



## **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 12 January 2011 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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- PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)  
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole  
Councillor Lorraine Lauder MBE  
Councillor Rosie Shimell  
Councillor Althea Smith  
Councillor Cleo Soanes  
Colin Elliott  
Leticia Ojeda  
Sharon Donno
- PUBLIC PRESENT:** Ibrahim Bah; Southwark Youth Council  
Abu Rojas; Southwark Youth Council  
Montina Ewohime; Southwark Youth Council  
Tevin Coward; Southwark Youth Council  
Alex Fefegha; Southwark Youth Council
- OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Julie Timbrell; Scrutiny project manager  
Davina Baily , Southwark Youth Service  
Pauline Armour; Assistant Director , Children's Sevices  
Malcolm Ward, Southwark safeguarding manager  
Chris Davies , Independent Chair, Southwark Childrens  
Safeguarding Board

### **1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adele Morris and Reverend Nicholas Elder.

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

2.1 There were no urgent items.

### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2010 were approved.

### **5. SOUTHWARK YOUTH COUNCIL**

5.1 The chair welcomed the Southwark Youth Council (SYC) delegation to the meeting. He drew members of the committee's attention to the paper that the delegation had prepared (circulated with the papers) and invited the young people to present and officers to assist with providing information.

5.2 A member of the delegation asked if the council was still intending to deliver the Children's and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP). Pauline Armour; Assistant Director of 05 -11 Services & Inclusion replied that the council still have the plan, however there have been some changes, particularly around schools. Following new priorities set by the coalition government there will now be more emphasis on schools concentrating on academic achievement, and that means that other partners will need to take more of a lead on priorities such as safeguarding, employment and healthy living.

5.3 The chair suggested that the committee and Southwark Youth Council monitor the implementation of the CYPP every three months, and that members of the SYC attend the meeting and ask questions. Members of SYC said they would welcome this.

5.4 The chair noted the idea for workshops in schools led by members of the community on social issues such as gangs. The chair suggested that this proposal be put to the cabinet lead for children's services, Cllr Catherine McDonald, for comment.

5.5 A young person from the delegation asked how young people will know that they will not be hit the hardest by the cuts. The Assistant Director of 05 -11 Services & Inclusion replied that the cuts are very difficult, and we are all being asked to make savings, however children's services will not be hit harder than other areas of the council's work. We are looking at what we can take money out of that will impact the least. Members of the delegation responded that they are sometimes unsure how serious the council is when it comes to involving young people in decision making and SYC members pointed out that sometimes feedback is not received.

5.6 Members of the delegations are asked for feedback following the visit by the cabinet lead for children's services to their recent meeting. A range of options were put forward by the cabinet lead and SYC would very much like to know the

outcome of these discussions. Committee members commented that the budget process is still ongoing; however they asked that officers present facilitate feedback to SYC, as it becomes available.

- 5.7 The chair also said that a letter would be written by the committee asking for feedback from the cabinet lead on the proposals put forward by SYC in the papers circulated.
- 5.8 A member of the scrutiny committee asked the delegation for more details on the incentives scheme to promote and encourage youth participation in the community. The youth participation project officer, Davina Bailey, noted that there is an accreditation programme and this is motivational, however other young people might want something more tangible and this would vary depending on different age groups. Councillors Cleo Soanes and Rosie Shimell suggested that members of SYC develop some practical suggestions for an incentive scheme and offered to assist SYC in this. Members of SYC welcomed this.
- 5.9 A member of SYC said that one the biggest issues for young people is the high level of street crime and said that it would be very helpful to talk to a senior police officer about this .
- 5.10 The delegation drew attention to their request for more opportunities to promote children's services and youth activities on Southwark Council's website and through Southwark Life. The chair indicated this would be put to the cabinet lead for children's services.
- 5.11 A member of SYC commented that young people would like more work experience opportunities.
- 5.12 The delegation drew attention to the promise that young people would have control of 20% of the youth budget through devolved decision making.
- 5.13 The chair of the committee thanked the delegation for coming. Members of the committee and SYC welcomed the opportunity to build a relationship and it was agreed that members of SYC would be invited to the meeting after next , for the item on the CYPP .

## RESOLVED

The committee and Southwark Youth Council (SYP) agreed to monitor the Children's and Young People Plan (CYPP) together. There will be an introductory session where officers will be invited to present on the CYPP and then progress on the plan will be followed up with a regular quarterly item on the agenda. SYP will be invited to attend and monitor the plan with the committee.

SYC made four suggestions and that the committee agreed would go to the cabinet lead, Cllr Catherine McDonald, for her view on opportunities for progression:

- 1 Young people would like an incentives scheme to promote and encourage youth participation in the community. Youth representatives and committee members agreed to

explore what this might mean practically.

2 The youth council proposed workshops in schools on social issues. This might be linked to citizenship classes and be run by, for example, ex gang members and young mothers and young fathers.

3 Representatives would like increase communication and avenues for participation and suggested the council set up a text service that would alert young people in the borough to service provision. SYC also want better publicity using, for example, the website and Southwark Life.

4 The youth council requested feedback on budget proposals following on from earlier consultation carried out by the cabinet lead, Cllr Catherine McDonald.

## **6. SAFEGUARDING**

6.1 The chair welcomed Chris Davies, independent chair, Southwark Safeguarding Children Board and Malcolm Ward, Southwark Council's Safeguarding Manger to the meeting to present and take questions on the annual safeguarding report.

6.2 The independent chair said that he would like to introduce himself and explained that he had been a social worker since 1971 and had been a director of social work for many years, for a number of local authorities. He also advised a select committee and said he understood the role of local scrutiny committees.

6.3 It was explained that the annual safeguarding report was a draft, and subject to consultation and therefore committee feedback very much welcomed. Feedback on the presentation would be useful, as well as comment on whether you think we have identified the right issues and priorities.

6.4 The independent chair and committee members noted the press coverage as a result of publication of the draft report by scrutiny. This was welcomed as raising awareness.

6.5 The independent chair noted that parts of Southwark are not easy to bring up children well; poor housing, poverty, cultural diversity and high levels of crime can make this a tough job for parents and professionals.

6.6 The draft safeguarding report was referred to. It was noted that there is good engagement by partners and the community around safeguarding issues. The board is well attended by most partners who participate in a wide range of service development and delivery activities, both within and across organisations. The strong cultures of partnership working and shared responsibility around safeguarding have been key to supporting children at risk of harm.

6.7 The draft safeguarding report also identified the priorities for development (page 13 of the agenda pack) as there is no room for complacency.

6.8 The independent chair noted that the board's role is to make it easier for social

workers, police and other concerned adults to safeguarding children better. Our job is to facilitate this process. Procedures can make it easier, but some can make it harder.

- 6.9 The chair invited members to pose questions. A member noted that the report said most partners contribute well, however who does not attend? The independent chair commented that sometimes attendance can be patchy and this varies across organisations as personal change. We do have an executive sub group of chief executives and this is well attended.
- 6.10 A member asked about links with G.Ps and schools and the chair responded that we do have links, but these are through third parties and with the end of the PCT G.Ps are becoming more and more important so we will need to look at direct links with practices. Alongside this there are moves by the coalition government towards school independence, so the board's relationship will be less about 'command and control' and more about influencing.
- 6.11 A member remarked that the independent chair's opening statement about Southwark being a difficult borough could be a cause for concern, explaining that she had just done an interview with the BBC and there is a chance that the media could exploit a statement like that.
- 6.12 The independent chair explained that he had not included that statement in the report for concerns it could be taken out of context. However all the measures indicate that for some parts of the Borough it is a challenging environment.
- 6.13 A question was asked about engaging with children and young people and the independent chair commented that for children who are suffering the best thing we can do is support adults who are around children. He commented that it was great that this item followed on from Southwark Youth Council and reported that he intends to visit this group about the boarder issues. The independent chair also reported that he had met with Speakerbox; which is a group bringing together young people who have been in care.
- 6.14 A member drew attention to recent flyers distributed locally which appeared to be targeted at young people, and sought to dissuade potential witnesses from giving information to the police by questioning their safety. The member asked what assurance young people could have around their safety?
- 6.15 The independent chair commented that we have been involved with young people involved with gang activity, and wanting to leave. Housing, community safety professionals, and other have gone to considerable efforts to protect young people. He reported that we do work with a wider group of police, witness protection, youth workers e.t.c. who have a responsibility for community safety and the welfare of young people.
- 6.16 There was a question about a rise in the number of young people in care and it was explained that the national trend is rising, so this is not surprising. However you have to be careful with these statistics and as there are not huge numbers, so one or two families can make a big difference.

- 6.17 A member commented on the report's aspiration to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals. The independent chair commented that one of the things that is distinctive about Southwark is that we have a high volume of referrals and the sheer volume can make it difficult to manage. Some agencies can be a bit indiscriminate and we want people to refer more thoughtfully. For example the police have a policy of referring all domestic violence incidents to social services. This can be hard to manage and we are having discussions.
- 6.18 There was a query about changes to public health arrangements and if challenges are anticipated. The independent chair commented that there may be more to gain and there is a potential to strengthen education. However there are many changes due and this can be difficult to predict and manage for frontline officers.
- 6.19 The chair thanked the independent chair and the safeguarding manager and requested that they come back in a year with the next annual report

#### RESOLVED

It was agreed that the committee would receive the next annual safeguarding report next year.

### **7. REVIEW OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND SPORTS PROVISION FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CHILDREN**

- 7.1 The chair drew members attention to the questionnaire circulated and invited comment. Members requested that the questions request more information on meals that parents provide as well as asking a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions. This will be amended and circulated for comment.
- 7.2 Catherine McInnis, Assistant Director Leadership & Learning Support, offered to consider how the questionnaire might be used by the free school meal pilot. This was welcomed by the committee.
- 7.3 The recommendations submitted by officers were welcomed.

#### RESOLVED

The committee agreed they would continue to pursue the above topic by:

Making a note of the recommendations submitted by officers with a view to incorporating them into the later report.

Amend and develop the draft questionnaire for parents. This will then be utilised in two ways:

- 1) Distributed via social media and other networks to get the views of parents on the topic.
- 2) to inform a questionnaire for parents in the free school meal pilots

## **8. REVIEW OF PARENTING SUPPORT - PART ONE: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS**

- 8.1 The chair noted that we had a visit scheduled to the Southwark Governors Forum, but he could not make it and asked the vice chair to attend, and this was agreed.
- 8.2 Pauline Armour, Assistant Director of 05 -11 Services & Inclusion, suggested that we approach other parent partnerships for their views, as well as head teachers in each quadrant. The committee welcomed this suggestion.

RESOLVED

The review will seek evidence from:

- 1) Early Years Parents Forum at 12noon January 25th, 10am-1pm at 1st Place Children's Centre, Chumleigh Street, Burgess Park, SE5 0RN
- 2) Admissions Forum Monday 7th February at 4pm. Exact time and venue to be confirmed
- 3) Southwark Governors Forum feedback from governors requested via the bulletin sent out in January.

Other parent networks will be pursued for feedback on the school admission process.

Children's Services will provide details of head teachers in each quadrant with a view to holding interviews with schools to get their perspective on the admissions process.

## **9. TRAINING**

- 9.1 The scrutiny project manager reported that officers were able to deliver the safeguarding training internally and a date on the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup> March had been provisional scheduled. Members welcomed this development, but requested an evening and a weekend slot, rather than the daytime, because of work commitments.

RESOLVED

The committee welcomed the planned safeguarding training and requested two slots, one at the weekend and one in the evening.

## **10. WORK PROGRAMME**

10.1 The vice chair tabled a paper (attached to the minutes) outlining concerns around adult education. It was agreed this was an area of concern and the committee should start a review at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

The committee will review adult education and an initial scoping document will be produced.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**

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