



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

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 7 March 2012 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01C - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)  
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole  
Councillor Sunil Chopra  
Councillor Adele Morris  
Councillor Althea Smith  
Councillor Cleo Soanes  
Reverend Nicholas Elder  
Colin Elliott

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Romi Bowen Strategic Director of Children's Services  
Rory Patterson : Deputy Director, Specialist Children's Services  
Kerry Crichlow: Assistant director; strategy and support.  
Gill Davies, Director of Environment  
Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure  
Colin Gale: Free Healthy School Meals project lead  
Davina Bailey: Southwark Youth Council involvement officer  
Julie Timbrell , Scrutiny project manager

### **1. APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rosie Shimell and education representatives Nick Tildesley and Leticia Ojeda.

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

- 2.1 There were none.

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

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

4.1 The Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on 8 February 2012 were approved as an accurate record.

### **5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW**

5.1 The chair welcomed the young people from Southwark Youth Council (SYC) and the Cabinet member for Children's Services, Councillor Catherine McDonald. The chair explained that the first few themes of the cabinet member interview will be done with the young people from Southwark Youth Council. The Cabinet member introduced the first theme; Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). This is the overarching strategic framework for services for children, young people and families in Southwark. It was approved by Council Assembly on 24 March 2010 and came into force on 1 April 2010.

5.2 The Cabinet member went on to highlight some of the key achievements of the plan. Under 'Thinking family– families at the centre of what we do' she noted that the new youth council had just been elected. She explained that the plan emphasises not treating families in separate divisions, but rather taking a holistic approach. Families are at the centre of the council's work.

5.3 The Cabinet member went on to outline the achievements of the 'Narrowing the gap' strand. She explained that the educational outcomes of our looked after children are lower, but last year's results were about twice as high. A virtual head has been appointed to oversee the education of children wherever they are educated. The 'Narrowing the gap' strand also does work on improving the outcomes of disadvantaged ethnic groups and the cabinet member reported that there has been some good work here.

5.4 The next strand is 'Raising the bar'. The Cabinet member highlighted the work of the school improvement team and the council's partnership work with schools. This has helped Southwark's primary schools improve so that they are now in the top quarter for performance.

5.5 The Cabinet member went on to talk about the strand aimed at ensuring that at risk children succeed into adulthood. She reported that a successful youth offending service inspection which highlighted effective practice around young offenders engaging in education, employment and training. The Cabinet member spoke about the new youth fund which is funding some of the young people in sixth form who have had their EMA cut and will also provide a small number of scholarships.

5.6 The final strand the Cabinet member reported on was; 'working together – children are safeguarded from harm and neglect', and highlighted the recent inspection that

judged adoption services to be good with outstanding features, and fostering services to be good.

- 5.7 The chair invited SYC and members to ask questions. A young person asked about the commitment to delegate 20 % of the decisions on the youth budget to young people. The Cabinet member said that funds are allocated by a panel of young people and that coming decisions on the Youth Service will be done in partnership with young people. A young person acknowledged that young people have had an input, but commented that many of the decisions had been taken already. The cabinet member responded that recent consultation work with the old SYC has been on improving the engagement of young people in judging recent bids for delivering some youth services.
- 5.8 A member of the committee asked how the Cabinet member will know that the plan is making a difference and she responded that when the new administration came in many of the measures were at the wrong end; for example teenage pregnancy and obesity rates were high. She reported that the trends for teenage pregnancy are now improving; and this had started under the last administration and accelerated under the new administration. The good news is that the national statistics show that Southwark has made rapid improvement and now 18<sup>th</sup> worst which is much better than the 4<sup>th</sup> worst position Southwark held until recently. The Cabinet member reported that the Teenage Pregnancy Commission has implemented new practices including 'health huts' to promote sex education and new initiatives to create behaviour change. She reported rates for obesity are still high and that when most of these measures are at the right end, then the administration will know that there is real improvement.
- 5.9 A young person asked about help to enable young people to get a job and the Cabinet member highlighted the importance of good quality work experience and that the council is seeking to improve the opportunities for young people to access these.
- 5.10 A young person complained that when young people do manage to access apprenticeships they are paid a pitiful amount of £2 per hour and then end up making tea and coffee. Young people relayed problems in finding sufficient work experience opportunities and asked if the council offered work experience and apprenticeships.
- 5.11 The Cabinet member responded that the council is promoting proper apprenticeships and gave the example of the local authority scheme whereby young people study for an NVQ2. She went on to explain that this is different than work experience which is more a 3 week taster of work and explained that there is ongoing work to develop opportunities for young people and she is involved in meeting the business community who are providing opportunities. She reported on the good work of the Educational Business Alliance who go into primary and secondary schools
- 5.12 Young people said that they do not know where to find out about these placement opportunities and said that the information is lacking. The Cabinet member said she welcomed this feedback and went on to say that she would like to consult more with young people on better ways to promote and advertise work experience

and apprenticeship opportunities. The cabinet member went on to explain that the local authority scheme has 27 young people on the programme and they recently celebrated the achievements of two outstanding candidates for the year. The Cabinet member that the apprenticeships are open access, with 20 % of the places going to 'looked after ' children.

- 5.13 A young person asked how many apprenticeship schemes there are in Southwark and the Cabinet member explained that the council don't oversee that and that there is a national apprenticeship scheme which has responsibility for managing this area and they may be able to provide this information.
- 5.14 A young person asked about proposed changes to the BTEC qualification and the cabinet member responded that there is a debate about changing parity. Some people have questioned if they are academic enough , however people in industries such as engineering have said that they are very important and rigorous.
- 5.15 A member of the committee asked about the Shard and commented that the council made some section 106 agreement with regeneration partners to provide apprenticeships. The Cabinet member agreed and said that Southwark College have been developing apprenticeships with the construction and catering industry as a result of this funding. A member asked a follow on question about work with florists and hairdressers and links with a branch of Southwark College in the Cut. The Cabinet member responded that the council is committed to continuing this work and is monitoring the work of Southwark College. There are discussions with Lewisham College about a possible takeover and merger.
- 5.16 A young person asked how they can be sure that once an apprentice has become qualified that they will be employed; and raised concerns that an employer might then ask them to leave once the training had been completed. The Cabinet member responded that the evidence shows that if an employer has trained a person then retention is high. However she acknowledged that in the current economic climate employers can pick and choose and may prioritise experience. She went on to say that completing a qualification is a good way of promoting yourself in the workplace.
- 5.17 A young person commented that she would like more of a range of opportunity and explained that she would like to be sociologist and would welcome a more diverse range, not just basic opportunities like hairdressing. The Cabinet member said she would take that away and agreed that the council need to encourage employers to offer a range of opportunities. She encouraged the young person to contact employers directly and show initiative.
- 5.18 A young person asked if the scheme is only providing opportunities for 'goody goodies' , and enquired about work experience for young people who were not angels in school but want work experience. The Cabinet member commented that the council want everybody to who has talent, skills and enthusiasm to have opportunities. She went on to say that employers are looking for reliable people who can get the job done , and while she understood that the classroom environment might not appeal to all young people it is a tough ask to say to an employer I didn't go to school but I would like you to give me a job.

- 5.19 A young person asked how schools can become more engaging for young people and the cabinet member responded that many schools in Southwark are improving and part of that is improving the education offered so that children and young people are more engaged by the learning.
- 5.20 A young person commented that some of the work experience placements are not accessible to people with disabilities and the Cabinet member responded that while she did not know the specifics the council do need to respond to a range of needs including special needs. A member of the committee responded that Leonard Cheshire Disability has a brilliant centre based in Southwark with excellent courses.
- 5.21 The chair invited young people and members to consider the theme on Changes to Delivery Arrangements for the Youth Service. The Cabinet member commented that the council has had to take money out of discretionary service to reduce the cuts made to statutory services. She went on to comment that the council consider that the current services does not meet the needs of enough young people, given the scale of the councils investment, which she said is quite high. The cabinet member said that the council have involved a wider group, including young people, in developing a future model. This has now been signed off. The new model is concentrating on meeting needs and quality. The new model is using a hub and spoke model; some provision is borough wide and some is more locally based.
- 5.22 A young person commented that there is a need for more information and communication about what is on offer. The cabinet member said she heard this feedback and that the council does need to make sure we communicate well.
- 5.23 The chair of the committee spoke about hate crime and young people who are victims of homophobic bullying; many of whom may not want to go to parents or the police. He enquired whether there was a safe space that people can go and raise an alert. The cabinet member responded that the council does lots of work in schools and attended a recent event in conjunction with Stonewall. The cabinet member reported that the council recently produced an anti-bullying strategy and this includes a section on homophobic bullying. Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) information and promotion was talked about at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting and actions are planned to take this forward.
- 5.24 The chair asked if any organisation had been identified who could lead on this work. He reported that some boroughs do this. The Cabinet member reported that some people think this approach works best, but another approach it to be more broad and generic. She reported that she would be worried if only one provider had this expertise and would rather this be embedded in wider provision.
- 5.25 A member commented that under the Equality Act all providers have to set out how they will promote LGBT equality and asked how Southwark was monitoring this. The cabinet member commented that the status of the school varies our ability to influence change; there are now maintained, academies and free schools. Ofsted have a duty to monitor schools. Romi Bowen Strategic Director of Children's Services commented that the council has limited capacity to do workshops to promote this, however she suggested that this may be an area that scrutiny can work on by asking these questions of schools. She also reported that the school

improvement teams will be having conversations with heads.

- 5.26 A member commented on a recent incident in the news where a girl had pretended to be a boy and then had a relationship with a girl. The cabinet member said this raised lots of issues; including being potentially being deceptive to others. The Strategic Director commented that this is also about the parenting role that is carried out by foster carers and parents, and the wider pressures that teenagers experience to be sexually active.
- 5.27 A young person commented that they are looking at reassurance that our systems are in place. Officers said that the service does screening the well-being of 'looked after' children, and went on to assure members and young people that there are no cutbacks to health services for 'looked after' children
- 5.28 The chair introduced the theme of 'Gangs and the 1000 most disruptive families' and asked the Cabinet member to outline the councils response. She responded that the government report was out and being circulates. This has recommendations for early invention and what to do to prevent young people getting involved in gangs and prevention in the home.
- 5.29 A member asked about work in Southwark. The cabinet member responded that there are lots of reasons why people get involved in gangs but to simplify this is often linked to experiences in formative years. There are interventions with 'troubled' families including early intervention.
- 5.30 She went on to explain that there is intervention to prevent young people most at risk and other initiatives such as parenting orders and anti gang workshops in schools aimed at girls and boys.
- 5.31 The cabinet member explained that the plan gave 7 or 8 possible indicators of a troubled family and recommended that a family with 5 or more of these indicators be indentified. Initially it was thought that Southwark would have around 1085 of these families, however we think it is more like 2000.
- 5.32 The cabinet member commented that the government list is helpful, and that Southwark now think that domestic violence is a very important indication. The government is promoting this initiative but the council is doing this work anyway,
- 5.33 A member asked about the support in place for parents who want to take responsibility and asked how the council supports them if parents are seeking help. An example was given of the police being called out to disruptive children. Officers reported that there are interventions that empower parents if they are losing control with maintaining authority. Harsh parenting can also be a cause of problems.
- 5.34 The cabinet member commented that she recently gave out certificates to parents referred to parenting courses and a number of parents commented that they did not want to be there initially but the course had been transformative.
- 5.35 The chair moved the meeting on to the next them 'Free school meals - linking this

to the recent scrutiny report on obesity and sports'. A member opened the discussion by commenting that a recent school visit had demonstrated the importance of involving children in deciding the content of school meals and thereby promoting healthy eating and preventing future obesity.

- 5.36 A member asked what the feedback from parents was and the cabinet member commented that parents say their children are enjoying the social aspect and they are being asked to cook food which uses more vegetables. One parent noted that since being made redundant the household budget is being stretched as there is only one working parent.
- 5.37 A member commented that early year's intervention and education is very important. The Cabinet member agreed and commented that a lot of good work is being done in Children's Centres.
- 5.38 A member commented that eating around a table in is a very important part of a child's social education and that many children live in cramped flats where this is not possible.
- 5.39 The cabinet member reported that since the programme had been rolled out uptake is often at over 80% and this is encouraging.
- 5.40 A member commented that a recent Islington report on obesity indicates no great impact or that any impact was hard to measure. The member asked if the longitudinal studies will allow drilling down to measure the effect of the programme on those children on packed lunches and those taking lunches. The Cabinet member replied that the council would probably not be able to do drilling down to that detail it can look at obesity trends from the child measurement programme at reception and year 6. A member commented that the Islington report cohort may not have had long enough time to measure the impact , as results will not usually be ready for several years.
- 5.41 A member raised concerns with fast food and welcomed the consultation which is taking place on the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan. This is consulting on restricting fast food outlets to 400 meters from schools. Another member commented that there are similar recommendations in the recent Obesity and Sports report, produced by this committee.
- 5.42 The chair thanked the Cabinet member for her interview.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN WITH SOUTHWARK YOUTH COUNCIL AND SPEAKERBOX - QUARTERLY REVIEW**

6.1 This was covered under item 5 during the cabinet member interview.

## **7. REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS.**

7.1 The recent school visit to John Donne primary school to review the school meals was noted and members commended the good work taking place.

### **ACTION**

Two more visits will be organised so that all members who want to attend are able to visit at least one school.

## **8. ADULT EDUCATION**

8.1 The chair welcomed Gill Davies, Director of Environment, Adrian Whittle, Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure and Vince Brown, from Save Southwark Adult Learning, to the meeting.

8.2 A member commented that one of the courses on offer by Adult Learning was on language exchange skills and asked where booklets are displayed and if they go to libraries. There was a query over a correct date.

8.3 The Director of Environment commented that the date can be checked, however lots of effort goes into ensuring the information is as accurate as possible. She went on to assure members that booklets are displayed in museums and libraries. The Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure commented that the report contains verbatim comments from the focus groups; however not all the comments may be accurate.

8.4 The Director of Environment explained that they are looking at this consultation on Adult Learning as part of a wider review and vision for the service and this includes looking at what other colleges do and how the council's service should complement this. The Adult Learning Service is currently having an Ofsted inspection.

8.5 Vince Brown commented that he welcomed looking at the work of other colleges and he was particularly interested in how Lambeth can deliver cheaper courses than Southwark. He went on to note that the Thomas Carlton centre is a social centre and a community that particularly meets the needs of people needing childcare or who are not so mobile. He commented that he would like to know more about how to participate and feedback to the review.

8.6 A member noted that officers were present when the young people from Southwark Youth Council were here earlier; and recommended that SYC are also consulted with on this review and particularly in improving communication. The Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure noted that this review is about adult learning, however officers can talk to colleagues about their overall offer and how it



is publicised. This currently goes in Floodlight, on bus-stops, in supermarkets, in libraries and via newspaper advertisements. He added that worded of mouth is also important.

- 8.7 A member commented that good Adult Education provision goes on in other places, including Rotherhithe Library and Dulwich Picture Gallery and it would be good to include this provision in the review. The Director of Environment mentioned that an outline of the review has been provided. The review will be looking at the broader provision including Southwark Collage and the entire range of Adult Education, not just the Personal and Community Learning. The Director of Environment went on to add that geography is an important part of the equation.
- 8.8 Vince Brown raised concerns that the arts and community courses could get lost in the boarder vision. He requested a specific meeting to allow more comment and to contribute to the visioning.
- 8.9 A member commented that the broader visioning is welcomed but a specific meeting would be good to enable specific concentration on the community and arts classes. The Head of Culture, Libraries, Learning and Leisure said that a number of workshops have been held but if there is more information then the service would like to hear this.
- 8.10 The Director of Environment clarified that the purpose of the review is to identify whether the council should be doing more on some area, less on other areas , what other providers are doing and what the service's niche should be. The Director of Environment went on the explain that the service does have a service user forum which has provided good feedback.
- 8.11 Vice Brown commented that a meeting in the evening would be appreciated as the daytime meeting had been at a difficult time and also some people had left the service recently, because of service changes so were not in the Users Council, although they would like to return.
- 8.12 The chair asked the Director of Environment if this would be possible and she confirmed that it would.

## **ACTION**

A one off meeting will take place so that people who could not make the previous visioning workshops can contribute to this review.

## **9. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL**

- 9.1 The report on Rotherhithe School was noted.

## **ACTION**

An update report on Rotherhithe and any other plans for free schools in Southwark will come to the next meeting.

### **10. UPDATE WORKPLAN**

10.1 The work programme was noted and agreed.

### **11. REVIEW OF PARENTING SUPPORT PART 2 A DRAFT REPORT ON SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN**

11.1 The chair noted the good summary report circulated and noted that the next step was to develop some recommendations.

## **ACTION**

The chair and the vice chair will work on drafting these ready for the next committee.