxbridge Family Hub. It was noted that the Democratic Services Officer would arrange this.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.</p> |
| 66. | <p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>Members noted that the ‘Standards and Quality of Education in Hillingdon during 2021/22’ report was due to come to Cabinet on 20 April, it was clarified that this report would come to Committee in March to allow comments to be submitted to Cabinet. It was clarified that the Quarterly Performance Monitoring report was deferred from March, new date to be confirmed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p> |
| 67. | <p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that the ‘Ukrainian Children – How Funding from Central Government Has Been Delivered to Schools’ report had been deferred to the March Committee meeting – this was to allow a more comprehensive report to come to Committee.</p> <p>Members highlighted that they had raised questions of this report and requested clarification on when answers would be received.</p> |

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| | <p>The Youth Services Update report was referenced, and it was suggested that an item be added to the work programme for later in the calendar year to receive further updates on this.</p> <p>Reference was made to schools in Hillingdon enrolling asylum-seeking children who were not attending school. It was noted that further information could be shared outside of the meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the work programme and updates be noted.</p> |
| | <p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.01pm</p> |

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information of any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell at democratic@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.