



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 12 July 2010 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor David Hubber (Chair)
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Adele Morris
Councillor Rosie Shimell
Councillor Althea Smith
Colin Elliott
Jane Hole
Sharon Donno

**OTHER MEMBERS
PRESENT:**

OFFICER Julie Timbrell , Scrutiny Project Manager
SUPPORT: Jane Baily, Assitant Director 11 -19 and Youth

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

2. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cleo Soanes as there was a meeting clash with the Democracy Commission. Councillor Althea Smith gave apologies for lateness.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

- 2.1 There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

- 3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

5. MINUTES

5.0 The Chair asked the independent members of the committee, who were present at the last meeting, if they could agree these. These were agreed as a correct record.

6. WORK PROGRAMMING AND SCOPING

- 6.1 The Chair circulated an article on parenting support which discussed the success of a volunteer programme. This addressed child protection issues through the use of volunteers who mentored struggling parents. (3 June 2010 Local Government Chronicle pg 16 – 17)
- 6.2 It was suggested that sports provision was chosen as a review topic and this be linked to childhood obesity.
- 6.3 There was a query on the School admission criteria and whether it was part of the committee's remit to address this, particularly in relation to academies.
- 6.4 Jane Bailey commented the admissions process for primary school places is locally administered, and no primary schools are academies. The committee might like to consider if the issues are how schools administer their published admission criteria or the Local Authorities wider role in admissions.
- 6.5 Cllr Adele Morris pointed out there is a local Admissions Forum. It was agreed they are best placed to look at particular issues raised by individual schools application and administration of their published admission criteria.
- 6.6 Members commented that it would be worthwhile to understand the new Coalition governments plans for 'new style' Academies, particularly the composition of the governing bodies and the role of parent representatives.
- 6.7 The Chair reported to members that he had recently attended an event put on by parents of children with autism and queried if there was sufficient support for parents with children with disabilities. The committee agreed that looking at parenting support as a theme would be very worthwhile.
- 6.8 The parent governor and head teacher representatives on the committee commented that last spring the previous committee had produced a report on the importance of parental involvement in children's educations. The conclusions emphasised the importance of enabling parents to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to help their children. It was requested this be circulated.
- 6.9 Colin Elliott spoke about the number of dangerous dog attacks. There was some debate on the right place for this and whether it might be better picked up by the scrutiny committee who deals with community safety. It was agreed that some facts and figures would be requested for the next meeting.
- 6.10 There was a query on the Local Authorities role and influence on schools admissions criteria, with specific reference to Kingsdale.

- 6.11 Jane Bailey explained that, while she could not go into details on individual schools, there are principles and rules that all schools must follow. There is an admission Code of Practice and schools also have to adhere to their published admission criteria. Furthermore schools are open to challenge.
- 6.12 A member commented that different schools have different admission criteria. It was noted that schools can vary their criteria as long as it conforms to the Code of Practice.
- 6.13 It was noted that the Admission Forum have oversight of this process. Members requested more information on the role of this body.
- 6.14 Members raised concerns about the complexity and ability of parents to negotiate the schools application process. It was suggested this was picked up under the review on parenting support.
- 6.15 Members noted the difficulties parents had understanding the 'distance to school' criteria. It was also noted that parents frequently do not understand they have some rights to defer places offered in September. This can sometimes be better for nursery school age children.
- 6.16 Members commented that the process is confusing and support is needed. When applying for school places parents have to be realistic about places they put their children down for. Even parents with a lot of information can find the process stressful so it is particularly important to ensure all parents have the right information to make the best choices for their children and minimise the difficulties involved.
- 6.17 A member requested more information on youth commissioning, and it was agreed that this could probably be dealt with under 'Cabinet questions' at the next meeting.

AGREED

It was agreed the committee would conduct the following reviews over the next administrative year:

1. Review of childhood obesity and sports provision for secondary and primary children
2. Review of parenting support:
 - i) First part : School admissions – with focus on reviewing clarity of information available alongside reviewing support networks to help parents negotiate the system
 - ii) Second part: volunteer and peer support, with particular attention paid to support available for parents of disabled children

Scoping documents will be circulated to the committee for the above reviews.

Reports will be requested on:

a) School admissions process and support for parents. This will contain an explanation of the government's guidance on schools admission criteria, the local authority's role in coordinating school admissions and the role of the Admissions Board. An overview of support for parents will also be requested.

b) The governments 'new style' academies. In particular the governing arrangements; composition of governing boards and number of parent representatives alongside an indication of the number of Southwark schools who are considering changing their status.

c) The number of dangerous dogs attacks in Southwark. Suzanne White will be contacted for facts and figures.

It was agreed that last years "Parenting engagement" report will be circulated.

7. TRAINING FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

7.1 The Committee considered safeguarding training form members. It was agreed that a price will be sought and in house trainers will be considered. The committee will then decide what best value is.

CHAIR:

DATED: