

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM REVIEW - DRAFT FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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| Committee name | Children, Families and Education Select Committee |
| Officer reporting | Ryan Dell – Democratic Services |
| Papers with report | NIL |
| Ward | All Wards |

HEADLINES

Background

As part of the review into persistent absenteeism, Members will be advised to consider findings, conclusions and draft recommendations on the review for discussion. These will be with the intention of improving attendance of statutory school age children in Hillingdon.

Summary

At the time of writing, the Committee has held five witness sessions, with a sixth scheduled to take place on 06 November 2024. The intention of these sessions was to obtain feedback from a range of stakeholders with a view to improving attendance. The first witness session set the scene and outlined the current state of play with regards to persistent absenteeism in Hillingdon. The second saw Members consider information from other local authorities. The third session heard testimonies from schools and also allowed the Committee to send a survey to schools in the borough. The fourth session saw Members meet directly with young people to hear their views and experiences. A fifth session heard from officers in relation to child protection and safeguarding. The sixth and final session will see Members meet with parents and foster carers.

As the bulk of witness testimony is now complete, it is considered timely for Members to start to consider their collective findings so these can be worked up in more detail, and ultimately incorporated into the final report to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider findings, conclusions and draft recommendations in relation to the review.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In considering this item, Members should bear in mind the following:

1) Scoping report – looking at the original parameters of the review

The updated review scoping report is attached so Members can be reminded of the original Terms of Reference as set out below, and whether the Committee has met these:

1. To identify the prevalence and patterns of persistent absenteeism in statutory school age children in Hillingdon, including a reference to primary planning areas
2. To explore the root causes and contributing factors of persistent absenteeism in statutory school age children in Hillingdon
3. To consider the impact of persistent absenteeism on academic outcomes on statutory school age children in Hillingdon
4. To understand and explore the nature of partnership working in relation to persistent absenteeism in statutory school age children in Hillingdon, including parents/ carers, young people, teachers, officers and other stakeholders
5. To review the effectiveness of existing interventions and policies in place for children and families struggling with persistent absenteeism in Hillingdon
6. To explore the measures in place for child protection and safeguarding in relation to attendance
7. To review and identify the trends and patterns of persistent absenteeism when considering demographic factors such as age, race, religion, wealth and disability, as well as considering differences between the North and South of the borough.
8. To review how other Local Authorities, including statistical neighbours, are tackling persistent absenteeism
9. Subject to the Committee's findings, to make any conclusions, propose actions, service and policy recommendations to the decision-making Cabinet

2) Policy review guidance

Members are asked to consider whether draft findings and recommendations:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review (as above)
- Be SMART, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- Not be a short-term fix, but a lasting outcome
- Consider the financial aspect, e.g. cost neutral, provide savings or if at a cost, then affordable – and if possible aligned with the MTFP (budget planning process)
- Are based on a broad evidence base as possible and 'user or resident' insight
- Not create additional bureaucracy, e.g. if it relates to a policy, then to seek to review or amend existing policies (unless there is an absolute imperative for a new policy)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible rather than generally
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as any specific recommendations.

Democratic Services will circulate separately from this report, areas for possible conclusions and recommendations arising from the various witness sessions.

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The aim of the review into persistent absenteeism is to hear testimonies from stakeholders as to how attendance can be improved, in addition to what is currently working well.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage, pending any committee recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage, pending any committee recommendations.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.