

Minutes

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

13 November 2024

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

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor Heena Makwana (Chair), Councillor Becky Haggar, Councillor Peter Smallwood, Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor Tony Gill, Councillor Sital Punja, and Councillor Jan Sweeting (Opposition Lead)</p> <p>Co-Opted Member Present: Tony Little</p> <p>Officers Present: Lucy Wylde (Service Manager), Marie Fleming (Team Manager, Youth Justice & Prevention), Tehseen Kauser (Director of Service Delivery – Children's Social Care), Julie Kelly (Corporate Director of Children's Services), Claire Fry (Assistant Director, Child and Family Support Services), Abi Preston (Director of Education & SEND), Dominika Michalik (Assistant Director of SEND & Inclusion), Gary Binstead (Senior SEND & Inclusion Commissioner), Michael Hawkins (Head of Education & Lifelong Learning), Ash Knight (Children's Participation Team Manager) and Ryan Dell (Democratic Services Officer)</p> <p><i>Note: several young people were in attendance for the items 1-5</i></p>
30.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Rita Judge with Councillor Sital Punja substituting.</p>
31.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
32.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Members requested that the following sentence be corrected:</p>

	<p><i>“Members asked about the tightness in years 9 and 10, particularly in the north of the borough...”.</i></p> <p>It was requested that “north” be corrected to “south”.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed, subject to the above amendment</p>
33.	<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>
34.	<p>HILLINGDON’S YOUTH OFFER AND DELIVERY MODEL – REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 2023 <i>(Agenda Item 5)</i></p> <p>Officers thanked Members for the opportunity to present this update.</p> <p>Cabinet approved the delivery of the new Youth Offer in September 2023, and officers noted that they were on a journey of this implementation.</p> <p>The Youth Offer consisted of three key teams: Universal, Targeted, and Community and Voluntary Sector.</p> <p>The Universal team currently delivered a number of youth work and detached sessions from multiple community locations across the borough.</p> <p>The Targeted team aimed to respond to emerging needs and their programmes were co-produced with young people.</p> <p>The Community and Voluntary Sector team delivered the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) as well as support groups for young carers, Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support (HACS) and transition to Excel.</p> <p>The implementation of the Youth Offer required a comprehensive and diverse approach, closely collaborating with organisations delivering programmes to children, and the National Youth Agency.</p> <p>A five-year strategy had been developed that provided infrastructure for delivery and accountability of the new Youth Offer. This strategy focused on nine priority areas.</p> <p>A workforce development plan had been created to guide recruitment and training. This included mandatory training and bespoke professional development. The ‘Stepping into Hillingdon’s Youth Offer’ training programme had been designed and delivered to the first cohort of new recruits in August and will continue to be rolled out with all new recruits as part of the induction process.</p>

The teams continued to utilise flexible assets in the community including three young people's centres, Uxbridge Family Hub, Hayes Family Hub, schools, libraries and community spaces. This ensured accessibility seven days a week.

A new communications strategy had been co-produced with the Corporate Communications team to advertise the Youth Offer. A three-month campaign, named #NextGen by children and young people, was due to be launched with a launch event at the young people's centre in Harlington. The communications strategy involved the creation of photographic materials and TikTok videos all co-produced with children and young people.

A young person who had been referred to the Targeted team was in attendance and addressed the Committee.

They had been referred to the team as they had been struggling with their mental health.

They now worked as a targeted reviewer and had been up and down the country undertaking consultation work for Hillingdon.

They had also been involved in two NCS trips, to Thorpe Park and to the Brentford Community Stadium.

Three members of the Youth Council were in attendance and addressed the Committee.

The first young person said that the Youth Offer was a good idea that brought everything together. It would help everyone and was accessible.

The second young person, who noted that they were a young carer whose mother had immigrated to the UK, noted that the Offer was impressive, and made it easier for everyone.

The third young person highlighted the use of TikTok, as this was a platform that was widely used by young people.

Members thanked the young people for attending, and asked officers about the most and least attended projects. Officers noted that the holiday programmes were well-attended, especially in the summer. Officers further noted that it would be difficult to highlight lesser attended projects as this would depend on the type of project. For example, some were group sessions while others were 1-2-1. Officers noted that they could provide a further breakdown of all programmes.

Members further congratulated the young people and noted that the Youth Offer had been a long time coming. Members noted that as of January 2023, the plan had been to offer 29 universal sessions per week; that the launch

had been delayed; some posts were unfilled; and that the transporter bus had been decommissioned. Members asked if 29 sessions were currently being delivered. Officers advised that the current figure was 23 and that recruiting was ongoing.

Citing page 15 of the agenda, Members highlighted some concern about the spread of activities within the borough, especially in the south. Officers noted that outreach work was delivered, and officers were working on a plan to make use of the top of the new Jubilee Centre. Further, there were football events held at the Skills Hub on Tuesdays.

Members asked about training for volunteers compared to staff members. Officers noted that as well as specific training for mentors, and a professional qualification for LINK counsellors, volunteers can access the same training and development resources as staff members.

Members asked about programmes for careers and managing finance. Officers noted that while there were not programmes specifically for this, these topics were covered under programmes for boys and young men, and girls and young women.

Members asked about remote delivery to increase engagement. Officers noted that there was some of this already in place. Officers further highlighted the blended approach for virtual plus face-to-face provision, noting that young people had advised via consultation that face-to-face provision was often preferable.

Members highlighted the decommissioning of the transporter bus and asked what impact this had had. Officers noted that detached work was ongoing and they were looking to secure two new buses.

Members asked about what challenges could be expected over the next two to five years. Officers noted the need to keep up to date with new technologies, and also noted evolving demographics.

Members asked about how work was coordinated with the voluntary sector. Officers noted that work was underway to develop a Youth Offer Partnership Board including service providers and stakeholders working together to deliver a coordinated programme to respond to identified need. Officers had been working with colleagues across the Council on developing a new improved directory of services which was easier to navigate and categorised services for children and young people. The new directory was currently under construction, but the existing directory was still accessible. A new Volunteer Strategy, which will be implemented over the next 5 years, would highlight four key priorities for developing the volunteer programme: Promoting the volunteer programme, Welcoming and building a community of volunteers, Celebrating and supporting volunteers; and Providing a quality experience.

Members noted that they had been invited to the launch in Harlington but noted it had been delayed. Members asked when this would now take place.

Officers noted that this would be done in the new year – it was noted that December was not the best time to launch anything.

Members suggested having a further update in future to include any further information on new transporter buses.

Members asked about representation on the Youth Council. The Youth Council sat under the Participation Team. Officers noted that they were in contact with all schools as part of an ongoing two-year project. There were currently 13 regular attendees at the Youth Council. When asked about any gaps in representation, officers noted that there was little representation from Hayes. However, officers were communicating with all schools on this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the information presented within the report

35. **CHILDREN'S CENTRES DELIVERY MODEL AND EARLY YEARS NURSERIES – REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 2023 (Agenda Item 6)**

Note: the YouTube broadcast started at the beginning of this item.

The Chair noted that due to the attendance of young people, items 1-5 had not been broadcast on YouTube.

It was reiterated that this was a meeting held in public, not a public meeting and so there were no speaking rights for members of the public.

Officers provided an update on the delivery of the Family Hub Delivery Model and Early Years Nurseries.

On Family Hubs:

The Family Hub strategy had been presented to and ratified at Cabinet in September 2023.

A second Family Hub in Hayes had been open in January 2024. The two hubs (Uxbridge and Hayes) delivered services to young people aged 0-19, and up to 25 for those with SEND.

Highlights included a visit by Dame Andrea Leadsom, who spearheaded the early years healthy development review, in February and the publication of the "Start for Life" offer on the Council website.

A strategy to advertise the family hub services had been developed, including a family hub graphic on all communications and a short film showcasing the services.

The 0-19 service directory was on track to be published in January 2025.

The Stronger Families Partnership work was highlighted, including a partnership day at Hayes Working Men's Club attended by 130 delegates from both statutory and voluntary community sectors.

An outcomes framework was being developed to track and monitor the services more closely.

On Early Years Nurseries:

The Council was looking to source an alternative provider to maintain childcare on the sites, rather than delivering the services directly.

Surveys of the sites had been conducted and offers from three distinct providers had been received.

Negotiations were ongoing with one preferred provider, with a recommendation expected at Cabinet in December 2024.

Members inquired about how to reach new families and promote the services. Officers noted that they would be happy to engage in any community events. Officers were also able to distribute flyers. Officers were working with community leaders, Heathrow hotels and William Byrd Primary School to identify gaps in engagement.

Members further noted it was good to hear that parents were seeking support from other parents.

Members noted that it was great to see the progress made by the Hubs and asked about the data on repeat attendances. It was clarified that families were counted rather than unique individuals and so multiple people would count as one attendance. There may be repeat attendances for programs such as midwifery.

Members raised concerns about the suitability of family hubs for teenagers and older children. It was acknowledged that it was a challenge to provide an all-age space. Uxbridge Hub was zoned into different spaces for difference ages. Efforts were being made to make the spaces multi-purpose and welcoming for all age groups. Officers constantly reviewed what was offered. If hubs were not all-age, it would likely be that buildings would end up only used for a portion of the day. All-age spaces would maximise Council assets.

Members further raised concerns about accessibility from all parts of the borough. Officers acknowledged this, and highlighted Cherry Lane children's centre and Pinkwell children's centre. Officers had been working with the Resident's Association in Heathrow Villages to hear from them. Some services were delivered directly located in the hotels and William Byrd Primary School.

	<p>Members noted that they had been impressed by the early expectations and asked if the Offer had lived up to these expectations. Officers noted that they believed it did. The provision delivered to date had been successful, in particular the start to life offer. Partnership working had also been effective. It was important that there were hubs delivering services with community, health and commissioned partners. One of the most powerful ways a parent can receive help is from other parents and this had been successful. It was noted that the strategy was to deliver six hubs. Two were up and running, and a third was in production.</p> <p>Members asked about the metrics of success. It was explained that attendance data, registrations, and achievements of families attending targeted courses were currently used as metrics, with efforts to develop a broader outcomes framework. There was currently no national framework for measuring success, but officers were working with colleagues in health and as part of the London Region Network to look at the potential for an outcomes framework.</p> <p>It was noted that comments to Cabinet would be delegated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report</p>
36.	<p>PROPOSAL FOR SOME COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TO LOWER THEIR AGE RANGE TO TAKE TWO-YEAR OLDS (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced a report on the proposal to lower the age range for three community schools. This would enable them to provide funded places for two-year-old children.</p> <p>The early years childcare entitlements for children increased from April 2024, allowing funding for working families to access childcare for 15 hours a week. This entitlement increased from September 2024 for children aged 9 to 23 months and was set to increase further from September 2025 from 15 hours to up to 30 hours.</p> <p>The local authority had a statutory responsibility to ensure sufficient childcare places across the borough for working parents and parents training or studying to enter employment.</p> <p>The Council had been looking at childcare sufficiency and working under DfE guidelines to develop childcare provision. Officers noted that there was less sessional care available given the way in which the childcare offer had evolved over the years. Many sessional care providers such as play groups exited the market when certain additional requirements in terms of planning and children's learning and development profiles came on board.</p> <p>Schools were well-placed to offer sessional care for younger children. Therefore, officers had spoken to schools and there were two different processes. The process for academies involved running their own</p>

	<p>consultation process, while the statutory mainstream provision required a formal process under DfE guidance, including public consultation.</p> <p>It was noted that this report had come to the Select Committee for consideration and comments ahead of it going to Cabinet in December.</p> <p>The three schools in question were Colham Manor, Field End Infants, and Minet Infant and Nursery School. They had all expressed a desire with their governing bodies' full support to lower their age range to offer two-year-old places by September 2025.</p> <p>A public consultation has been held, and responses were being reviewed.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the purpose of this item was to review the proposals, not to make a decision on them. The final decision would be taken by Cabinet.</p> <p>Members expressed support for the proposal, recalling a similar initiative in the 1970s when the Council used spare class bases to develop nurseries. However, they cautioned about potential future increases in birth rates and the need for additional capacity.</p> <p>It was noted that comments to Cabinet would be delegated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted the report; and 2. Delegated comments to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair, and in consultation with the Opposition Lead
37.	<p>PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE PHYSICAL DISABILITY (PD) SPECIALIST RESOURCED PROVISION (SRP) AT COTEFORD INFANT SCHOOL (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>Officers introduced the item on the proposed closure of the Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for Physical Disabilities (PD) at Coteford Infant School.</p> <p>Officers explained that the Local Authority was proposing to formally close the SRP at Coteford Infant School, which was an SRP for physical disabilities.</p> <p>Historically, the SRP had 10 commissioned places, but due to declining demand, the number was reduced to seven, and currently, there were three children attending. Over the next year, only two children were expected to remain at the SRP.</p> <p>The SRP at Coteford operated differently from a typical SRP, with no separate specialist resource provision room or facilities. The school operated as an inclusive mainstream school.</p>

The proposal was more of a technicality, meaning no change for the children as they were already being supported in an inclusive mainstream environment.

The funding for the children would remain the same, with the place funding of £6,000 being replaced by exceptional funding of the same value to support schools that are highly inclusive.

This was about correctly commissioning places according to need. Historically, children may have been more likely to be part of an SRP for physical disability. Nowadays, there was an expectation on mainstream schools to accommodate these needs.

Many schools were DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant.

It was noted that while the term 'closure' had to be used as per DfE requirements, there would be no change. There would only be a removal of the reference to an SRP.

An addendum had been published to correct an error in the report regarding including data in the report on children on the SEND register versus children with SEND support. Ordinarily, officers reported on EHCP and SEND support, and rarely reported on the SEND register.

A formal statutory consultation had been conducted from 25 September to 25 October 2024. The consultation included an online survey, a virtual event for families, and a face-to-face event at the school. The responses from the consultation were included in the consultation responses document. Officers acknowledged that there was some confusion and fear around the proposal.

Members sought reassurance that the proposed changes were purely technical and will not affect the children's experience or funding. Officers confirmed that the funding and support for the children will remain the same. There may be a difference in the provider of therapy, which would be agreed upon with the school, though the level of therapy would be the same as detailed in each child's EHCP. Where therapy was provided in mainstream schools, this was commissioned through a contract with CNWL. SRPs tended to commission their own therapy. The funding mechanism would be slightly different but would be the same amount. There would no longer be 'place funding' of £6,000 for commissioned places, however officers committed to paying the same £6,000 of 'exceptional funding' where schools were over a certain percentage of children with an EHCP. Coteford Infant School has a high level of EHCPs and were in receipt of this funding last year.

Members asked about possible concerns relating to the wider impact on special needs provision at the school and sought reassurance that the local authority will support any additional needs or concerns that the school may have. Officers highlighted that there were a range of challenging needs that schools were managing and supporting effectively.

Coteford Infant School was operating as an inclusive mainstream school and there would be no change to the children's experience at the school. Currently, the children in the SRP were in mainstream lessons full time, which was not the traditional SRP model. Usually in an SRP, children would be in a separate base for 15-50% of their timetable. The proposal would not change how the school operated. Officers reassured that the local authority was committed to supporting schools and families with SEND.

Officers added that EHCPs were legal documents which were then funded to ensure that the plan was reflective of the student's needs. If needs changed or there was a need for different provision, the authority would work with the school.

Members asked about proactive measures to reassure parents that there will be no change. Officers acknowledged the fear and anxiety caused by the proposal and emphasised the importance of clear communication to reassure parents. Officers noted that there were no financial savings for the Council as a result of the proposal. It was the role of the authority to commission effectively according to the evidence and demand, as well as ensuring delivery of an inclusive agenda in all schools.

Members raised concerns about the accuracy of the report; the narrative of there being no change; and the need for an equality impact assessment. With regards to the equality impact assessment, officers noted that there was no change as the funding and support for the children remain the same therefore an equality impact assessment was not required.

Members asked if the SRP funding would be added to the EHCP funding so that children were not impacted. Officers clarified that this referred to the place funding of £6,000. Officers noted that there was place funding and top up funding. The top up funding would continue in line with needs, and the £6,000 place funding would be paid as exceptional funding, which the Council provided as a non-statutory funding stream to support schools that were highly inclusive.

Members questioned the communication process, given concern from parents. Officers were open to feedback. Officers noted that they had not expected such a negative reaction. However, there was a statutory process that had to be followed, which included the use of certain terminology such as 'closure'.

Members asked what role the school had played in communicating the proposals. Officers explained that there had been ongoing engagement with the school and efforts to reassure parents through various forums. This had been part of a wider review. Part of this review highlighted the inclusivity for children with physical disabilities. SRP provision across the borough had increased in line with demand and there were 72 additional places provided during 2024, which were for children with ASD.

Officers further clarified that they had tried to offer reassurances to the school; there had been a lot of direct dialogue; and there had been a consultation with residents, the school and other interested parties.

Members asked if the decision to close the SRP had been made before the consultation started. Officers confirmed that the decision had not been made. There was a statutory process to follow and the conversation started almost a year ago with the school.

Members asked if it were possible for this item to be taken to Full Council before Cabinet. The Chair confirmed it would not go to Full Council and Cabinet would make the decision.

Members asked, if there was no change, why parents had been told in January that they could not access this provision. Officers noted that as far as the difference between a child who was considered as attending the SRP versus mainstream, there was no difference in delivery of provision, the only difference currently was the provider of the therapy. This was a key point. Officers reiterated that there were no children who would be missing out on anything or being denied anything. EHCPs do not specify who should deliver the provision, only that provision be delivered in order to improve outcomes.

Members further asked why funding mechanisms had not been explained to the school. Officers reiterated that they had explained the funding mechanisms on numerous occasions to the school. Exceptional funding was brought in last year. This was a non-statutory funding stream that was in place to support schools who were highly inclusive so that they were not financially disadvantaged by being so inclusive. Place funding was being replaced with exceptional funding because currently the exceptional funding did not include SRP children as they were funded through a different mechanism. If this proposal was to move forward, the SRP children would be included in the exceptional funding. It was reiterated that there was no financial saving to be made and no change to the support delivered, apart from potentially who delivered the therapy, which was for discussion with the school.

It was noted that comments to Cabinet would be delegated.

Members proposed that if Members had issues with reports such as inaccuracies, these could be raised prior to the meeting and this would aid scrutiny of the reports.

RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee:

- 1. Reviewed the proposed closure of the Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for children with Physical Disabilities (PD) at Coteford Infant School detailed in the report;**
- 2. Noted the consultation in response to the proposed closure; and**

	<p>3. Delegated comments to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair, and in consultation with the Opposition Lead</p>
<p>38.</p>	<p>PROPOSED INCREASING OF THE AGE RANGE FOR THE ASSESSMENT BASE AT RUISIP GARDENS PRIMARY SCHOOL <i>(Agenda Item 9)</i></p> <p>Officers introduced the report on the proposal to extend the age range for the assessment base at Ruislip Gardens Primary School. This assessment base was a new type of provision aimed at identifying needs early and supporting children through the assessment process.</p> <p>The current age range for the assessment base was three to five years old. The proposal was to extend this range to include two-year-olds, in exceptional circumstances. This would be beneficial for two-year-olds who were approaching their third birthday for example, and who would benefit from being part of the assessment base, and having their needs assessed earlier.</p> <p>A formal statutory consultation had been conducted from 25 September to 25 October 2024. The consultation received 12 responses, and the aim was to ensure that as many children as possible can be supported through this provision.</p> <p>Members expressed support for the proposal and inquired about the compliance with Building Bulletin 104 during the design of the assessment base. Officers confirmed that the design followed Building Bulletin 104 regulations.</p> <p>It was noted that comments to Cabinet would be delegated.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewed the proposal to expand the current age range of the Specialist Assessment Base for 3-5 year olds at Ruislip Gardens Primary School to include 2-year olds when appropriate and necessary in exceptional circumstances; 2. Noted the consultation that has taken place; and 3. Delegated comments to Cabinet to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair, and in consultation with the Opposition Lead
<p>39.</p>	<p>DRAFT HILLINGDON EDUCATION STRATEGY <i>(Agenda Item 10)</i></p> <p>Officers introduced the Draft Education Strategy 2024-2029, noting the rationale for the priorities and the range of consultation steps taken with school communities and education providers.</p>

The strategy set out three main priorities, with the third priority combining elements of broader education work across the Council, including attendance and exclusions.

Officers emphasised the importance of collaborative working between schools and settings, which was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members asked about the key differences between the new strategy and the previous one. Officers noted that while some elements remained the same, there were notable differences. Priority One reflected the identification by headteachers of reduced collaborative working between schools and settings which had been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. The strategy emphasised the need to leverage the strengths of schools within Hillingdon to address area-wide challenges. The similarities were justified by data, indicating that certain issues, such as attendance and the disadvantage gap, persisted and required ongoing attention. These were national issues, however, it is crucial for the local area to address these issues closely and identify areas for improvement. A key focus of the strategy was collaboration with partners, including Brunel University London and the Education Endowment Foundation. This collaboration aimed to utilise evidence-based practices and share ideas to improve educational outcomes. The data in the appendices showed that many groups were performing well, with some exceeding expectations. However, disadvantaged students, who made up just under 25% of the cohort, require focused attention to meet their school improvement priorities. Another difference from the previous strategy was that this one had been co-produced with young people, and covered a range of services including education and SEND.

Members praised the well-written report and the work done between officers and schools, and acknowledged the challenges in raising standards and narrowing gaps. Members asked about progress made since the last strategy. Officers explained that while there has been progress, the pandemic had disrupted some efforts, and the new strategy aimed to build on existing strengths and address current challenges. Officers further noted that lots of schools in Hillingdon had fantastic results for their disadvantaged students.

Members asked about including citizenship education in the strategy. Officers noted that schools already delivered things around citizenship. During consultation with young people, topics such as this and financial awareness were raised. Officers further noted a recent instance where an Infant School had used polling booths to run mock elections. Officers further noted the intention to create a preparation for adulthood policy for Hillingdon.

Members asked about addressing emotionally based school non-attendance and suggested that this should be framed more broadly in terms of its relation to SEND, rather than just emotionally-based. Officers noted the national attendance issue, and there were a multitude of reasons for this. What officers were trying to do was to present to the school community that there was an area-wide problem and it was important to work together to tackle these issues. Officers acknowledged emerging data from mental health providers

that there were large groups of young people, mainly in secondary education around Year 8-9, who were refusing to attend school and that this related to severe anxiety and suicidal ideation amongst others causes. Officers further noted that this had become a focal point in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic and they were keen to have this explicitly in the strategy. While it was important to look at broader attendance, this particular area of EBSNA was really important to recognise.

Members asked about liaison with secondary schools. Officers noted that there were more than 60 schools signed up for a launch event next week, including 12 secondary schools. 19 out of 20 invited schools (including primary and early years providers) had joined the Strategic Partnership Board.

Members asked about barriers to collaboration between schools. Officers noted that historically, schools had said that the stability of working with the same people meant that they were more inclined to engage. Staffing was an issue in that a lot of schools were struggling for a full complement of staff. Sometimes there was an element of competition between schools. There was also a perception of distinction between the north and south of the borough. Officers also highlighted ongoing initiatives to foster collaboration, such as the Safer Hayes initiative. 15 schools were signed up in the Greater Hayes area.

Members also inquired about vocational education, noting that while mentioned in the strategy, it was not listed as one of the Priorities. Officers noted that prior to post-16 there was a narrow academic focused curriculum. Oak Wood School had launched a programme which included a vocational offer. At post-16, the offer in Hillingdon was strong. There was a need to ensure that every young person was aware of their available options and can make informed choices. Officers further clarified that Priority 2: Preparation for Adulthood did include vocational topics.

Members noted the intention of 'improving inclusion by improving attendance' by creating a protocol for the early identification of possible Emotionally-Based School Non-Attendance, and asked about working with parents and children on this. Officers noted that they were currently in the process of working with educational psychologists and health partners who are working with young people as their views are central.

Members asked about the Council's efforts to ensure an equitable share of children with SEND across schools. Officers noted that many schools were working hard with a broad range of SEND needs. Officers were also looking at what schools needed and what families needed, and were looking at what services were delivered through the SEND Advisory Service (SAS). Officers were looking at creating a small multidisciplinary team to support with some of the more complex cases in mainstream. Officers also highlighted the importance of sharing good practice, providing training, and supporting schools in managing complex needs.

Members expressed concerns about children with complex needs falling through the gaps. Officers noted that while this strategy did not directly

respond to that, the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) strategy does address these challenges. Officers further highlighted the ambition of a fully inclusive education. Further, officers noted the importance of ensuring that schools were managing the needs of children in their area. Officers wanted to work towards a system whereby schools were shaped around the needs of the children. It was important to work with schools on this. Officers shared census data of EHCPs with schools termly to understand the demographics of the area, the challenges and where there was more versus less pressure. Another area officers were looking at was cluster groups around SEND, bringing together primary and secondary schools to look at the needs of the area. Officers acknowledged that it was a challenge for schools and the landscape around SEND was ever-evolving.

It was noted that comments to Cabinet would be delegated.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Noted the key findings set out in the draft Hillingdon Education Strategy report; and**
- 2. Delegated comments to the Democratic Services Officer in conjunction with the Chair, and in consultation with the Opposition Lead**

40.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM REVIEW – FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (*Agenda Item 11*)

The Chair introduced the item on persistent absenteeism.

The Committee had now completed all of its witness sessions, and Members thanked all witnesses for taking part, especially the young people, noting the importance of capturing the voice of the child.

It was suggested that Members take some time to consider the notes from each of the witness sessions before formulating recommendations. This was agreed by Members.

Members thanked the Democratic Services Officer for organising and note-taking at the witness sessions.

Members proposed writing a letter of thanks to the young people for attending the witness session and contributing to the review. The idea was well-received, and it was agreed to bring this proposal forward.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Considered draft findings and recommendations in relation to the review; and**

	<p>2. Will write to the young people who attended the witness session to formally thank them for their participation</p>
41.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 12</i>)</p> <p>Members considered the Forward Plan.</p> <p>It was noted that a number of the items considered at this Select Committee meeting were on the agenda for the next Cabinet meeting in December 2024.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Forward Plan</p>
42.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 13</i>)</p> <p>The Chair introduced the Work Programme.</p> <p>Members asked whether there would be a budget report upcoming. Officers would confirm.</p> <p>Members proposed adding a further update on the Youth Offer to the work programme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Children, Families and Education Select Committee considered the report and agreed any amendments</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 of any of the resolutions please contact Ryan Dell at democratic@hillington.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.