



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 Wednesday 11 September 2013 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor David Hubber (Chair)
Councillor The Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Chris Brown
Councillor Lisa Rajan
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Councillor Lorraine Lauder
Colin Elliott
Lynn Charlton

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Dora Dixon – Fyle: Cabinet Member for Children's Services

OFFICER SUPPORT SOUTHWARK YOUTH COUNCIL: & Romi Bowen: Strategic Director of Children's Services
Kerry Crichlow: Director Strategy & Commissioning
Rory Patterson: Director, Children's Social Care
Julie Timbrell: Scrutiny Project Manager
Davina Bailey :Youth Development Worker
Abu Bangura:SYC
Lauren Pemberton – Nelson :SYC
Ore Adedulu :SYC

1. APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Smith and Shimell. Parent governor Leticia Ojeda also sent her apologies. Councillor Soanes and head-teacher executive representative Lynn Charlton apologized for lateness.

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 9 July 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. SOUTHWARK YOUTH COUNCIL

5.1 The chair welcomed Southwark Youth Council attendees and invited them to contribute to the meeting by asking questions and commenting on matters under discussion.

6. INTERVIEW WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

6.1 The chair invited Southwark Youth Council attendees to join with the members in asking the cabinet member for children's services questions on the following themes :

- I. Primary and secondary school provision, including progress on a University Technical College
- II. Pre-school child care
- III. Children and Young People's Plan
- IV. Apprenticeships
- V. Local authority's role in secondary education and relationships with Academies
- VI. Scrutiny's role in Education and Children's Services

6.2 The cabinet member was first invited to say a few words by way of introduction to the interview on her portfolio. Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle

commented that she is particularly pleased with the fantastic exam results achieved in local schools, both at primary, secondary and college level. The chair referred to the first theme on 'Primary and secondary school provision, including progress on a University Technical College' and commented that progress on the University Technical College had ground to a halt. The cabinet member agreed and said this was related to issues with the site and that a recent meeting had been held with the leader of opposition and the MP. She explained that the problems relate to issues beyond the council's control.

- 6.3 A member then asked if there were likely to be primary school bulge classes to cope with additional demand. The cabinet member answered that there is a Primary Investment Strategy that includes additional forms at a number of schools, including Albion, Grange, Gallywell, Old Bellenden, Bessemer Grange, Crawford and John Donne. She was then asked to comment on the difficulties of planning with academies and free schools and the cabinet member responded that this is difficult as these schools can open anywhere, and not necessarily where the council thinks they are needed. A member added that recent data predicts an even greater need for primary school places and the cabinet member responded that she was confident that the plan the council has will meet Southwark's needs.
- 6.4 The chair then moved the committee on to the next theme: 'Pre-school Child Care'. The cabinet member said that as the committee is aware the borough have extra 2 year old places which the council has been publicizing, and this is helping to deliver the Children and Young People Plan's outcomes. A member asked about uptake and the cabinet member said that this has been good, but the council needs to do more to reach those most in need. The strategic director of children's services, Romi Bowen, said the council has identified about a 1000 children that meet the criteria and the service has contacted about 500 families; the council is now doing more to outreach and door knocking to reach even more families. A member asked if the additional places were means tested and the strategic director said that the additional places were, although it is possible that there would be a larger roll out at a later stage.
- 6.5 The chair then asked the cabinet member about the third theme, on the Children and Young People's Plan. She responded that the plan that recently went to cabinet had been amended to reflect the recommendations made at the last scrutiny meeting. The chair commented that the report was quite slim and the committee wanted more on implementation and the 1000 journeys. The cabinet member said that a report on the 1000 journeys had now been published.
- 6.6 A member added that the committee were keen to see the plan fleshed out with targets, particularly on disabled children. The strategic director

explained that there are three themes: best start, safety and stability, and choice and control. The last theme is focused on children and young people with special educational needs or disability and their families' access to a local offer of support from childhood to adulthood. The chair pointed out that the committee produced a review focused on supporting the families of disabled children with a number of recommendations, and asked if these would be used. The strategic director said the report will be used as a source document.

- 6.7 The member said that she was particularly interested in how families would know the plan had made a difference. The strategic director explained that the plan reflects what families have said they want and the priorities of government, and it is a transformative plan rather than a descriptive plan. She went on to explain that this is in recognition that the Children Trust is no longer a statutory body or large, but the Health and Wellbeing Board is a big driver. She added that one of the things the council heard is that families want more continuity of social workers and so the services are redesigning to deliver this. She added that the service needs to collaborate with families, particularly as the council has a year to make substantial changes.
- 6.8 A youth member commented that he thought the 1000 journeys was a really good engagement exercise and asked if the SYC could be part of a review - perhaps via an annual survey. The cabinet member agreed and thanked the SYC for their involvement.
- 6.9 A member reported that people in the community have raised concerns with the loss of teaching assistants and asked if the cabinet member thought this was a problem and she responded that it might be possible for families to make use of personal budgets to pay for extra support. The strategic director agreed this might be possible, but could prove difficult.
- 6.10 The chair then invited members to comment on the fourth theme on apprenticeships. A member commented that he was impressed by the Apprenticeship scheme in the council and the cabinet member agreed this was good. She was then asked if there was a requirement that building projects have apprenticeships and the cabinet member said that there was and the council is also leading the way in this. A youth member commented that many people in his school got these apprenticeships. He added that they were pleased with the rates of pay and hoped that through this scheme that they would get a permanent job. The cabinet member agreed and said that the scheme pays the London Living Wage and the scheme is for one year, so even if there if the position does not lead to a permanent job young people will get significant experience and there is also the possibility of a good reference. A member asked if there was data on the number of apprenticeships and the strategic director said that there was and offered to supply a report. The committee said this would be useful and asked for a

breakdown of numbers. Members asked for a gender breakdown to ensure that was no bias towards jobs in the construction industry that might advantage men.

- 6.11 The chair then referred to the fifth theme 'Local authority's role in secondary education and relationships with Academies' and asked about the council's relationships with schools. The cabinet member said they were very good, but could always be better and added that the council is setting up a meeting with the Harris Academy provider. The chair then explained that the committee will be inviting academy providers and chains to attend the committee. A member asked if there were problems with the level of exclusions and data on results. The cabinet member agreed that there are disparities in the rates of exclusion and also the availability of information. She assured the committee that this is tracked and she is aware that this is an area the committee is concerned about.
- 6.12 The chair then referred to the final theme: 'Scrutiny's role in Education and Children's Services' and asked the cabinet member how she thought this was working. She commented that she thought the scrutiny committee was a good forum, and particularly noted that unlike the council assembly it is possible to have a discussion about the nitty gritty of issues and decision making. She also welcomed the inclusion of SYC. The chair commented that the committee has raised some concerns with not seeing plans early enough.
- 6.13 The strategic director suggested in going forward that the committee might want to look at certain areas. She firstly explained that the CYPP is a plan for change, and some of the priorities for change are chosen by central government and might not be quite what local families want. She suggested that the committee could look at the impact of the CYPP, particularly on disabled children & families, as well as 'looked after' children. She also said that she hoped the committee might make room to look at children's health.
- 6.14 A SYC attendee suggested looking at the involvement of young people in decision making and education and noted that some schools allow children to record a vote during the elections, which was good.
- 6.15 The cabinet member was then asked if she was pleased with the Free School Healthy Meal initiative and she responded that she was very pleased with the positive coverage and national moves to introduce this programme. She noted that coverage has mentioned the work done in Southwark and she is involved in a conference. She reported that the council had now fulfilled the Labour party manifesto pledge for years 5 and 6. The chair asked if schools were covering their costs and the head teacher executive commented that schools were reimbursed the average price, and added that while her school was covering costs she had heard that larger schools

might have a shortfall. She suggested that a more accurate counting method could address this. The director of strategy & commissioning said she will take this on board and commented that while the council wants to be as accurate as possible they do not want to create burdensome bureaucracy. It was noted that reports on this have been requested.

RESOLVED

A report on the number of apprentices, with a gender breakdown, will be provided.

7. INDEPENDENT CHILDREN SAFEGUARDING BOARD CHAIR - PRESENTATION

- 7.1 The chair welcomed the new safeguarding chair, Michael O'Connor, and added he was pleased the Safeguarding Chair was attending to present the draft report. He noted previous concerns the committee had raised concerning delays in the reports production. The safeguarding chair explained he was a qualified social worker who had previously worked as a strategic director of social services for a London borough and that he was also a school governor and trustee for a children's cancer charity. He explained that the report had been delayed partly because of a change in the chair on the safeguarding board, but also because of big policy changes, including that now the safeguarding report will be part of the inspection regime.
- 7.2 He emphasized the importance of getting the report right and explained that this report focuses on the past whereas as there will be more of a focus moving forward. This will include work on streamlining the Common Assessment Form (CAF), the number of children on child protection plans, the issue of neglect and its complex links to poverty, drugs and alcohol. He explained that there is also a focus on child sexual exploitation, both preventing and assist children who have been exploited. There will also be more of a focus on Looked After children, and particularly those who go missing. The safeguarding chair said there is a need to integrate plans, particularly those affecting troubled families, violent youth and domestic abuse.
- 7.3 The chair asked the safeguarding chair if he would consider the report on bullying and improving peer relationships, which the committee is completing. The safeguarding chair responded that he would and he was also interested generally in the suggestions and concerns for the committee. The chair commented that the committee had for some time been focused on the evidence that supporting parents to enable them to parent better is very effective at achieving good outcomes for children. He asked if the

safeguarding chair was aware of any initiatives that use parents to mentor other parents. He responded that he had not but he had focused more on the effectiveness of 'recovery plans' which do look at role models. The chair commented that families that have informal support do seem to be better able to head off greater problems. Kerry Crichlow commented that mentoring can be effective with young people and children's services have supported a couple of programmes which support parents; HomeStart has proved the most effective. The safeguarding chair emphasized the importance of early intervention.

- 7.4 The safeguarding chair commented that interventions with primary schools can be very good. The head teacher's executive commented that one of the issues at primary schools is that more and more adults have Mental Health issues, and these are impacting on children. The chair referred to the recovery model and said that often mental health issues are a feature. He also added that often parents might not meet the threshold for services - but children services are talking to providers to see what can be done so problems do not spiral , and added that there is a cost saving here if work can be done with parents with low level mental health problems. Rory Paterson added that work is done with families at Children's Centers.
- 7.5 The safeguarding chair reported that there will be a session for young people to give their views sometime next year.
- 7.6 A member asked about plans to improve and streamline the common assessment processes for the CAF. Rory Patterson said that this is taking place across London and there is a national process - there have been various pilots. He reported that this should result in a better process for all families - and be particularly helpful for disabled families.
- 7.7 The safeguarding chair was asked if he intended to go to the corporate parenting panel He explained that he is still new to the role and had not got a grip on all areas yet , however he promised to review information from this committee as he agree it was a key area for safeguarding and he will think about attending.
- 7.8 The chair indicated that an update on the areas under development would be helpful, as well as the final report.

RESOLVED

Circulate the final Safeguarding report as soon as it is ready.

The safeguarding chair will be return in 6 months time to provide an update

8. REGULAR UPDATE ON SOUTHWARK FREE SCHOOLS

8.1 The report, and the discussion held with the cabinet member earlier in the meeting on this area, was noted.

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

9.1 The chair reported that he and the vice chair had met to agree the recommendations. Once agreed the report will next go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then on to Cabinet.

RESOLVED

The committee agreed the report's recommendations.

10. REVIEW : THE COUNCIL'S ROLE WITH MAINTAINED, ACADEMY AND FREE SCHOOLS

RESOLVED

School heads and academy providers will be invited to a committee meeting to discuss the review and exclusion rates.

11. WORKPLAN

11.1 The committee discussed the importance of ensuring that parents claimed for free school meals because this was linked to rates of Pupil Premium that schools receive. The head-teacher executive representative explained that maintained schools all provide the council with data and details on how the funding has been spent.

11.2 The Youth Council attendees thanked the cabinet member and scrutiny committee for giving the SYC an opportunity to give their views. Members asked if they intended to stand for election again, however the SYC attendees explained that while they would like put themselves forward, the rules prohibit this so a new cohort can take their place. Members of the committee commiserated and commented that a combination of continuity and freshness is sometimes best in a representative body.

