



## **Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission**

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 4 February 2025 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Cassandra Brown (Chair)  
Councillor Jon Hartley  
Councillor Youcef Hassaine  
Councillor Irina Von Wiese

**OTHER MEMBERS  
PRESENT:**

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rachel Bentley, Cllr Sunil Chopra, Jonathan Clay (Co-opted Member) and Martin Brecknell (Co-opted Member)

Apologies for absence were also received from Cllr Renata Hamvas who was away on Council Business.

### **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 disclosures of interests and dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 are to follow

## **5. WORKING LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND HEALTH - SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)**

The commission first received a report from Russell Jones, Assistant Director – (Dual Role) Integrated Commissioning Southwark Council and South-East London, Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) on Working links between Education and Health - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) on the following points

- Start well agenda on children and young people; increase in SEND and EHCP; Support through General Practitioners (GPs'), schools and targeted Send services.
- Stakeholders- Evelina, NHS Guys and St Thomas Children's Arm, South London and Maudsley Mental Health Services and Finesse youth provision; Community Paediatric services, School of Nursing (complex needs), Language Therapy, Occupational therapy, Physiotherapy, continuing Health Care and Mental Health Services.
- Strengths- delivering support in special school settings, medical and support planning, timely support and intervention, training offer in education settings; the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the council commitment in supporting various health and mental health services for children and young people.
- Nest and the school's engagement team, mental health in schools' team, physiotherapy in specialist and mainstream schools, transition clinics work from children's services into adult services, SEND panel and Continuing Health Care Plan and committed and skilled Health Workforce.
- Areas of improvement- waiting times in mental health services, timeliness of input in EHCP plans, transition challenges, health and care workforce capacity, governance arrangements for SEND are in transition (Strategic Partnership Board).
- ICB serves across six boroughs in London and have a SEND forum to share best practices across the boroughs.

The commission then asked questions on the following topics

- Early Diagnosis and waiting times from diagnosis to first therapy session; Transition clinics when children turn 18 and considered adults; Anorexia and depression clinics access in the borough.
- Examples of good practices shared; Assessments in the areas of neurodivergence; Importance of Early Intervention in Health, day today to issues in SEND.
- Other factors in EHCPs' process like quality of provision rather than timeliness.

Russell explained to the commission that there are different ways of getting support and avenues. The average waiting times and information on transition clinics will be reported back to the commission separately. 'SLaM' mental health services provided by the NHS provides support for children and young people with eating disorders.

The commission learnt from Russell that the ICB formed was a result cost reduction of management through integration, appointment of a joint Strategic Board. Diagnosis and SEND support models from areas such as Plymouth and Portsmouth have been shared across the boroughs. On neurodiversity assessments, neurodevelopment pathway delays extend wider than Southwark and are incredibly complex. The demands for ADHD and Autism diagnosis are increasing across the borough and nationally.

Russell informed the commission that more investments in Speech and Language Therapy are being considered for early interventions. Strategic Partnership and its leaders looking at data across the boroughs on trends in day-to-day issues in SEND. On EHCP, timeliness is a priority, but quality and accurate provision of services is crucial in SEND.

## **6. EHCP ASSESSMENT PROCESSES - CHAIR'S FEEDBACK**

The Chair informed the commission on the feedback (presentation attached) from meeting with officers on the EHCP process

- Length and complexity of the EHCP forms, statutory timelines and pressure on Local Authorities
- EHCP process review; Increase in need of SEND listed in presentation; Decision making panels; Age Stats.
- Needs based assessments, timeliness, lack of flexibility in process for LAs', parental requests at 60%.
- EHCP timelines affected by school holidays, Southwark's' reporting of data to Department for Education (DfE)
- Limited exceptions for EHCP timeliness.

The commission then discussed the following themes

- Lot of SEND issues nationally, Strategic Board and operational structures
- Measuring impacts and outcomes on families
- Recommendations – Southwark's' Capital strategy for children with SEND, satellite provision in SEND, Speech and Language Therapy in schools, bringing EHCP process into the council's digital strategy, grow and amplify Southwark's SEND parent-carer community voices and Government Lobbying on the inclusion charter.
- Mandatory periodic health check for infants and young children- Early Intervention
- Improving communication to schools on EHCPs'

**7. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS - EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY 2023-24**

The commission noted the Cabinet Responses to scrutiny recommendations from 2023-2024.

**8. WORK PROGRAMME 2024 - 2025**

The commission noted the work programme for 2024-2025.

Meeting ended at 8:40 pm

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**