

## Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 15 September 2015 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Jasmine Ali (Chair)  
Councillor Lisa Rajan  
Councillor Sunny Lambe  
Councillor Charlie Smith  
Councillor Kath Whittam  
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer  
George Ogbonna

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER** Simon Mitchell, Assistant Director  
**SUPPORT:** Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project Manager

**1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Councillor James Okosun, Councillor Sandra Rhule, Martin Brecknell and Kay Beckwith.

**2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT**

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

**3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

#### 4. MINUTES

##### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June were agreed as a correct record.

##### VIDEO - OPENING THE MEETING

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqJwifga37A&list=PL\\_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m\\_X68dsWK6jeo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqJwifga37A&list=PL_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m_X68dsWK6jeo)

#### 5. DRAFT AUTISM STRATEGY

The chair opened the session by explaining that Peta Smith, lead officer for the strategy, and Jay Stickland, Director, were not able to attend this evening and sent their apologies. The chair said she was grateful that the Assistant Director, Simon Mitchell, had stepped in that but as it was important to hear from the lead officers Jay & Peta would be invited back in December to feedback on the results of the consultation. She then invited the Assistant Director to briefly present the paper circulated, and then invited the committee to ask questions.

The following queries, comments and answers were received:

Members asked about the consultation day and who was booked on, and if an additional Saturday would be considered, or north or south of borough. The Assistant Director said that if more days were needed, they would be added, however the service needed to be mindful of resources, hence only one location in the centre of the borough had been booked as other places in the north and south had been prohibitively expensive.

The committee raised the pivotal time of transition from childhood to adulthood, the move to different services, and the importance of liaising with Further Education.

Members asked if there had been liaison with school SENCO leads as a correct and timely diagnosis is very important, and the Assistant Director agreed that it is important to diagnose early to prevent latter problems and avoid a misdiagnosis for a behaviour problem.

A member commented that the strategy is a little thin on schools and also that she could not see a document that meets the needs of professionals. She asked the Assistant Director if officers will be sending out a questionnaire to professionals. He responded that he did not know if there was a survey for professionals, but there is a dedicated session for professionals to feed into the strategy.

The chair suggested using the services of the Headteachers' Executive to promote the consultation to schools. A member reported that Redriff autism unit had not heard about the consultation, which was a concern.

Members stressed the importance of 'Independent Living', and people with autism being able to access adequate support to live in the community, e.g. services like Keyring and employment support.

A member raised concerns that the strategy focused almost exclusively on data and training frontline staff and much of this training was online.

There was a comment that the document is fairly dry and the consultation also lacked an open question.

A member asked if there will be section on monitoring the implementation of the strategy , and a section on how it will be kept updated. The Assistant Director referred to Statement of Intent, and the member followed up by emphasising the important of measurable targets & outcomes and a continual cycle of refreshment of the strategy aims and content.

There was a comment that that autism is not a mental illness, not a disability, just different. People are not going to get better or worse - but are at risk of becoming isolated, and the strategy would benefit from taking that stance.

Members queried if there was sufficient engagement with parents.

Concern was raised at national figures that show that only 15% of people with an autism diagnosis are in employment, and the importance of achieving a much higher rate in Southwark.

## **RESOLVED**

Cllr Kath Whittam will take the lead in preparing a summery on behalf of the scrutiny committee on the points raised and submitting this to officers.

Officers will be invited back to present on the results of the consultation and next stage in the strategies development.

## **VIDEO - DRAFT AUTISM STRATEGY**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE6UTi\\_qGMA&list=PL\\_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m\\_X68dsWK6jeo&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OE6UTi_qGMA&list=PL_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m_X68dsWK6jeo&index=2)

## **6. WORKPLAN**

### **RESOLVED**

The workplan was agreed.

### **VIDEO - WORKPLAN**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-205ywfMU54&list=PL\\_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m\\_X68dsWK6jeo&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-205ywfMU54&list=PL_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m_X68dsWK6jeo&index=3)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGT-YtIKyzk&index=4&list=PL\\_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m\\_X68dsWK6jeo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGT-YtIKyzk&index=4&list=PL_maFEOk7e9jJM6Cjj88m_X68dsWK6jeo)

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**