



## Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 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 Lisa Rajan  
Councillor Rosie Shimell  
Councillor Cleo Soanes  
Colin Elliott  
Leticia Ojeda

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Cabinet member for Cabinet Member for Children's Services

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Kerry Crichlow, Deputy Director Strategy and Commissioning – Education  
Merril Haeusler, Deputy Director of Children's Services – Education  
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager - Scrutiny  
Sam Fowler, Schools for the Future Project Director  
Davina Bailey, Southwark Youth Council involvement officer

### 1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rowenna Davis.

### 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 summary of the meeting held on the 25 February were noted, full minutes will follow.

### **5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW WITH CABINET MEMBER LEAD FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES : COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE.**

5.1 The chair welcomed Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, to the committee for her annual interview.

5.2 The chair introduced the first theme, concerning the amount of progress that has been made in reducing childhood obesity in the borough and if the introduction of universal free school meals has had any measurable effect. The cabinet member noted that this is a relatively new manifesto pledge and that the impact of the free healthy school meals on obesity will not be fully known for a few years; however she noted that the child measurement programme is showing some improvement. She reported that the council is considering asking schools to measure children in year 1. The cabinet member explained that the programme is not just about obesity - in some cases lunch may be some children's first hot meal of the day.

5.3 A member asked if the possibility of providing a free breakfast rather than lunch had been considered. The cabinet member responded that the council has been looking at breakfast clubs and she said that she would like this; however there would be a cost to provide both. She commented that since the committee's recent discussion on child malnutrition this has been all over the news, including reports that rickets is returning.

5.4 A member asked the cabinet member how she felt about Southwark Council being a leader in the provision of free healthy school meals, and if the cabinet lead thought that central government had a responsibility for this too, as well as other agencies. The cabinet member agreed that the council is showing a leadership role, and that everywhere the council goes we are being asked about this. She reported that the council is working with the Children's Society and Kids Company, and noted that the website of former commended the council's scheme, and perhaps with their pressure the council might get additional funding.

- 5.5 A member asked if the programme helped parents to cook and the cabinet lead said that children are now growing food and tasting a wider variety of foods, and asking parents to cook this at home.
- 5.6 .A member commented that she was surprised that the scheme is now only considering measuring children in reception. The cabinet lead responded that there is an extra cost involved and setting up the scheme was resource intensive. In addition to this she explained there is the existing child measurement programme. An officer explained that they are looking to do a comparison study as it will take until 2017 to get the full results.
- 5.7 A member referred to a question raised at council assembly and noted that there is variation in the amount spent on free school meals and constraints. An officer explained that the council has have been helping schools, as commissioners, to negotiate a good deal, and that officers can offer support.
- 5.8 The chair invited members to ask the cabinet member about the second theme, which asked if the cabinet member was satisfied with the way in which the council responded to the horse meat scandal. The cabinet member responded that the council has been following the FSA and food safety advice. She explained that one school asked for extra assistance and ended by saying she is happy with the council's response.
- 5.9 The committee moved on to the third theme: 'how realistic are the council's plans to cope with increasing primary school pupil numbers?' The cabinet lead explained that the council have done an audit and that the Education department has been responding quickly. However, she explained that the council only got the settlement on 1 March. She said the council will be able to meet the demand for places and it will be engaging with head-teachers and schools.
- 5.10 A member asked how this will translate in terms of forms and places and Sam Fowler, Southwark Schools for the Future Director, explained that this will mean that seven schools will provide an additional 30 places and three schools will provide an additional 15 places. Officers were asked if they had considered the impact of the widening of the EU and people's right to move. Kerry Crichlow explained that pupil place predictions are an art rather than a science. She explained that they are making temporary plans so the council and schools can move to permanent arrangements. She explained that they have to predict for September based on January requests. She added that there is also a need to meet parental choice, but not over-provide.
- 5.11 A member referred to the fourth theme on the ideal size of primary schools and mentioned that she had been doing some reading that suggested that class sizes do not always correlate with quality. Another member commented that there could be an impact on quality if a bulge class opened

in a school which is only performing at a 'Satisfactory' level, as this could put an additional pressure on the school. The cabinet member and officer explained that the council is supporting all schools, and said that the council does intend that all schools will be good or outstanding. She explained that all investment from the school investment programme is carefully considered.

- 5.12 The cabinet member was asked if she had been looking at whole new schools, and she responded that the council had been looking at expanding classes, particularly in the south of the borough. An officer added that there is a mapping of demand to places and emerging free schools.
- 5.13 The chair asked the cabinet member about the fifth theme and asked if the Cabinet member would agree that it is likely that there will be a need for another secondary school in the south of the borough in the fairly near future. The cabinet member said that people in the south of the borough will be considering secondary schools further afield, as will the council in its planning. A member commented that Haberdasher's has a strict criteria, and to get a place a child would normally need to be local or have a sibling in the school already. An officer explained that in the short term there is a problem of over provision, however he agreed that longer term there could be a need. He noted that there is a new school on the Aylesbury and an ARK school. A member commented that she had been investigating neighbouring schools in Lewisham and Lambeth and remarked that some are very large. An officer said that they are talking to secondary schools and there is strength of feeling among secondary schools around demand, however he assured member that they are reviewing the situation so the council can be light on its feet and a report will be produced for cabinet in the autumn.
- 5.14 A member commented that most secondary schools are academies and so can choose to do their own thing. An officer responded that the council do not really try and force anything and that the approach is more about engagement. He added that the type of school is not so important and the council found it is more about the individual approach of schools. He ended by saying some were more engaged than others, but the council is seeking consensus.
- 5.15 The chair introduced the sixth theme on Young People - provision of facilities and activities and Youth Employment and asked the cabinet member to comment. She explained that the council have moved to a hub and spoke model, which has involved investing in buildings and mini buses. The service now has less duplication and the council is still managing to deliver a good service on limited resources.
- 5.16 A member queried the value for money achieved through the scholarship scheme, and noted a £287,000 spend to support 13 students since the start

of the programme (page 10, supplementary agenda, Community Restoration Fund, report paragraph 29). The cabinet member said that the Youth Fund is a good scheme but she did not have the details on this particular stream of funding. The member queried this and the cabinet member said there might be a good reason, for example special needs, and advised the member that she would respond in writing.

5.17 A member asked about opening times, and noted that young people have requested later opening times. The cabinet member responded that they use fewer buildings and offer a wider range of services. The chair noted that the young people suggested more marketing and the use of social media. He said that the officers indicated that they would take this suggestion up, and the cabinet member concurred that this would be very good.

5.18 The chair referred to the final theme and asked what effect the government's Troubled Families initiative has had in Southwark. The cabinet member responded that Southwark are ahead of the game, and reported that the council has been able to claim a reward grant of £31,000 because of met targets. The chair said he was disappointed with the ending of the arrangement with CVS. Kerry Crichlow commented that this was by mutual agreement and that the council has invited experts in these areas to contribute. She explained that there is a focus on gangs membership and a new team is being recruited; Family Focus Plus. She remarked that families with gang associations don't like being called troubled families, and reported that they remark that all families can be troubled at times. She commented that the issue of domestic violence is a big concern, and noted that SYC mentioned this. A member noted that Southwark's work with gangs and the council's Family Focus approach has been in the media. The cabinet member commented that the issue is really knowing who these families are, and enabling teachers to refer has helped in identification, for example. She said it was then important to meet the needs of families in a timely and early fashion.

## **ACTION**

The cabinet lead member will get back to the committee with details on the value for money achieved through the Youth Fund scholarship scheme, which supported 13 young people at a cost of £287,000.

## **6. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN (CYPP).**

6.1 The chair welcomed the Southwark Youth Council (SYC) members and asked if they had had a chance to review the update report on the Children's and Young People's Plan, circulated with the papers, and if they

had been involved in consultation events, such as the Ministry of Sound event. The SYC officer, Davina Bailey, said the young people have not reviewed the report, and this is a newer cohort so these SYC members did not go to the Ministry of Sound event, however they have been involved more recently in the 1000 journeys, through developing questionnaires and feeding back on consultation.

- 6.2 The chair asked Kerry Crichlow, Director Strategy & Commissioning, to give a quick overview of the report circulated, for the benefit of SYC members present, and then asked the young people if they had any comments. A young person commented that services are good, but marketing is a problem; for example bullying; there is help out there, but often people do not know what is available.
- 6.3 A member asked how people did find out about services and what would be the best way of marketing provision. The young people responded that word of mouth and social media were the best sources of information; they suggested Facebook targeted adverts and using youth clubs and schools to promote services. A young person commented that youth focused events sometimes do not promote themselves very well and offer content in a way that grabbed young people's attention. Kerry Crichlow commented that social media is moving at a fast pace and officers are working on utilising this. The officer assured the young people that their offer to help is much appreciated and will be taken up, and noted that young people are the experts and a valuable resource.
- 6.4 The chair then asked the young people about volunteering experience and work experience. A young person raised the issue of apprenticeships and commented that creative, arts and scientific careers are often looked down upon, however business opportunities are limited.
- 6.5 A member asked the young people if there were any poor services and the young people commented that frequently the opening times clash with school, and starting later and opening later would be better.
- 6.6 The young people were asked if they get help with their CVs. A young person responded that his school employed a specialised tutor to help with this. He explained that the tutor examined out of school activities and helped the young people identify skills to highlight on their CV. Another young person reported he went to Connexions and they redid his CV.
- 6.7 A member asked if the young people thought about emerging careers; for example green industries, such as wind or solar energy, or information technology. A young person commented that often young people's knowledge is quite limited, and she commented that it would be good to get more information and knowledge about what is available and what skills and

types of qualifications are needed for progression to different levels of training or university.

- 6.8 A young person commented that she had got a good mentor, which was really important for networking, encouragement, and placements. Young people commented that without mentoring or support young people got much poorer work experiences, such as Asda. A member asked if pupils are sent somewhere or given options. A young person responded that her school only recently got a careers advisor and she does not know if she will be cut. She commented that young people prefer consistent advice, and unfortunately often people were just sent to places for their work experience.
- 6.9 Davina Bailey reported that SYC is going to have an employment conference. Young people explained that this is aimed at providing information about career opportunities and employment rights.
- 6.10 A young person commented that teaching young people how to build confidence, speak in public and developing a network is important. A member asked if their schools reach out to parents to see if they could offer opportunities. A young person responded that his school did ask parents to do that, however this was only for the two weeks placement and there was no follow up and mentoring. A young person reported that her school helped young people to build up a CV for a position, and prepare for interview, including dressing for the part. Pupils got assigned to a parent for a mock interview, who then rated students and gave feedback.
- 6.11 The chair thanked the young people for their comments and questions. He then invited members of the committee to comment. A member noted that the paper says that scrutiny members will be invited to the 1000 journey celebratory event on 21 March 2013 at 5 pm; however he could not recall having received this invitation. Officers said this will be sent out shortly.
- 6.12 A member asked how people were selected for the 1000 journeys, and went on to comment that she does hear that people with disabled children are particularly struggling. Kerry Crichlow commented that the services have heard uncomfortable feedback. She said that they did have people in focus groups that are under court orders for parenting and some feedback was hard hitting. Issues that came up included bullying; peer pressure; boys hitting girls; fears that primary school children had about entering secondary school; and fear for the future.
- 6.13 A member agreed that primary school pupils do frequently have fears about bullying and peer reassurance on entering secondary school. She explained that her school had a company come in and put on a programme to help transition, which was very good. Another member spoke about a transition programme put on by Harris Academy that catered for about 200 pupils,

which was very good but not well enough promoted. Another member commented that her daughter did get bullied and took part in a transition programme, but she was not really ready to talk about her experiences with younger children. She recommended a mix of ages so young people have some distance. A young person commented that he went through a peer mentoring programme which was very helpful.

## **ACTION**

Children's services officers will invite members of the sub - committee to the 1000 journey celebratory event on 21 March 2013.

### **7. REVIEW: BULLYING - SCHOOL AND COUNCIL POLICY IN SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND REDUCING ABUSIVE AND POOR PEER RELATIONS.**

#### **ACTION**

Contact Cybersmile and Jennifer Blake from Safe 'N' Sound Youth Project to see if they can attend to give evidence.

### **8. COMMUNITY RESTORATION FUND REPORT**

8.1 An officer will be invited to the next meeting to present the report and take questions.

### **9. REVIEW: LOCAL AUTHORITY ROLE IN EDUCATION**

9.1 The chair reminded the committee that we resolved to make a recommendation to cabinet. The project manager queried if this was to go in a final report or a letter, and reported that a date to consult the parent governors and head-teachers executive was still to be set. Members commented that once this evidence has been received the review could be completed.

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

#### **ACTION**

Children Service's officers will provide an update report.



## **11. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL AND SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS - REGULAR REPORT**

- 11.1 Sam Fowler, Southwark Schools for the Future Project Director, reported that the Compass school is progressing and is expected to open in 2014 on the Bermondsey site along with the University Technical Collage. Members asked if there is space for both schools on this site and the officer responded that there was sufficient room , although there maybe tensions.
- 11.2 The chair asked if there was an update on the City of London Academy consultation on their expansion plans, and the officer responded that there are plans for a 6<sup>th</sup> Form at the 387-399 Rotherhithe New Road site run by the Academy.
- 11.3 Members asked for the rational behind the German speaking primary school and the officer noted that there is a degree of concern as there is a bilingual school in Lewisham, and commented that this is not a Southwark specific proposal and it will not feature heavily in the council pupil place planning.

## **12. WORK-PLAN**

### **ACTION**

The annual children safeguarding report and presentation by the Independent chair will be confirmed to see if this can be delivered in April.

The review into Bullying will seek to take further evidence, if possible, from Cybersmile, Safe 'N' Sound, and Speakerbox