

Minutes**Education & Children's Services Policy Overview
Committee****Wednesday, 26 January 2011****Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**

HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Members Present: Councillors Catherine Dann (Chairman) Brian Crowe (Vice-Chairman) Judith Cooper Peter Curling John Hensley Kuldeep Lakhmana</p> <p>Representative Member from Roman Catholic Diocesan: Tony Little.</p> <p>Officers Present: Anna Crispin (Deputy Director Learning, Effectiveness & Major Transformation, Education and Children's Services) Merlin Joseph (Deputy Director Children & Families, Education and Children's Services) Amar Barot (Head of Finance, Education and Children's Services) Alison Moore (14 – 19 Manager, Education and Children's Services) Gill Brice (Democratic Services Officer, Deputy Chief Executive's Office).</p>
33.	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>There had been no apologies submitted.</p>
34.	<p>Declarations of Interest in matters coming before this meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Catherine Dann declared a Personal Interest on Item as she was a Governor of Newham Junior School and Bishop Ramsay C of E School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Judith Cooper declared a Personal Interest on Item as she was a Governor of Charville Foundation Primary School and St Andrews C of E Primary School. She remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Peter Curling declared a Personal Interest on Item as he was a Governor of Mellow Lane School and Harefield Academy. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Kuldeep Lakhmana declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 8 – School Places Update as she was a Governor of Cranford Park Primary School, Wood End Park Primary School and Harlington Community School. She remained in the room during the item and took part in the discussion.</p>

	<p>Tony Little declared a Personal Interest on Item as he was a Governor at Pinkwell School. He remained in the room during the meeting and took part in the discussion.</p>	
35.	<p>To confirm that all items marked Part 1 will be considered in Public and all Part 2 items will be considered in Private</p> <p>It was confirmed that all items marked Part 1 would be considered in Public and all items marked Part 2 would be considered in Private.</p>	
36.	<p>Matters that have been notified in advance or urgent</p> <p>There had been no items notified as urgent.</p>	
37.	<p>To receive the minutes of the previous meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.</p>	
38.	<p>DRAFT BUDGET 2011 - 2012 FOR CONSIDERATION</p> <p>Officers introduced the report taking members through the main points and highlighting the key issues contained in the draft budget report. Members were informed that the current budget proposals had been reported to Cabinet in December 2010.</p> <p>A member raised concern at paragraph 14 contained on page 3 of the report and the comment made in relation to 'core offer' and 'additional offer' that 'core services do not, on their own, ensure child safety'. Child safety was one of the major care objectives.</p> <p>Officers advised that the Core offer was a statutory function and covered processes that the Council must do, for example statutory visits to children in care. The additional offer referred to non statutory functions, which supported the core functions.</p> <p>It was suggested that the wording of the paragraph needed to be amended to provide more clarity. Members were further informed that this related to the model being developed as part of the budget proposals and that there were clear procedures and guidance that sat behind the model. The proposals would not only retain the statutory and non statutory duties but would build on the provision of parent support to be pro-active and not re-active.</p> <p>A member asked officers whether they were confident that the £2m allowance for inflation would be sufficient.</p>	<p>Action By:</p> <p>Amar Barot</p>

The Committee was advised that the corporate estimate included the cost of any budget pressures that may arise and officers were confident that the £2m included for inflation would be sufficient. Consideration had been taken of current contracts and that a large majority of the expected pressures would relate to staffing. This figure may be updated before the report was submitted to Cabinet on 17 February 2011.

A member asked that as the pupil numbers had been estimated in December 2010 how would the current pupil count be factored into the budget.

Officers advised that the funding in the budget had been calculated from the January pupil count. Funding would be confirmed by the Department for Education (DFE) in May or June of this year. The Council had produced its own estimate base and had not used the base provided by the DFE. The local data was more accurate and part of the contribution would be held corporately to allow for any fluctuations in pupil count. Whilst the schools budget was volatile it was not felt this would cause a problem in the next financial year.

A member raised a concern on the potential Social Care pressure and thought that this might be historical. With there being a shortfall of £0.888m in the Asylum funding the authority in the past had anticipated a certain amount of funding but this had not materialised. How sure were officers that any further shortfall in the Asylum funding could be met within current resources?

Officers informed the Committee that the figure had been based on the published arrangement earlier in the year. A more simplistic regime had been introduced with an additional special circumstances fund. The special circumstances fund would be made to port authorities for costs over and above the national cost. The authority would be able to make a supplementary claim over and above the national funding. The reason for the pressure was that the Asylum funding provided was never sufficient to meet the Council's costs.

A member stated that the Committee had no information on what the savings would be on staff and the impact of the changes therefore, the Committee would be unable to make any meaningful comments.

Officers advised the Committee that there were detailed papers that had been considered as part of the budget process. The impact, risk and consultation with stakeholders had been undertaken over a long period of time and had been a long and exciting project. The paperwork was extensive and included the impact across the whole of the service. This was the format used across all groups of the Council.

A member asked that further to the concerns raised about the core and additional services who would be charged for these services.

Officers informed the Committee that the intention was to keep close as possible to a zero based model. The level of savings required had been looked at as a whole and not as individual services as had been done in the past. There was absolute clarity that statutory duties had to be provided. A preventative service needed to be devised to reduce the number of children needing acute support. This would not mean that this service had to be provided in a way it was currently provided. Funds had been provided in the base budget to enable the Authority to provide these services locally with discretion on how the model would be delivered taking into account what Hillingdon priorities were. A significant number of services provided were statutory duties to support families and additional support services sitting behind them.

A member asked if this was to be provided by other organisations there needed to be guidance in place to keep safeguarding up to date. How would the authority ensure that schools were following this through?

Officers stated that this would depend on the nature of the activity. There were two ways in which supporting safeguarding would be provided. Firstly the proposal would be put forward to the Schools Forum to make a collective decision to contribute globally to a service. The other way would be for individual arrangements with individual schools to buy back some of the authority's services.

A member asked that in relation to the core offer and additional offer what if something went horribly wrong; there could be accusations that the authority was breaking the law. If it was found that there had been an error in provision of the core and additional offer there could be a case for mal administration.

The Committee was informed that safeguarding responsibilities were a top priority. The Core offer was the statutory requirements and systems to support the core offer were being organised differently to ensure that delivery of the service was efficient.

A member stated that the point he raised previously was about accountability. The Policy Overview Committee had no idea of what choices and risks officers had made in producing the budget and whether those choices and risks were justified.

Officers advised that this was the last stage of a long process on the budget proposals, which had included scrutiny by the Hillingdon Improvement Programme Sub Group and by the Leader. There had also been monthly updates and reports to Cabinet.

The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working and asked that this be included as a comment to Cabinet.

A member asked how the schools been consulted on the budget and how this had been organised.

Officers advised that Local Authority level and the per pupil allocation was received on 14 December 2010. The Schools Forum met on 25 January 2011 to hear the initial draft budget. There had been no consultation as such, as the allocation of funding had been prescribed with what had to be included. There was some flexibility in the funding but there were very few decisions to be made as a lot of freedom had been taken away.

The Committee then went through the appendices attached to the report seeking clarification on a number of points as follows:-

1.2 – What was meant by re-engineering?

Officers advised that this was looking at administrative processes and equipment to see how this could be provided more efficiently.

1.5 – Merger of Respite Services - Would this be an increase or reduction of the service

Officers advised that the service would be enhanced as Merryfields was a modern building and would provide more respite during the day and overnight.

1.4 – Full review of Looked After Children – This was a good way forward but how realistic would it be that in house Foster Carers could be found.

Officers advised that this was fairly realistic as previously there had not been a major campaign undertaken on recruitment. A number of interests had already been received. A broader campaign to recruit foster carers was currently being planned and officers were confident that they would be able to deliver on this. The Council must be robust in delivering in house provision over the coming years, and had two years to deliver these targets. It was not just about delivering the service in house but looking at revising current contracts to ensure value for money.

1.8 – What was the Family Intervention Project?

The Committee was advised that this was a grant received around supporting problem families in providing a preventative service and these services would now be pulled into one service.

2.3 – End Student Awards Function - Officers were asked for clarification in this section as it was unclear what it meant.

Officers advised that this would be amended but as the Local Authority responsibility to award funding to students had been transferred there was no longer a need for a post to support it.

3.1 & 3.2 Restructure of Tier 3 Management and Reduction in size of Education Welfare Services. A member commented that the figure was low and asked why this was and how many posts would be deleted.

Officers advised that this was a partial year figure for the current financial year and the full year figure would be realised. Members were informed that it would be 6 posts in total that would be deleted.

4.1 – Youth & Connexions Review - Officers were asked whether the Youth Service was to be provided by Youth centres and not centrally.

Officers advised that there had been significant funding to provide locally based Youth Centres. To ensure maximum use of these centres the provision of Youth Services was to be moved to these centres.

5.3 – Decommission of Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service – Does this mean that the traveller service would be discontinued?

Officers advised that in the past funding had been separately ring fenced, and now included the traveller service. Funding was no longer ring fenced and was now provided as a single grant paid directly to Schools. Schools could buy back support but after consultation they had advised that they would not buy back the service and there was therefore no longer a need to retain the service.

5.5 Review of Music Service – Clarification was sought as to Whether the saving figure related to the figure shown on page 23 of the report.

Officers advised that the music service was complexly funded; interim changes had been made that could look to a savings target of £200,000. Work would be continuing to providing a more in depth service in the future. The committee suggested that as the figure was not just from charging that the wording in the report should be amended to reflect this.

Fees and Charges

A member asked why the fees and charges had not included a two tier system as in other departments for residents and non residents.

Officers advised that this was probably historical but would feedback this comment.

The Committee suggested that a recommendation should be added to give consideration in providing charges for residents and non residents.

Expansion Programme

Officers were asked whether they were confident that the primary expansion programme would be adequate to meet the needs required. The latest funding allocation for Phase 1 expansions had been included in future Capital funding. It was recognised that Hillingdon was the only Local Authority to receive increased capital funding allocation, it was anticipated that the authority would receive the funding to meet the places required.

Capital Funding

It was suggested and agreed that the Committee make an observation that members recognised that Hillingdon was the only authority to receive an increase in the Capital funding allocation. This authority should seek to ensure that this continued given the likely pressures that would be faced in the coming years in Primary Schools and at a future date in Secondary education provision.

Resolved – That the following comments be put forward for consideration by Corporate Services Policy Overview Committee and then onto Cabinet.

1. That the wording ‘core offer’ and ‘additional offer’ (see below) be clarified to provide a better understanding of what was being provided as part of these services.

“The Education & Children’s Services Group has taken the opportunity to completely rethink how it delivers its overall service to Hillingdon’s children and young people. It has applied a phased approach to developing a ‘core offer’ for services deemed essential, backed by an ‘additional offer’ of services which support the core services, as many of the core services do not, on their own, ensure child safety. Savings proposals have been developed on a service basis.”

2. The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working if the proposals contained within the budget were to work.

3. The Committee requested that it should be made clear in the report that this was the last stage of a long process to develop the budget proposals being put forward to Cabinet.

	<p>4. The Committee asked that the “End of Student Award Function” saving proposal be re-worded for clarity (saving no. 2.3)</p> <p>5. The Committee requested that relation to the Music Service saving proposal that it contains a description advising that the savings figure referred to does not just come from charging for services (saving no. 5.5)</p> <p>6. Fees & Charges – the Committee asked that consideration be given to different charges being made for services to residents and non residents as is the case in other departments.</p> <p>7. The Committee recognised that Hillingdon was one of the few councils increasing funding for its capital projects. The Committee requested that officers seek to ensure that this approach continued given the likely pressures faced in primary schools and in due course in secondary schools.</p> <p>8. Finally, the Committee recognised the considerable difficulty faced by officers in meeting the current financial situation, which has been forced upon them. The Committee agreed with the approach taken in streamlining administration to improve ways of working and avoiding duplication with schools.</p>	
<p>39.</p>	<p>Major Review - Draft Final Report</p> <p>Officers before introducing the report advised the Committee that feedback had been received from the schools that the letters sent to the Students thanking them for attending the previous meeting had been well received.</p> <p>A member asked that the wording of recommendation 1 should be amended to delete ‘look at the further use of Section 106’ and insert ‘review the mechanism for Section 106’ and also adding ‘opportunities’ and deleting ‘qualifications’.</p> <p>The committee agreed to the amended wording for recommendation 1.</p> <p>In regard to recommendation 4 it was suggested that this be amended to ensure that the recommendation reflected correctly what needed to be undertaken. It suggested that this recommendation be amended to read:</p> <p>‘To ensure that information was available to enable students to prepare adequately for progressing to the next stage of post compulsory education/training.’</p>	<p>Action By:</p> <p>Alison Moore Gill Brice</p>

The committee agreed the amended wording for recommendation 4. A member suggested an additional recommendation 6 in regards to the provision of training on major development projects in the borough. Following discussion members felt happier that this information was included in the report that there was difficulty in finding adequate employers to take apprentices.

The amendment to the report as suggested was agreed by the committee.

A member stated that he would have liked the review report to include that reservation had been expressed about there being a need for respect for a vocational curriculum with a practical route. It was recognised by the principal of Uxbridge College that over the years a constant search had been conducted for a way of dealing with the 16-19 curriculum without huge success. The scale of curriculum change had been the largest ever known leading to a system that was maybe too complicated. When asked about diplomas it was felt that they would not be replaced but anticipated that they would be a niched market.

There was discussion about consortia which might justify more emphasis. The relevant points were that there was a greater need for cooperation between institutions, provision of adequate support to pupils, the importance of time-tabling and travel arrangements.

A member felt that given the new priority in regard to apprenticeships there should be greater importance on finding adequate employers.

The committee agreed to the information provided being included in the report.

It was asked whether it would be possible to provide a diagrammatical indication of the routes that were available for 14-19 education, if this was not possible a list or summary would be useful to include as an appendix to the report.

The committee agreed to the information in regards to the routes available for 14 – 19 Education being included in the report.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the report on the National Review was not due to be published until mid March. It was agreed that in March when the report on the National Review was available if it was prior to Cabinet in March, the information would be incorporated into the covering report to Cabinet.

A member of the committee suggested an additional recommendation in regards to those students Neither in Education, Employment or Training to look at best practice from other authorities. This would enable officers to look at whether we could benefit or not from other authorities to reduce the number of NEETS.

	<p>There were concerns raised at the inclusion of the additional recommendation but following further discussion the wording for the additional recommendation was suggested as follows:-</p> <p>'That officers examine whether Hillingdon can reduce the number of Neither in Education, Employment or Training by taking account of best practice in other boroughs in specific category of NEETS.'</p> <p>The committee agreed to the additional recommendation being added as above.</p> <p>A member suggested that the information provided by the witness from Hillingdon Training Ltd., gave the number of apprentices that had benefited from the scheme being 30 and should be included in the final report.</p> <p>It was suggested and agreed by the Committee that the report should include additional information on the historical context of vocational provision.</p> <p>Resolved – That the final report be amended to include the points agreed by the committee. The amended report to come back to the next meeting for final approval before its submission to the Cabinet.</p>	
40.	<p>Forward Plan 2010/2011</p> <p>Resolved – That the information contained in the report on the Forward Plan be noted.</p>	<p>Action By: Gill Brice</p>
41.	<p>Work Programme 2010/2011</p> <p>Resolved – That the work programme be updated to reflect the changes made at the meeting.</p>	<p>Action By: Gill Brice</p>
<p>The meeting, which commenced 7.00pm, closed at 9.40 pm.</p>		

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Gill Brice on 01895 250693. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.