

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

28 June 2023

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

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Heena Makwana (Chairman), Becky Haggar (Vice-Chairman), Kishan Bhatt, Kamal Kaur, Tony Gill, Peter Smallwood, and Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Co-Opted Member Present: Tony Little</p> <p>Officers Present: Julie Kelly, Executive Director of Children’s Services Kat Wyatt, Head of Service, Youth Justice, AXIS, Adolescent Development and Youth Services Sandra Taylor, Executive Director of Adult Services and Health Claire Fry, Head of Service, Child and Family Development, Adult Services and Health Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Rita Judge with Councillor Kamal Kaur substituting.</p>
2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
3.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed</p>
4.	<p>MINUTES OF AGM (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the AGM be agreed</p>

5.	<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 5</i>)</p>
6.	<p>STRONGER FAMILIES HUB REVIEW (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman noted that the purpose of this item was for the Committee to review the draft findings and recommendations. There had been six witness sessions to date. The first heard from officers who gave an introduction to the Stronger Families Hub. The second and third heard from young people and their parents/ carers about their experiences of using the Hub. The fourth heard from Hub staff. The fifth heard from health representatives, and the sixth, which was held in two parts, heard from education representatives. Members thanked the witnesses for their time, noting that it was especially useful, during the sixth sessions, to hear from schools in both the north and the south of the Borough. It was further noted that without the witnesses' and officers' input, the Committee would have no recommendations to make to Cabinet.</p> <p>Members summarised from the witness sessions that the service was greatly appreciated, and that officers were very enthusiastic to make it work. However, a 'fragility of capacity' had been noted across several witness sessions. Members also noted that they wanted the service to be available to all residents who needed it, and that early help was better than later help.</p> <p>Members noted that an advantage of the Stronger Families Hub model was that families only had to tell their story once, but further noted the 'fragility of capacity'. Members also highlighted a potential staffing issue around a careers pathway/ progression for Hub staff.</p> <p>Members noted that there may be opportunities to learn from best practise elsewhere. However, officers noted that the Stronger Families Hub was the first of its kind as a 24/7 service, and it may be that other Local Authorities used the Stronger Families Hub to learn from themselves. Members praised officers for having the first service of its kind.</p> <p>Members asked about engagement across communities, and asked whether it would be possible to advertise the Stronger Families Hub in alternative languages with a view to reaching out to a wide range of communities. This may also help with engagement in schools and faith groups.</p> <p>Members noted suggested recommendation four (<i>"To note the Health and Social Care Select Committee's review into the effectiveness of the CAMHS referral pathway, and to review ways to enhance signposting around mental health services via the Hub and to voluntary sectors"</i>) with a view to including reference to the private sector within this recommendation. Members also raised a point about considering the timing of getting young peoples' feedback on the service. Officers advised that mechanisms for obtaining feedback now existed within each service area, and not within the Hub itself.</p>

	<p>The Chairman noted issues around parental consent, and that as the Stronger Families Hub was a consent-based service, not having parental consent could have an impact on the support obtained. Safety was a priority, and so the Stronger Families Hub referral form should include an option to explain why parental consent had/ had not been obtained. Officers agreed that concerns around consent needed to be addressed.</p> <p>Members suggested removing the word ‘annually’ from the first suggested recommendation (<i>“To renew awareness of the Stronger Families Hub annually with partners to keep abreast of changes or new developments. This is to include an annual renewal of the membership of the Stronger Families sub-group to ensure it reflects all stakeholders”</i>).</p> <p>Members further suggested a recommendation to reflect promotion through third sector organisations, schools (including those out-of-Borough) and elected Members themselves.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee considered possible conclusions, findings and draft recommendations in relation to the review.</p>
7.	<p>CONSULTATION ON THE HILLINGDON 0-19 YEARS CORE OFFER TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the item on the draft Family Hub strategy.</p> <p>Family hubs were part of the Government’s new commitment nationwide with a view to providing support and advice on a range of health and family needs. This support was available to young people aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for young people with SEND). The National Centre for Family Hubs was led by the Anna Freud Centre and supported by the Department for Education. The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report – The Best Start for Life – led by Dame Andrea Leadsom MP, championed Family Hubs as a place where families can access support in the early years of their child’s life, through the delivery of a specific Start for Life offer, including access to maternity and health services, alongside support for parenting and reducing parental conflict.</p> <p>In August 2022, the Government published the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme guide for the 75 Local Authorities funded in 2022-25, to establish their Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer. Hillingdon was not eligible to bid for funding due to the advances already made locally, in establishing Uxbridge Family Hub in December 2021 and with work underway to deliver a second Family Hub in Hayes, due in July/ August 2023.</p> <p>It is the intention to provide a range of services in an integrated manner with good collaboration across services. The delivery points would include some existing centres such as libraries, thereby using Council assets. However, it was acknowledged that some areas of the Borough would be harder to reach, and so there would be a Mobile Library and Transport Community Bus. The geographical coverage across the Borough would ensure that there were a</p>

range of services available within a 30-minute walk or 1.5-mile drive for all residents, where there was an identified need.

The draft strategy was currently out for consultation and residents were encouraged to complete the survey and have their say on the proposals. The consultation was running for 12 weeks from 10 May until 30 July 2023. Consultation events had also taken place within Children's Centres and libraries.

It was noted that some services may be moved from one location to another – this was not a reduction in service, but with a view to implementing a flexible, targeted offer and meeting community needs.

Officers noted that they were also consulting on the three early years nurseries, which were running at a deficit, and there were options within the Cabinet paper pertaining to maintaining childcare sufficiency.

Members thanked officers for the report, and noted the safeguarding remit, and asked if this remit would widen. Officers noted that the family hubs received referrals from the Stronger Families Hub, for example for one-to-one support, access to groups and activities, and that it was possible to widen the remit of the family hubs.

Members commended the progress that has been made over the past year and noted that there was a need to understand the new services and what was being provided to residents. The possibility of an app was highlighted, as young people and families were becoming more technology-friendly. Officers noted that there were a number of existing apps, such as a North London Trust pregnancy app, which Hillingdon's children's centres were embedded into. The Start for Life offer was noted to cover pre-birth to the age of 2 years. An in-house app was possible. The local SEND offer online also provided information.

Members asked about supporting, for example, people with issues around pregnancy and alcoholism. Officers noted that they were working closely with midwifery services, and also with social care teams.

Members noted that they were happy with the direction of travel but asked about the proposed delivery spaces, with reference to the 1.5 mile/ 30 minutes distance. Members noted that there were no proposed venues in Heathrow Villages ward, suggesting that residents in this ward may have to travel more than 1.5 miles or 30 minutes. A map of the proposed venues may be useful. Members also asked about priority groups and suggested that it may be useful to have this data compared by area of the Borough. Officers noted the valid point on Heathrow Villages, further noting that they were acutely aware of the need to manage the public health offer. It was recognised that the feedback from the consultation would address some needs. Officers also referred to in-reach into communities and priority groups. Using local buildings enabled the Council to make use of its assets. There would also be the mobile offer into areas such as Heathrow Villages.

Officers highlighted that there could be some confusion with a variety of services now known as Hubs (including the Stronger Families Hub, family hubs, health hubs).

Members noted that some of the key data sets were based on old ward boundaries. Officers noted that this information formed part of the childcare sufficiency assessment which used a template provided by the Mayor of London's office. Some of the data sets that the template draws on had yet to be updated when the assessment was last completed in December 2022, and this was why it listed old ward boundaries. Members also noted that the 1.5 miles/ 30 minutes distance may be difficult for residents with disabilities.

Members noted that there needed to be practical solutions beyond the mobile offer, and asked about consulting with faith leaders, and how they could be reached. Officers noted that the consultation was ongoing.

Members asked how Members themselves could distribute the consultation, for example to businesses. Member's local knowledge and ward events could be used, as could their social media presence. The point on businesses required more thought.

Members noted that proposed increases in house-building could lead to demand for services increasing. Members also noted considerations around childcare costs and the increase in numbers of children/ young people with SEND. Officers noted that the consultation asked residents about childcare. The detail of the extension to the childcare offer for working families outlined in the Spring Budget was not known until after the report was submitted to cabinet, but the implications would be considered post consultation as part of the report back to Cabinet in September. On sufficiency, officers were looking at housing as one area of consideration. The consultation was not exhaustive, though it would help to gather evidence prior to the draft strategy coming back to Cabinet.

Members asked, as the consultation was still ongoing, whether it could be offered in alternative languages. Officers noted that this could be looked into and that multi-lingual staff within the service had attended consultation events.

Members asked whether any additional finances had been received for this strategy, and what effect closed centres would have. Officers noted that while some services were being re-located, this was not a service reduction. Staff worked for services, not for specific locations. There were some lease arrangements with schools, but some financial resourcing was required.

Members further asked about funding for asylum-seeking families and whether the Council was trying to secure additional funding through the Home Office. Officers noted that there were small pockets of funding available for specific groups. The hotels used to house asylum-seekers were primarily in the south of the Borough as these were nearest to Heathrow Airport.

	<p>Engagement with the Home Office and public health colleagues was ongoing, but no additional funding had yet been received.</p> <p>Members noted that the proposed delivery spaces had to be attended to make them worthwhile and welcomed the consultation and the proposed strategy.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted the report; and 2. Delegated comments to Cabinet as part of the consultation on the proposals to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead)
8.	<p>YOUTH OFFER CONSULTATION (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Officers presented the report on the proposed Youth Offer, noting that an overview was provided to the Select Committee in January 2023. The Select Committee had requested a further opportunity to provide feedback if a public consultation was approved. In March 2023, Cabinet agreed to a recommendation to conduct a public consultation, which ran from 03 April until 05 June 2023. The consultation included an online survey and facilitated consultation groups and was also promoted through 11 social media posts. The Youth Offer strategy had a dedicated consultation page, and the consultation was also promoted with schools and community groups; included in the April Hillingdon People Extra Newsletter; and in the May/ June edition of Hillingdon People. It was noted that full analysis of the consultation responses was still to be completed.</p> <p>The online consultation received 123 responses, 90 of which were from Hillingdon residents, with the remainder consisting of those who attended school in Hillingdon, and some from businesses and voluntary groups. The majority of resident respondents were aged between 10 and 15 years, and 14% of those identified as having a special educational need. The highest levels of responses had come from the HA4 postcode, and the fewest came from Harefield, Northwood and Northwood Hills.</p> <p>57% of respondents to the online consultation were not currently engaged in a youth service programme. 51% had never attended a programme. Respondents indicated that they would like to see more activities promoting emotional health and wellbeing support, sports, and outdoor leisure activities.</p> <p>On the service being delivered in a range of settings, 58% indicated they would be more likely to attend on this basis. 51% of respondents felt that the new offer promoted inclusivity with an additional 36% feeling it partially promoted inclusivity.</p> <p>14 facilitated consultation groups took place which engaged 154 children who were currently engaged in a form of youth provision across the Borough, 64% of whom were aged 10-15, and around 50% lived in the south of the Borough.</p>

31% of respondents wanted locality-based services and respondents indicated that they would be happy to travel across Borough to visit the right centre or activity in the right place to meet their needs.

Members thanked officers for the report, and suggested youth services being run as a type of students' forum whereby young people could run the services. Members also noted question 12 of the Hillingdon Youth Survey, which highlighted that one of the things young people wanted from a Young People's Centre was 'to get out of the house'. This highlighted that outdoor facilities were important for young people. Officers noted that it was important for the service to get children outdoors, but that digital emotional support was also important.

Members referenced question nine of the Youth Offer Strategy Consultation, which asked about reasons for not using youth centres. The reasons included accessibility and meeting needs and was linked to visibility. Members also noted the lack of venues in Heathrow Villages ward and noted that it was important for residents to know what was available and where. There were a number of apps such as the Local Village Network, where users could input their postcode to find local services. Members also referenced the 154 young people who took part in the consultation groups, and asked if there was a target percentage of young people to support. Officers noted that these 154 young people were already accessing services during the consultation.

Members noted the relatively small number of responses and noted that this may affect the robustness of the data collected. Officers acknowledged a lack of visibility. A comprehensive directory of opportunities would be created and made available to children, young people, families and partner agencies in the Borough which would provide young people with greater awareness and access to positive opportunities delivered by a range of organisations. Members noted paragraph 14 of the report, noting that the directory of opportunities could be sent to schools.

Members praised the ambition of the Youth Offer and asked how the success of the Youth Offer would be measured. Officers noted that there had been lots of published papers on similar proposals, and that early intervention was important. The Youth Offer would provide a universal offer for a range of preventative, early help services. Soft results could include increases in self-esteem. If the Youth Offer was approved by Cabinet, there would be scope for it to be further improved as needs and demographics changed.

Members noted that it was good to hear there were apps available to point to services, and that the summer youth programme was full. Officers noted that the summer programme was continuing.

Members referenced the table of current delivery spaces/ proposed delivery spaces and asked about the South Ruislip and Charville Young People's Centres which were noted to have low footfall due to the locations not being accessible to young residents. Members asked if this was due to accessibility

	<p>or awareness. Officers noted that locations were being provided both for young people and for families as a whole.</p> <p>Members also noted that no secondary schools were listed. Officers clarified that this was not an exhaustive list of locations, and there may be future opportunities for this.</p> <p>Members noted that funding for youth services had been reduced nationally. Officers noted that there were vacancy gaps but there had been no change in base funding, though some investment was required internally, for example for the directory and second transporter bus. Officers further noted that a strong Youth Offer could lead to additional options for grant funding. Members also noted that there may be opportunities for external funding from third parties.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted the information presented within the report; and 2. Delegated comments to inform the consultation to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chairman (and in consultation with the Opposition Lead)
9.	<p>MINUTES OF THE CORPROATE PARENTING PANEL (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous Corporate Parenting Panel meeting be agreed</p>
10.	<p>CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL MEMBERSHIP 2023-24 (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the report relating to membership of the Corporate Parenting Panel 2023-24. Members agreed to update the report to reflect Councillor Gill being a named substitute member.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appointed Councillors Nick Denys, Heena Makwana and Jan Sweeting to be the permanent Elected Members on the Panel on the bases of political balance (2 Con: 1 Lab); 2. Appointed Councillors Becky Haggar, Peter Smallwood and Tony Gill to be named substitutes on the basis of political balance (2 Con: 1 Lab); and 3. Upon the recommendation of the Chairman of this Committee, to confirm Councillor Nick Denys as the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Councillor Heena Makwana as the Vice-Chairman.

11.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the latest Forward Plan, noting that the Consultation on the Hillingdon 0-19 Years Core Offer to Children, Young People and Their Families and the Youth Offer Consultation were due to come back to Cabinet in September 2023 following their consultations.</p> <p>Members noted that the SEND Strategy had been expected in June 2023. Members also referenced the Children Centre delivery model, due to come to Cabinet in September. Officers would follow-up on these.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Select Committee noted the Forward Plan</p>
12.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Members noted the Work Programme and suggested that the Committee should start to consider topics for the next major review.</p> <p>Members made reference to previous suggestions of an audit of SEND children by school, and an audit of asylum-seeking children by school, being brought to the Committee. This could be investigated by officers.</p> <p>Members also noted a School Organisation Plan, which could be brought to Committee. This could be investigated by officers.</p> <p>Members noted that the Mid-year budget/ budget planning report was due to come to Committee in September.</p> <p>Members suggested that questions on the Forward Plan and Work Programme could be submitted in advance of the meeting, where appropriate.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Work Programme</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8:40pm.</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.