

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

MINUTES of the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 26 November 2012 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02B - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)  
Councillor Rowenna Davis  
Councillor Rosie Shimell  
Councillor Cleo Soanes  
Colin Elliott  
Lynn Charlton  
Councillor Althea Smith  
Councillor Chris Brown

### **OTHER MEMBERS**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Claire Hickson: Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development.  
Councillor Dora Dixon – Fyle: Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Merrill Haeusler: Deputy Director of Children's Services – Education  
Kerry Crichlow: Deputy Director Strategy and Commissioning  
Colin Gale: Free Healthy School Meals project lead  
Graham Sutton: Principal Strategy Officer  
Julie Timbrell: Scrutiny Project Manager

### **1. APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sunil Chopra and The Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole, because he was chairing a community faith meeting. Leticia Ojeda, parent governor representative, also sent her apologies. Councillor

Soanes sent apologies for lateness.

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

2.1 The 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 12 September 2012 were agreed as an accurate record.

**5. REVIEW OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN (CYPP)**

5.1 The report was noted and comments made in the following section.

**6. SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK AND COLLEGE**

6.1 Councillor Claire Hickson; Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development, and Councillor Dora Dixon – Fyle; Cabinet Member for Children's Services, drew the committee's attention to the report circulated with the papers. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services observed that one of the biggest commitments made by the incoming Labour administration was the establishment of a £3 million Youth Fund, which has paid for a Southwark Education Maintenance Supplement and a training service. She reported that partly as a result of this Young people Not in Education or Employment (NEETs) are coming down. The cabinet member explained that the service is also helping families to get out of worklessness.

6.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services reported that the apprenticeship scheme at the council is going well. An Economic Wellbeing Strategy went to cabinet recently and this includes measures to ensure young people get real work experience. She explained that she recently met with Southwark Youth Council and that there was an exchange of views on the importance of bridging the gap between school and employers through training and work experience.

- 6.3 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development reported that there is a gap between the London wide and Southwark borough unemployment rate of about 2% and this is quite a challenging gap to close. She commented that young people have a quite straight forward process to negotiate to apply to university from school, however the route to work is more complex and young people do not always know how to access apprenticeships and training, particularly if they are from a less advantaged background. She went on to remark that there is more need for extra support particularly for the less motivated. She commented that there is less unemployment but more long-term employment.
- 6.4 The chair invited Southwark Youth Council (SYC) and committee members to comment. A young person referred to the report on the focus groups that SYC had recently conducted with young people. She reported that young people had identified safety as a number one priority, with decision making as the next highest priority. The chair indicated that the Health and Wellbeing Board might be a good place to raise concerns and both members and officers assured the SYC that the board is very open to hearing young people's views.
- 6.5 A member commented that she is concerned about the young people who may not access SYC. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services commented that the youth service is now focused on localities. She went on to report that there is also a youth bus that goes out to estates and other places.
- 6.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development commented that the council is trying to target long-term unemployment through Job Centre Plus. A member reported that she recently attended a roundtable discussion, but Job Centre Plus was not present. The cabinet member said that she took the members point, and went on to explain that the council cannot force Job Centre Plus to attend, however the council can increase its influence by developing better relationships.
- 6.7 The chair asked SYC members if they have been involved in gathering the 1000 stories for the new Children's and Young People Plan. A young person confirmed that they had, and they are involved in going out and recording stories. She reported that SYC are emphasising the positive as well as the negative. She explained that this is because they want to prevent good services being taken away if they are working well.
- 6.8 A member asked the young people if they feel able to approach the job market and if the Connexions service is assisting. One young person commented that there is a high level of awareness of different types of jobs. Another young person commented at a

national poll identified that getting into work was the fourth most important priority for young people. He reported that his school is organising a business seminar with local providers so that young people can become more aware of the skills needed by employers and the opportunities. A young person added that while retail opportunities were often promoted she would welcome more information about wider opportunities in law, politics or banking, for example.

- 6.9 A young person commented that one of the most important challenges for young people is getting ready for work and being able to contribute to wider society. She commented that the bursaries provided by Southwark are welcome, and went on to suggest that the council contact some of the larger corporations and encourage them to employ Southwark young people.
- 6.10 Charter School's work to arrange placements was cited as an example of good practice by a young person. He reported that they had arranged work experience at News of the World and the Bank of England. He explained that last year they had a careers fair that received feedback from the young people. This year more people are involved from the outside and he is pleased with the progress. He commented that often young people hear of the same jobs coming up and young people would like more variety.
- 6.11 A young person commented that one of the biggest issues is work experience. Often schools provide few or very limited options. She explained that while young people can take the initiative to arrange work experience, many young people found this difficult and they were only sometimes offered one days experience, which was not useful.
- 6.12 The Cabinet Member of Children's Services explained that the council is liaising with Connexions as they are reconfiguring what they offering. The council is encouraging them to offer training and apprenticeships. She also explained that when the council procures large contracts the local authority is asking for the inclusion of apprenticeships and training opportunities. The council is also encouraging business to locate and grow in Southwark. She explained that many of these are construction firms and these will not probably attract women, but the Shard includes a Health and Beauty salon and a florist.
- 6.13 Graham Sutton, Principal Strategy Officer, commented that there is quite a complex picture, and while the council no longer directly influences the provision of employment support, the council does work with Southwark Collage. He explained that apprenticeships offered structured training and the council do know that uptakes are lower in London than the wider UK. Larger employers offer these, however the council would like to see smaller business offer

these too. The council is also promoting the wealth of opportunities for young people.

- 6.14 Merrill Haeusler, Deputy Director Children Services – Education, commented that education are working in partnership with businesses. The education department is also looking at learners who have disengaged and ensuring that there are sufficient providers across Southwark that are providing post 16 training.
- 6.15 A young person commented that often young people do not know what they want to do and of work experience is useful to help them decide. Another young person added that increased awareness of the opportunities available would be helpful, as well as more information on the type of qualifications needed to apply for jobs, for example which A levels which are needed to gain a particular university place.
- 6.16 A young person commented that parents often prefer the more traditional options such as becoming a lawyer or doctor, and creative studies are discourage or often only offered at BTEC. However she commented that there is too much competition at law and it is good for young people to keep their options open.
- 6.17 A member raised a concern about work experience offered that did not then lead to a job and that employers are offering week placements that do not lead to a job. This can be very discouraging for a young person. Davina Bailey, the SYC youth involvement officer, commented that several employers are advertising apprenticeships that are not really providing the training necessary to qualify.
- 6.18 A member encouraged young people to contact her if they wanted work experience in being a local politician, and said that many local members would be willing to assist young people with work experience
- 6.19 The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services commented that work experience is a very important introduction to working life; it is about getting into a routine and introducing yourself to the general skills needed for working life. She explained that she worked in Boots as a young person and found the experience useful. She commented that an apprenticeship is focused on developing particular skills needed for more specialised work, where as work experience or a part time job is good at getting work reading and acquiring general skills. She reported that the council is working with nurseries and encouraging them to train local people in childcare.
- 6.20 Several young people emphasised the importance of work experience. One young person said she did a placement at a

media provider and realised that this was not an area that she wanted to pursue a career in. Another young person commented that her schools careers officer left last year and this has made it more difficult to access opportunities. A young person said that Boots is the wrong place to go as people need something to aspire and motivate them. She went on to comment that work experience needs to be relevant to a college application and that apprenticeships are for later.

- 6.21 A member agreed with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and said that work experience can give a multitude of experiences. She explained that her first work experience was in Sainsbury's stacking shelves and this gave her an opportunity to observe the management structure, to take a disciplined approach to work and develop customer service skills. A youth worker reported that she supports young people at Boots and unfortunately they often do not have the opportunity to observe the wider businesses they are stuck in the back office arranging stock and on leave this to go on their break. A member commented that if young people are take jobs such as these it is important that they move around different departments and she hoped the council would encourage this.
- 6.22 A young person responded that if you want to make an application to study law then the relevant work experience placement is needed; and that a retail experience will not count is that is not what a university is looking for. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development said that we need to think about young people who will not get to university too.
- 6.23 A member suggested that young people take part time jobs. A young person responded that she would not be able to take four A levels and do a job and said that she intending to get a job once she had completed her A levels.
- 6.24 The Cabinet Member for Children's Service said that she recently attend an event where young people are given a chance to set up a business for a day. She went on to explain that she is working with London Youth bodies and business support organisations to support young entrepreneurs.

## **7. REVIEW : BULLYING**

- 7.1 The chair invited the young people to give their views on bullying. A young person said that peer pressure is the main issue and this is not direct bullying; but about mental pressure. Another young person agreed and said that this can be sly, for example pretending to be a friend but not really being genuine.

- 7.2 A young person reported that his school uses a box where you can put a slip in talking about bullying , but withhold your name and a teacher will then go and talk to with the named person in a sensitive way . He commented that sometimes group behaviour can be perceived as bullying , even if that is not the intention, for example if someone falls over and then their companions react in a way that makes the person feel bad by laughing.
- 7.3 A young person spoke about his experience of mentoring a younger boy. He visited the counselling programme a Place2be, which really helped. He commented that his behaviour was to do with his home background.
- 7.4 Cyber bullying was raised as an issue of concern and a young person spoke of an image that circulated of a girl, which was not very nice. He reported that the school tackled that very well and as a result relationships improved. A member asked the young people if text and cyber bullying is an area of particular concern and suggested that the committee ask social media and mobile providers to give evidence. She also commented that this is an area that both schools and young people need to work on.
- 7.5 The positive role of School Councils in tackling bullying was cited, however young people spoke about issues outside of school and the 381 bus route was given as an example of poor behaviour. Young people suggested that somebody went on the route to combat bullying.
- 7.6 The education representatives spoke about the video and booklet that Southwark Council produced that is very good.
- 7.7 A member said that her school have instigated a kindness week and added that raising awareness of the different types of bullying; emotional, psychological, physical and sexual is very important in enabling staff to tackle bullying.

#### RESOLVED

Invite outside organisations and social media and mobile providers to give evidence about their role in tackling cyber bullying

#### 8. LOCAL AUTHORITY ROLE IN EDUCATION

- 8.1 The chair reported that both the Local Government Information Unit (LiGU) and the Local Government Association were doing work looking at this area.
- 8.2 Merril Haeusler, Deputy Director for Children's Service – Education, commented that the majority of the council's

relationships with schools are very good and they are keen to work with the council She explained that they provide information when requested and are interested in work experience and providing pathways into training and employment. She reported that fewer primaries want to become academies, and went on to report that a recent meeting between the Council Leader and head teachers was positive.

- 8.3 The chair enquired how the council can influence those schools that are not doing so well and the Deputy Director remarked that those schools in an academy chain are less open to influence as the chains have their own ethos. She noted that academies are purposely set up not to be influenced by local authorities.
- 8.4 The chair noted that the council has the power to issues a warning notice to maintained schools, and then asked if the council made a suggestion, and it was not adhered to, would this action be taken. The Deputy Director said this had not been done. She went on to explain that the departments mantra is: support, challenge, intervention. A member asked is the Deputy Director had an open door policy and the officer confirmed that the department does.
- 8.5 An education representative commented that at one point the council had difficulty obtaining information on exclusions. The Deputy Director said that the information is available on exclusions and the Cabinet Member for Children's Service commented that it did take a while to obtain the data. A member commented that her understanding was that Harris Academy took some time to supply this information and their exclusion rates were some of the highest.
- 8.6 A member asked how a complaint would be dealt with by the local authority and the Deputy Director explained that if a parent wanted to complain about a school then they could write to the Secretary of State, or they could approach the council who would pass the information onto the Secretary of State.
- 8.7 A member reported that the Local Government Information Unit (LiGU) has recently produced a report called 'Should we shed the middle tier' about the diminishing role of local authorities.

RESOLVED

Circulate the LiGU report 'Should we shed the middle tier?'

## **9. REVIEW: UNIVERSAL FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS**

- 9.1 The chair reported that he and members of the committee had visited St Francesca Cabrini Primary School. He noted that the committee have now visited a number of schools to consider the



lunches they provide and how they are delivering the new Universal Free Healthy School Meals offer. He commented that a variety of catering methods are used, including in house provision and different external catering companies.

- 9.2 An education representative noted that the universal funding is having the unintended impact of not requiring parents to apply for the free school meal benefit and this is unfortunately affecting the funding that schools receive as free schools meals applications are linked to deprivation funding. Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning, commented that the council had just received some recent census information which had brought this issue into sharp relief. She went on to report that some schools are managing to record all children receiving this benefit but some are not managing this, and there is a wide spectrum of performance. She reported that the intention is to try to and improve this and review progress in January. An education representative commented that it is important that the council work with the schools to get the most accurate figures possible.
- 9.3 The Director of Strategy & Commissioning was asked by an education representative how the programme links up with work on reducing childhood obesity and she responded that the council is committed to measuring the current cohort of children at entry and year 6 .This will give some data on the impact of the free Healthy School Meals programme on reducing obesity.

#### RESOLVED

The chair indicated that programme should be kept under review for the next 6 months.

### **10. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL AND SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS**

- 10.1 Merril Haeusler, Deputy Director of Children's Service – Education, referred to the report circulated with the papers and explained that there is no further information on Compass. She explained that Compass's preference is for a Bermondsey site and understands that there is a governance meeting in October. A member asked if the Compass school was factored into the council's calculations and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services explained that the setting up of a free school is completely independent of the council processes.
- 10.2 A member asked what way is the council able to influence the planning of free schools and control provision. The Kerry Crichlow, Director for Strategy & Commissioning, explained that the council's role is very limited and that the council does not have control, however the council can try and influence the process. She went

on to explain that the council does plan for demand and the increasing need for places.

**11. REVIEW CABINET RESPONSE: SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

11.1 The chair noted the cabinet response to the scrutiny review on support for parents and carers of disabled children and young people. He welcomed the resolution to look at establishing a disability register. The Director for Strategy & Commissioning commented that they are looking at a Wandsworth Council pilot which looks at data sharing.

RESOLVED

This will be reviewed later in the administrative year.

**12. WORKPLAN**

12.1 The workplan was noted.

Meeting ended at 8:42 pm