



CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 2 March 2010 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Barrie Hargrove (Chairman)
Councillor Nick Vineall
Councillor Eliza Mann
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Veronica Ward

**EDUCATION
REPRESENTATIVES:** Colin Elliott
Jane Hole
Sharon Donno

**OFFICER
SUPPORT:** Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services
Jane Bailey, Assistant Director; 11-19 Services and Youth
Kerry Crichlow, Assistant Director; Strategy & Support
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Jonathan Mitchell and Reverend Nicholas Elder.

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 Members made the following declarations: Councillor Jonathan Mitchell as a governor at Harris Girls' Academy; Councillor Sandra Rhule as parent of a pupil at Kingsdale Foundation School; Councillor Veronica Ward as the grandparent of a

child at Charles Dickens Nursery and as a governor at Dulwich Wood Children's Centre; Sharon Donno as an employee of Kintore Way Nursery School; Reverend Nicholas Elder as the chair of governors at Kinderella Pre-School; Colin Elliott as a parent governor at St Saviours and St Olave's; and Jane Hole as a governor at the City of London Academy.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2010 be agreed as a correct record:

Correction of the spelling of Heber school and addition of Councillor Veronica Ward's interest in Charles Dickens Nursery.

5. EXECUTIVE QUESTIONS WITH CLLR LISA RAJAN - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- 5.1 The chair welcomed Councillor Lisa Rajan and noted the tabled written answers to the questions submitted. Members were asked if they had any follow up questions.
- 5.2 Members indicated that that they would like to ask some supplementary questions on teenage pregnancy. Councillor Rajan first updated the sub-committee by commenting that she had just received the latest figures for teenage conceptions and that there had now been a reduction of 22 % on the 1998 base rate and Southwark now had the sixth highest rate in the country; Southwark was previously the third highest. A member asked if we had the highest rate a few years ago? Councillor Rajan responded that yes Southwark was the highest, then the third, now the sixth. A member asked what this fall was attributed to? Councillor Rajan said that the council had looked a good practice in Hackney and other Boroughs. The report tabled went into more detail.
- 5.3 There was a comment on using peer educators to reduce conceptions. A scrutiny report had identified this as a positive method for reaching young people. Councillor Rajan said that she had spoken to the youth council and they were doing this, but it was not the biggest emphasis. Various methods were used to communicate with young people; the internet, peers support, leaflets etc. People liked to be reached in different ways.
- 5.4 A few questions were then posed about the last section of question 1 on obesity. A member commented that there appeared to be lots of initiatives to reach children, but asked what was being done to reach parents and grandparents? Councillor Rajan replied that there was a national campaign; "Change for Life" and questionnaires had been sent out to parents and the information was being used. Parents were sent information on healthy eating and snacks and reward charts.
- 5.5 Another member commented that she was most concerned with secondary schools as many young people stopped off at fried chicken shops. Councillor Rajan replied

that the council was training to promote a whole council approach through licensing and planning. It was a social thing as well; stopping off for a drink after school in a cafe.

- 5.6 Councillor Rajan commented that children were given cut up apple and carrots when they left school. Children also got an opportunity to wrap up unfinished food from lunch to take home. Members commented that children seemed to need food at the end of the day and welcomed provision to meet this need as this appeared to be a trigger time.
- 5.7 Members commented that they would have liked to have seen something in the report about increasing the 2 hours spent playing sport as this was not enough. It was noted that schools had banned machines selling fizzy drinks etc to reduce the amount of calorie intake however members would like to see more sport provision. Councillor Rajan commented that Southwark Superstars was about providing more sports provision.
- 5.8 A member commented that when she was at school they did cross country running, which she hated, but in retrospect it was effective. Young people now want to look like Kate Moss, or the boys want a 6 pack, but then they go and eat junk food at fast food outlets. Councillor Rajan was asked about the programme to increase sport from 2 hours. She responded that she agreed there should be more sports in schools; however the council could have more influence by encouraging children out of school. The walking to school programme was good.
- 5.9 There was a comment about take up of school meals and concern that more affluent children were not using these which then impacted on those children who received free school meals.
- 5.10 A member suggested that cooking should be prioritised in the school curriculum and offered all the way through, from nursery age. Councillor Rajan agreed that this was a skill that needed to be taught and re learnt in school.
- 5.11 Councillor Rajan said that the council also wanted to work more with Children's Centres on weaning and in antenatal care- focusing on the under-fours so that they were not overweight by the time they start school.
- 5.12 Members then moved on to Question 2 about the restructuring of the Youth Service with members asking if councillors had been involved in devising the new area youth plans.
- 5.13 Councillor Rajan answered that she had asked the youth area managers to contact all the local members. A member confirmed that they had contributed to the discussion and been impressed with the layout.
- 5.14 Members moved onto Question 5 regarding the development of youth councils and the election of representatives onto community councils. A member asked if the youth champions would attend the community councils? Councillor Rajan responded that they might do. It depended how the meetings were constructed and how attractive these items were to young people and the champions. This was being left up to the community councils and the youth council to decide what worked best for

their local area. Cleaner, Greener, Safer was usually a popular item, however the council was allowing the youth councils to establish themselves and devise their preferred ways of working. The emphasis was on training and then from May they could steer their own path. The council did not want to dictate; rather empower.

- 5.15 Members asked Councillor Rajan if she had taken time to consider the recommendations in the sub-committee's scrutiny report on youth provision in Southwark? Councillor Rajan confirmed she had a copy and had considered it.
- 5.16 The sub-committee moved on to question 7 and commented that it would be good to meet the new independent chair of the children's safeguarding committee. Councillor Rajan welcomed this and also suggested that the sub-committee take time to consider the annual safeguarding report, due in September, and that this might be a good time for the new chair, Chris Davies, to come to scrutiny.
- 5.17 A query was raised on question 11 concerning recruitment and retention of Southwark social workers. The member asked if this was at crisis point. Councillor Rajan replied that no, not in Southwark, but a level of anxiety had been maintained and that the council aimed to reduce poaching. Southwark had recruited a number of high quality master degree students from America. Young people came here for the experience, and the Americans were particularly well trained.
- 5.18 Members raised concerns about Americans moving on. Councillor Rajan responded that that they were on permanent contract, but it was a concern. The service was also looking at expanding the provision of key worker housing to retain people in inner London.
- 5.19 There were wider issues of increasing the status and reversing the trend of baby P, because these had had the effect of social workers moving away from more sensitive areas. Southwark was looking forward to the social work task force raising the professional status through the introduction of a royal college. It was anticipated that this would increase ongoing training and the quality of degrees.
- 5.20 A member asked a supplementary query on question 13 and enquired about the number of families who had received counselling because they had been affected by the Sumner Road fire. The chair responded that he understood that thirty-three families had been affected. A large number of people had lost everything, obviously losing a life was the worst, but it had been traumatic for many families.

6. UNIVERSAL YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

- 6.1 Jane Bailey, assistant director; 11-19 services and youth, introduced the report on the item. She explained that the four area managers were now in post. Each area recently convened consultation events and voluntary sector representatives, extended schools coordinators, TRA representatives and young people were all invited. The next step was doing an inspection for quality and young people would be involved in the quality assurance process.
- 6.2 The service was aiming to work with the voluntary service in a more open and

transparent way. The council needed to ensure that youth workers had the right skills and were able to refer young people to appropriate services; for example drug services and for specialised training and employment advice.

- 6.3 The youth councils were up and working. Young people were organising around community council areas and also two young people from every area come together and would be engaged around the executive. The area plans would decide what provision should be offered and when, including on Fridays and Saturdays. The plans would consider the needs of particular groups including girls and exclusion projects. The services would work with extended schools.
- 6.4 A member inquired about communication? The assistant director responded that this area had been improved through the bi-monthly insert in Southwark Life, the slicker 'Whatvr' website and provision would be included in the revamped Southwark Council website. The Mix festival had been very well received by young people and all the youth councils have been involved in its development.
- 6.5 The assistant director said that the number of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people had reduced from 420 to 230. Clarification on this was requested by a member. It was explained that this number was related to the 'learner cohort'. Concern was raised that other young people, who might be NEET, might be unknown to services. The assistant director said that there was a high degree of population churn so this was possible, however area managers worked across the service and encouraged staff to pick up on this issue and refer young people to appropriate services.

7. OVERVIEW OF PROVISION OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS FOR 14-19 YEAR OLDS

- 7.1 Jane Bailey, assistant director ;11-19 services and youth, presented the report circulated with the papers entitled: 'Overview of provision of education, training and apprenticeships for 14-19 year olds'.
- 7.2 The assistant director spoke about plans for young people at 14 onwards where school was not enough. There would be a number of opportunities to learn hair dressing, plumbing and car maintenance from September. Southwark council has also been trail blazing apprenticeships.
- 7.3 The provision of education, training and apprenticeships for 14 to 19 year olds was coordinated by the Southwark 14-19 Partnership. The partnership was made up of the local authority, all secondary schools, academies, Southwark College and work based learning providers. It was a sub group of the Children's Trust and progress was regularly reported to the full trust.
- 7.4 Southwark was commissioning small voluntary providers to work with young people on the edge of the formal offer to do softer activities so that young people got work ready. Young people got a small activity allowance for attending; this was not bigger than the EMA allowance they got for attending college.
- 7.5 Members raised concerns that every young person was followed up and that the

service was linked in with the benefit office, for example. The assistant director commented that if a young person did not tell their education provider their plans it could take time to link to the Connexions service. There were links between Connexions and job centre plus and there had been some moves to identify more young people through the benefit service and the council was working on this.

7.6 A member asked what leverage Southwark had to ensure a broad offer? The assistant director explained that the council had a role in the commissioning process; this was more of an encouraging and cajoling role. There were good relationships and Southwark was able to influence provision.

8. EARLY YEARS REVIEW

8.1 The draft Early Years review was considered by the sub-committee.

8.2 Members discussed recommendation 7, that highlighted the need for transition funding for children using children's centres nurseries. The sub-committee decided that this should be made more concrete and the following wording was decided : 'Give urgent consideration to providing adequate transition funding for children moving from day-care to nursery school in relevant Southwark children's centres so that affected children who are not '3 enough' still receive adequate funding to sustain a place'.

8.3 Members decided the report should elaborate more on the problems nurseries experience in receiving funding in order to provide sufficient staff support for children with special needs. Recommendation 5 was also made more specific: 'Backdate support funding for children with special needs to the start of their time in nursery, for children who later receive a more extensive statement'.

RESOLVED:

That, once the report has been amended in line with the above and agreed by the chair, it be submitted to overview and scrutiny committee for consideration. The report then be sent to the following:

- Parent Participation Forum
- Providers we visited
- MPs
- Head teachers' s executive
- Children's trust (Young Southwark)
- Executive members
- Chairs of Governors – via David Lister.

9. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

9.1 The sub-committee considered the draft Parental Engagement report.

9.2 It was agreed that recommendation 2, 'Provide universal services', be deleted.

- 9.3 Colin Elliot's report on the 'Promoting good parenting' event for Governors' would be included as an appendix.
- 9.4 The sub-committee noted that both the Children's and Young People's Plans and the Parental Engagement report emphasise family support and resolved that this report should be submitted as part of the consultation on this plan.

RESOLVED:

That, once it has been amended as agreed above, the report be submitted to overview and scrutiny committee for consideration.

10. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

- 10.1 Kerry Crichlow, assistant director, strategy & support, introduced the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) for 2010 to 2013. It was proposed that this plan would be the Council's key policy framework document for children and young people. She asked the sub-committee to note that this proposed CYPP would be subject to final partner and public consultation, as set out in paragraphs 28 and 29 of the document circulated, with publication by April 2010. This was an opportunity for the sub-committee to raise any comments at the meeting to feed back as part of the consultation process. She explained that the CYPP 2010-2013 would be subject to new statutory guidance, expected later this year, which might require revisions to these proposals. The CYPP would become the new commissioning plan for the 'Children's Trust.
- 10.2 There was a complex relationship between the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Board. The CYPP would need to respond to the annual safeguarding report.
- 10.3 Over the summer the council had asked people to tell their stories and received over 100 of these and a selection would be published on the web.
- 10.4 A member noted the significant partnerships with Education and Health, but said she did not see housing in there, and this was very important for families as many lived in very poor housing. The assistant director responded that this was absolutely right; some of these went beyond the influence of Children's Services. The council had done some good work with extended services and housing departments. She commented that she would not stop there as community safety was also very important, both keeping children safe and safe from the fear of crime.
- 10.5 A member commented on the importance of the early years and reaching vulnerable families. She spoke of concerns that many families were not accessing early years provision and gave as an example families in Camberwell. The assistant director said that this was a plan of plans, and there would be other more specific plans that looked in detail at issues such as childcare. The needs analysis showed issues the council needed to focus in on.
- 10.6 The assistant director stated that the plan would enable the council to think about decommissioning as it was likely there would fewer resources. The council would

need to consider what it was duplicating and concentrate on priorities. Having school ready children was important as was having schools ready to receive children. A member commented that it was important that the council had work ready young people at the opposite end of the age range and noted that the plan went up to age 19.

- 10.7 There was a comment from the sub-committee that the plan was at quite a high level, was it possible to compare with other local authorities to see if they were quite as high level. He enquired if anything was excluded? The assistant director explained that it was possible to trace the high level content back to actual stories. Families said that they wanted to simplify the system. The plan was edited and honed.
- 10.8 The strategic director of children's services, Romi Bowen, said that it was anticipated that there would be less money and so there was more emphasis on targeted interventions, particularly at Early Years. For example Sure Start was currently used by people with a lot of social capital. Some of that provision would need to be more targeted. Some of the lower level plans would be more activity based. The strategic director explained that the council also needed to energise other sectors; police, housing etc.
- 10.9 Members voiced concerns about the housing bidding system being complex, particularly for older people who might be less comfortable with the internet. Concerns were also raised about illegal sub letting and this was noted.
- 10.10 The chair proposed a number of measures to support the implementation of the CYPP by this sub-committee. If agreed these would go ahead as recommendations for the new children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee if it is reconvened after the elections.
- 10.11 The strategic director commented on the number of concerns raised about children's welfare that related to domestic violence, and this could escalate from arguments to children being in danger in the midst of conflict. She particularly welcomed the sub-committee's decision to recommend work on this area.

RESOLVED:

1. That the sub-committee support the principles in the plan, particularly:
 - i) Priority given to simplify the system
 - ii) Emphasis on families
 - iii) Targeting families most at risk
2. That the new children's services and education scrutiny sub-committee:

Ensure the annual interview of the executive member includes their practical achievements against the plan.

Undertake quarterly performance monitoring developed from paragraph 17 of the report.

Provide stronger cross cutting challenge of different council departments and council partner agencies contribution to the plan including:

- Housing departments contribution to addressing child poverty
- Multi agency work to combat domestic violence

11. MATTERS ARISING

11.1 Councillor Nick Stanton's response to Councillor Nick Vineall's query on snow was tabled, noted and discussed.

11.2 Councillor Vineall noted the difference between the cost of gritting the road for the day (£1000) and the notional cost of closing a school for the day (£350,000).

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Nick Vineall draw the executive's attention to the disparity between these figures. He would write a couple of paragraphs and a letter would be sent to the executive drawing their attention to this issue.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

12.1 The sub-committee agreed the work programme. Both the Early Years review and the Parental Engagement review would be finalised based on the recommendations agreed at tonight's meeting. would will both be submitted to the 8 March overview and scrutiny committee meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.25pm.