

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Babudu (Chair)
Councillor William Hougbo (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Radha Burgess
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Eleanor Kerslake
Councillor Michael Situ
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer (Co-opted member)
Marcin Jagodzinski (Co-opted member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Jason Ochere

OFFICER SUPPORT: Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nick Johnson, Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member) and Mannah Kargbo (Co-opted member).

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

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

There were no disclosure of interests and dispensations.

4. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2021 and 20 April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2022 are to follow.

5. CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW - COUNCILLOR JASMINE ALI DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION

The commission first heard from Councillor Jasmine Ali, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member to get an overview on children, young people and education. Councillor Ali informed the commission on the successes of the Council in education, especially Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) where in the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) carried out a pilot inspection within the borough and received excellent feedback on Southwark Independent Advice and Support (SIAS) team for their support to children, young adults and their families. Good progress has also been made on mapping and monitoring activity on inclusion and curriculum in the borough with 95% good and outstanding schools in the borough, this has been led by Reema Reid, Head teacher at Hollydale Primary School.

In relation to education and its finance, Southwark is at the forefront of recouping the deficit of £21m in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) by engaging in talks with Department for Education (DfE), Councillor Ali informed the commission that she had written a letter to the Education Secretary, Nadhim Zahawi MP on bridging the financial gap, this was supported and signed by other London boroughs. The School Inclusion Charter should be signed by head teachers in June 2022, subject to final amendments and signatures from other partner agencies in the safeguarding board. Councillor Ali reiterated from her address at the previous commission meeting that exclusion numbers have been reduced to very low levels in Southwark as a result of the hard work by the council teams and councillors, in addition DfE are investing another £3m in setting up a task force around reducing exclusions, consisting of professionals and social workers.

With regards to mental health there is a £2m investment in building resilience in schools around mental health, in addition to services provided by Southwark Council for promoting better mental health amongst young people such as The Nest, other campaigns like 'Fund the Hub' are also being funded by health colleagues to help young people. On matters relating to youth violence such as shootings and stabbings, CQC has fed back that youth funding teams have been performing over and above expectations to bring young people through the justice system.

The commission also heard on Social Care with regards to Child Protection Services, there are 313 children on child protection plans, 462 children in care and 565 young people leaving care. During the pandemic, the child protection registry grew by 30% which is an increase of 100 more children, however none of these 100 children came into care which was a result of strategies in place to keep families strong and together. Corporate parenting committees have ensured that all young people get guaranteed job deployment opportunities and their testimonies are being heard. Youth New Deal has also enjoyed many successes due to successful cross country partnership working as discussed at the last commission meeting.

Councillor Ali then responded to the following questions emailed to her from the commission prior to the meeting:

- Can the Cabinet Member give an update on the consultation around closing Townsend School particularly plans to support children's continued education and development?
- Does the Cabinet member have projections for falling rolls in Southwark over the next 5 years and possible consequences – are more class changes and closures possible?
- The Cabinet member has written to councillors noting that more families are getting their first choice for secondary school – is this because of increased popularity of local schools or falling rolls/decrease in demand?

On the closing of Townsend school Councillor Ali explained to the commission that this school would not be closing at this point of time as it was found that on investigating the financial issues and the deficit, that the redundancies for teachers would cost money and it might be a better option to federate the school with other schools. The redundancy money could be utilised as a backfill for future costs incurred during the federating process, however this is a new approach and has not been tried before and also that additional work needs to be done before implementing this approach.

Councillor Ali answered further questions from the commission on the anxiety faced by parents due to the public interests in schools like Townsend closing and Nunhead reducing their plans from 130 to 90 pupils. Financial viability is the key factor in the determination of closing any school with Townsend a novel approach has been adopted by trying to federate it to prevent it from closing down and with Nunhead their financial deficit would not be recovered with their plan at 90, individual cases of schools are discussed at member officer groups and a lot of complex factors are considered including sustainability of the building and trends in rolls. Funding from DSG for primary and secondary schools are formed in blocks which further complicate matters in recouping the deficit as monies have been moved between different blocks. Closure of schools sometimes have no relation to the council, as in cases where the diocese decide to absorb the school with the rest of the church schools, impact of Brexit and impact of the pandemic where

people consider affordable places outside London as they are able to work remotely. The commission agreed the need for a strategic approach to this issue and the need for it be considered by the commission in the coming council year.

In relation to falling rolls in Southwark, Greater London Authority (GLA) and the regeneration team have been looking at the trends, and analysis are being carried out, primary schools projections would continue to fall to the year 2027. The pupil place planning report due to come out in October 2022 will give a better idea of trends.

On reasons for more families getting their first choice for secondary schools; Higher number of available places in Secondary school since September 2013, new schools coming online and reduction in number of applicants overall, 750 fewer applications than in September 2015, however this year there have been 57 more applicants for Secondary school.

Councillor Ali then answered the commission's questions on the following topics:

- Composition of the team/s around the child
- Youth services and crime levels across the borough
- Children going into care compared to not going into care via stronger family support strategy as discussed earlier

In relation to team/s around the child there is a pilot task force consisting of social workers, psychologists, family therapists, and youth services teams supporting multiple needs. The more significant amount of funding has been given to schools to provide better social care and is completely schools led with the help and support from councils, DfE would then review and monitor its progress.

With regards to youth services and crime levels the Council have put together a Youth New Deal which has worked well, Local Economy team have reported back on many young people that have managed to get jobs and secure employment opportunities through the procurement, building and development of a digital platform for thousands of new opportunities in real time. In addition to this a youth parliament has also been setup and publicised in schools.

On children not going into care during the pandemic which is at a record low, children coming through the care system need care to be shaped around their individual needs as they vary between children and young adolescent people. Some are adopted, others have guardianship and some end up living with their grandparents or a relative. Young people who coming into care makes it a lot more difficult for families to cope as they have their own world view at these ages and care workers have to work with them. The objective has been to keep children with their families and provide support for the families so young adults can have better life opportunities with regards to university and employment. However some children and young people are not suited to fostering and are put in care homes

which has funding of £1.5m from the DfE.

6. TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - REVITALISING SOUTHWARK'S TOWN CENTRES & HIGH STREETS

The commission then received a report from Councillor Jason Ochere Cabinet member for Jobs Business and Town Centres on the Town Centre Action Plan. There are three main pillars in revitalising the high streets and town centres the first being investment in the high streets which is related to the question asked by the commission on the High Street Recovery Fund. The regeneration projects that happen across the borough of greatly contribute to towns and high streets, however there is also a need to continue with the high street recovery fund which in previous years has been known as High Street Challenge Initiatives which has dedicated money to various projects run by community groups and businesses or individuals and it's also a way of attracting people to our high streets and helping to increase activity.

The commission heard that great progress has been made with regards to investment of about £300,000 in high street businesses, individuals and community groups. Councillor Ochere explained further that within his own ward of Camberwell, SE5 area forum have been supporting businesses by employing a dedicated business marketing officer. Local business meetings involving diverse range of businesses from Easy Gym to Caravaggio have been held to find out some of their key concerns and talk about improvements they would like to see. As a result a number of business have been signposted to finding business support programs in conjunction with GLA, this has helped businesses improve their online presence, develop their legal acumen around contracts and provide them with accounting support.

On sustainable transport businesses investment, Pedal My Wheels has been supported with their cargo bike pilot by investment through the high street recovery fund, they have procured fitted and branded bikes for local freight and also developed their app to facilitate track and monitor cargo trips. In the north of the borough in areas like Peckham business facilitating discussions have been held and money has been given to Tree Shepherd who have had organised market events for black people and women owned small businesses. Also in the north money from hardship recovery fund has been given to Better Backside Business Improvement District for their Inns and Yards project in an effort to reinvigorate public spaces.

In relation to the second pillar of revitalising high streets is around night time economy plan which is in process of being issued to the GLA providing a clear blueprint of objectives to be achieved. One of the key themes emerging from the night time economy plan are economic and social benefits that can be achieved through planning and regeneration activities, contribution of arts and cultural organisations by reinvigorating talent centres and keeping them open beyond 6 pm, also looking at using galleries and libraries to attract people at night time.

Another key theme would be looking at Southwark Chamber of Commerce and business improvement districts and understanding how to better help small and medium enterprises in the area to get them thinking more innovatively to attract people at night time.

The third key theme in night time economy plan is to look at public safety at night especially with regards to violence against women and girls with sign posted and well lit streets. The fourth key theme is strategic improvement to key transport infrastructure projects such as extension of the Bakerloo line and other key stations in the areas of Peckham, Camberwell and East Dulwich.

Councillor Ochere explained to the commission that action plans are necessary to hold the local authority accountable for short, medium and long term planning. The long term objectives of this action plan is to have areas with their own business improvement districts which would allow businesses to self-determine what they would like to see in their areas. In addition promoting businesses with the help of their town centre manager to replicate the successes in London Bridge areas of Peckham, Camberwell and East Dulwich. The medium term priorities would be to hire dedicated town centre managers to connect with businesses and organisations and feeding back to the Council on improvements needed. Short term priorities would include basic things like street cleaning and street lighting.

Councillor Ochere then answered the commission's questions on:

- Progress update on Southwark Pioneer's Fund
- Community improvement district compared to traditional business improvement districts
- Effect of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) vehicular traffic flowing into active travel and footfall areas hence affecting air quality in High Streets such as Lordship Lane. Coordination between Local Economy and Highways over strategic improvement of vehicular traffic in and around high streets.
- Lack of diversity in businesses on high streets consisting mainly of coffee shops, bars and eateries, driving people to big shops and retail outlets.

On Southwark Pioneer's Fund, pre pandemic in 2019 about £40,000 was given to businesses and then due to the pandemic that money was repurposed to be given as grants for businesses. Currently, a commitment of £2m funding has been made for aspiring start-up businesses in Southwark and also for start-up ventures at the idea stage, this has been incorporated for funding under the refreshed model of Southwark Pioneer's Fund; resulting from the commission's suggestion at previous discussions during meetings. Funds would be delivered over a four year period without a loan element, this is after discussions with business and local access partnerships which concluded the need for businesses not to be heavily indebted, as there are already existing loans that have been taken out during the COVID period. The fund will also have business support elements with regards to digital

visibility, advertising, developing products and procuring affordable spaces. The first element would be the start-up programme, supporting aspiring start-ups and entrepreneurs, second element would be the Growth Programme focused on later stage enterprises. Two other elements of the fund are to be rolled out over the next 18 months focusing on enterprises that deal with decarbonising and reducing environmental impacts called the Green Programme and the final element would be a Social and Community Programme focused on supporting social and community enterprises that are led by women and people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.

The funding programme will follow a staggered approach across the four elements with the contract commissioning various organisations to support these businesses and the money will be given concurrently. The criteria for money to be given for the aspiring and start-up businesses would be; residents interested in self-employment at the idea stage of the business, enterprises that have just been registered and started trading and/or are in the business model development stage and lastly businesses in early stage life cycles typically up to three years. In terms of the Growth programme, criteria would be enterprises that have been trading for three years or more and have a turnover of £50,000 in the last 12 months. The start-up and growth programme would be going for tender in two weeks' time and by June 2022 people would be able to apply for the first tranche of funding; green programme and the social and community programme will start from the year 2023 onwards.

On community improvements districts the commission learned that more work needs to be done in looking at finding areas that could be owned by the community in Peckham, Waterloo road and East Dulwich areas.

The commission heard from Councillor Ochere that it's critical for the local economy team to be involved in decision making of traffic calming measures, more than 50% of the East Dulwich business group who have about 140 members have customers visiting from outside the borough and LTNs may have a potential detrimental impact on these businesses. It's critical that proper consultations are carried out with these businesses which rely on increasing footfall activity to thrive. The local economy team has already begun working with Highways and are embedded in future decision making processes. The introduction of market at Melbourne Grove has gone through two rounds of consultations where explanations have been made to the public that introduction of markets should not be based on keeping or removing LTNs instead it should be based on; the ability to bring in retail activity in an area, feedback from consultation with its residents and the impact on existing businesses and retail activity.

In relation to lack of diversity of businesses, in areas like Camberwell where farmers markets have been transformed to selling Caribbean style hot-food, books and flowers for Ukraine, such unique and innovative ideas should be encouraged. Also more work needs to be done from a licensing perspective to tackle lack of diversity, ensuring there are a mixture of businesses or traders that are not

saturated and are able to diversify.

Councillor Ochere then answered the commission's questions on:

- Support for struggling small and medium businesses through interacting with Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)
- Influence of local cultures and identities on the local Economy in some areas of the Borough
- Increasing capacity and expediting processes within the local economy team to help support people trying to procure Peckham Park road shops and business spaces. Issues with current system failing to bring community groups together on Peckham Park road with regards to issues of parking.

On the VCS interacting with businesses, there is a need to develop cultural and creative economies with the objective of bringing people to areas of Peckham, Camberwell etc. with help of events like street dancing festivals and charity events.

With regards to local identities, Team London Bridge has been making excellent progress in attracting people with the help of the health SE1 hub with Lambeth colleagues and also the life sciences hub. Local identities and cultures need to be respected by trying to remove the narrative of false and misleading historic claims with the goal of attracting people to visit Southwark for its vibrant culture and identity.

In relation to Peckham Road Shops and smaller town centres simple improvements need to be made to shop frontages like heritage funds used for East Street shops frontages, attracting more people by improving the look of the shopping areas. In addition having dedicated town centre managers would help businesses feedback on simple issues that make businesses unhappy such as waste collections, shop fronts and dealing with Thames water.

Councillor Ochere then answered the commission's questions on:

- Parking issues for smaller business while bigger businesses increase vehicular traffic with large parking areas causing more pollution
- Local Access Partnership exploring social investments models complementing Southwark Pioneer's Fund
- Lack of diversity and a framework of support providers for Southwark Pioneer's fund start-up and growth programmes

The commission learned that there is a need to have more progressive ways of asking small and large businesses to contribute to reducing their climate change impact by encouraging them to sign up to climate change agreements with the Environment Agency and in return the government could perhaps subsidise 90% reduction rates for electricity and 65% for gas, coal and solid fuels. The local transport network needs to have more services connecting these businesses to

change people's habits of the use of their vehicles.

In relation to Local Access Partnership that compliments Southwark Pioneer's Fund, the commission learned that it will have loans as a part of their social investment programme for businesses to apply for, however Southwark Pioneer's Fund will remain a grant over a four year period for businesses to grow and to be self-sufficiently growing in the fifth year without the need for any other loans or grants.

On the framework of support provided for businesses, Councillor Ochere explained to the commission his understanding; that there were a range of ideas that were looked at, which included having a single and multiple organisations to contribute to the business support elements and that it's not a one size fits all businesses approach, presumably it's a variety of organisations working together to support various businesses, however confirmation on this aspect will be sent to the commission in due course by Councillor Ochere.

7. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

The Chair then read out feedback from National Health Service (NHS) colleagues on SEND recommendations, health colleagues were unable to attend this meeting due to not working evenings. NHS Colleagues sought some clarity was on the latter part of the draft recommendation no.3, concerns around early diagnosis in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

The Chair briefed the commission on the conversation with Bridget Nicola from NHS Clinical Commissioning Group prior to the meeting as it was important to get views from NHS colleagues and not just Council colleagues. The commission's recommendation on shortening response times for Autism and ADHD; The Health colleagues fed back that it was a positive and ambitious recommendation, however Autism had the lowest waiting times in Southwark when compared nationally and although in the context of ADHD the wait was longer but it was still one of the best waiting times when compared nationally. Health colleagues also explained that going forward there is a Central Government mandate on an integrated care system that covers how local authorities and NHS work together around the SEND vision and that there is potential cause for NHS and Councils working more closely together, but the challenges are a mix of practicality between different processes and differences in work culture.

The Chair explained to the commission that there are inherent structural and cultural differences in the way parts of the NHS and Council operate such as evening working and the inability of the Health colleagues to attend this commission meeting.

The Vice Chair then informed the commission on feedback from the parent of a child with SEND, Shenice, who was invited but was unable to attend the commission's previous meeting; Firstly, teachers in schools should quickly identify

children with SEND and secondly, any exclusions of the child with SEND before after or during the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) process should be wiped from the child's records.

The commission considered Shenice's feedback on wiping out exclusions from a child's record once it has been established that it is a child with SEND needs and is going through or will go through or has gone through the EHCP process. However the Chair explained to the commission that it is not known whether such a recommendation would lie within the remit of the council for it to be actioned.

The commission noted from the statement (distributed to members at the meeting) of personal experiences with SEND provision from Shenice that SEND provision was inefficient and patchy in mainstream schools which fed into the commission's recommendation no.2. The commission agreed to incorporate Shenice's feedback in this recommendation below. To be amended by the Scrutiny Officer post meeting.

2. The Commission recommends that the Council explore routes to supporting mainstream schools in improving the quality of training plans for their SEND provision, including Continuous Professional Development for staff. The Commission identified varying levels of confidence and competence in schools across Southwark which will likely affect the ability of schools to identify and provide the necessary support to children who may have limited SEND needs that would greatly benefit from early identification and support.

The Chair suggested amendments to expand on the second sentence of the recommendation 3 below on the co-ordination problems between council staff and health colleagues. To be amended by the Scrutiny Officer post meeting.

3. The Commission recommends that the Council works more closely with health colleagues to provide earlier diagnoses of relevant SEND needs where assessment is health and mental health led. From the Commission's early work we identified some concern amongst schools and Council officers that the Council's strong record of early diagnosis and information provision applies unequally across SEND needs that may require more specialist health and mental health led diagnoses. Similarly, the Commission identified concerns that conditions such as ADHD were not seeing as much success in early diagnosis and early support as recent gains in autism-related provision.

The Chair also suggested and agreed amendments to be made acknowledging the council's good record on being one of the highest performers in the country with regards to SEND diagnosis and EHCP process on the statutory 20 week target timeline in recommendation.6 below. To be amended by the Scrutiny Officer post meeting.

6. The Commission recommends that the Council explores shortening the average timescale for SEND diagnosis from the current, statutorily required, 20 week target. Whilst the Commission appreciates that there can be some support for children

during the assessment period, the Commission notes the impact of this lengthy period on parents and carers and on the ability to provide the best possible early support and schools to fund appropriate support before EHC Plan funding is forthcoming.

The commission agreed to all the rest of the SEND recommendations 1, 4 and 5.

8. FINALISATION OF ANY SCRUTINY REVIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IF NOT CONCLUDED EARLIER

- Growing ethnic minority pay gap
- Procurement

The commission agreed to the recommendation 7 on the growing ethnic minority pay gap.

The commission agreed with the feedback on email from Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member) suggesting that there should be more emphasis on the requirement of subcontractors and suppliers to employ apprentices, however it was agreed that this was already reflected in recommendation 9 ii., below.

9. The Commission recommends that Paragraph 55 of the Fairer Futures Procurement Framework is updated to reflect that:

i. A blanket target of 1 apprentice per £1 million in contract value will in many cases not be sufficiently ambitious

ii. Provide specific, more ambitious targets in areas where more apprenticeships can be supported per unit of contract value

The commission also discussed a new draft recommendation on higher social value percentages in the council's strategic goals driving the green agenda like building council houses that are more environment friendly, hence increasing competition amongst developers. The commission also noted that an earlier recommendation to Cabinet from the previous Council year 2020-2021 has already been made on clarifying where the current percentage of 15% social value is applied.

The Chair suggested the following draft recommendation 10, to the commission on Social value:

10. The commission recommends that the council revisit the percentages allocated, to social value and consider raising them in the face of an existential threat of the pandemic to many local businesses and the declared climate emergency.

The Chair also suggested a draft recommendation 11, below on Southwark Pioneer's Fund from earlier discussion under item 6, on the town centre action plan with Councillor Jason Ochere, however it was agreed to wait for Councillor Ochere's response on diversity of support providers for the start-up and growth

programmes before finalising recommendation 11 below.

11. The Commission recommends that the Council develops a framework of business support providers to best serve the diversity of need amongst Southwark's entrepreneurs and social businesses. A single provider is likely to struggle to effectively serve entrepreneurs at different stages, from very diverse backgrounds and in very different sectors.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

The commission noted the work programme for 2021-22.

The Chair thanked the commission for its excellent extensive work over the past years on exclusions where Southwark has taken the national lead and also highlighted the commission's work into looking more creatively at community welfare through an ambitious procurement approach. The Chair also informed the commission that this would be his final chairing of the commission and also sincerely hoped that this work is carried forward by the next commission. The Chair also thanked all leaving councillors for their excellent contributions and also thanked the Scrutiny team.

Meeting ended at 9:13 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: