

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 17 October 2022 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jason Ochere (Chair)
Councillor Rachel Bentley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Chloe Tomlinson
Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Cassandra Brown
Councillor Renata Hamvas
Councillor David Watson
Martin Brecknell (Co-opted member)
Marcin Jagodzinski (Co-opted member)

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

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Lynette Murphy-O'dwyer (co-opted member) and Gregory Doey, Headteacher Pilgrims' Way and Bellenden Primary Schools.

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 commission noted an incomplete sentence in the apologies section of the minutes and this has since been corrected.

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 was approved as a correct record.

5. PUPIL PLACES: LOOKING AT SHORTFALLS IN PRIMARY PUPIL NUMBERS ACROSS THE BOROUGH

The commission first heard from Helen Ingham, Headteacher at Ivydale Primary School on the following points:

- Impact of Brexit and reduction of Ivydale from a four form to three form elementary school.
- Impact of Covid and families moving out of the borough.
- Rehousing of families outside of the borough
- School tourism creating fluctuating pupil vacancies due to the constant mobility of pupils among the schools in the borough

The commission then heard from Andrew Rojas, Headteacher at St. George's Primary School on the following points:

- Pupil premium rates at 60%
- Drop in pupil numbers leading to budgetary constraint
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) higher number at St. George's Primary
- Need to provide support to parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds also factoring in equality across families with regards to schools closures

The commission then heard from Makeda Williams-Pinnock, Headteacher at Victory Primary School on the following topics:

- Reduction in pupil numbers due to Victory Primary School being located in a regeneration area, parental preference is for newer school buildings
- Neighbourhood migration as local businesses and industries close down such as Elephant & Castle shopping centre and families moving as parents look for employment elsewhere
- Regeneration projects leading to newer buildings and higher rents in excess of £2500/month for a one bedroom flat making it impossible for lower income households to afford it.
- Higher rents leading to migration has also resulted in breakdown of

extended family support systems, increasing the need for childcare and its associated costs.

The commission then asked questions on the following topics:

- Council support to reduce falling rolls especially with regards to school tourism
- Communication with Liaison Officers in the community and Diocese
- Signs of stability post-Brexit in nursery numbers
- Pressures on pupil numbers in years 5 and 6 due to pupil migration to certain primary schools and academy trusts that are feeders for certain secondary schools

The commission learned that current Local Authority fair access protocols give parents the freedom to move schools easily by filling in a form, although this has been an important prerogative given to parents, its often been carried out without enough consideration. Headteachers also have had a role to play in meeting parents who are changing schools and furthermore there is a need to look at proper checks with children's' services and taking into account safeguarding factors. School hopping can have a detrimental impact on a child's education and development. The commission also learnt that there is need for the Local Authorities to look at their respective admission protocols to ensure there are enough checks in place when parents want to move their child to another school.

The commission also learnt that there is a need for better communication from liaison officers on published admission numbers for schools especially with regards to accuracy of the data. The commission learnt that there is a higher risk of Church Schools closing as the Diocese are a much smaller organisation. There is support from the Director of Education for church schools, however there have been delays to certain strategic plans without any information and/or reasoning for it.

The commission heard that the schools in regeneration areas where temporary housing has been removed to build estates has seen a drop in nursery numbers as people moving into the newer buildings are mainly professionals without children. Pressures on pupil numbers in years 5 and 6 still exist due the mobility of pupils into other feeder primary schools and academy trusts.

The commission then asked further questions on the following topics:

- Pupil premium and financial need of schools, Schools provision for SEND pupils
- Falling birth rates
- Council's role in mitigating falling rolls

The commission heard that although pupil premium does help with school finances as does Education and Health Care Plans with regards to SEND funding, not all schools face the same challenges and there is a need for equity in funding of

schools which impacts their resources. Outstanding schools as rated by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) are able to have more secure funding when compared to good schools who still provide a good education.

The commission learned from the headteachers that the population projections in terms of birth rates are inaccurate giving schools a false sense of security, there has been a 31% reduction in birth rates from 2010 to 2020 with the biggest dip in the year 2018.

The commission heard that the council needs to play a role in educating parents that a school with a good Ofsted rating also provide a quality education and that this should be measured in attainment and progress of the pupil's education development. The council needs to play a role in implementing decisive actions when it comes to short, medium and long term strategic goals in mitigating falling rolls. Socio-economic factors, housing and regeneration play a major role in falling pupil numbers and there is a need for a Southwark wide co-ordinated approach to mitigate falling rolls.

6. PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY SIZED HOMES TO HELP MITIGATE FALLING ROLLS IN SCHOOLS

The commission then received a presentation from Juliet Seymour, Planning Policy Manager, Southwark Council on planning strategies for family sized homes to help mitigate falling rolls in schools:

- Brexit and people migration
- Covid flexible working practices
- Discrepancy in GLA Pupil Roll Projections due to migration in boroughs not factored in
- Southwark Plan 2022- Family Friendly Neighbourhoods
- Future work - real world analysis of child yield

The commission then asked questions on the following point:

- Protection and ring fencing of Section 106 monies for schools
- Gap in population projections from GLA from 2015 onwards
- Costs of private rented sector and smaller developments unfit for families

Juliet then offered to provide the Section 106 monies report to the commission at a later date and also explained to the commission that they are working with GLA on gaps in the population projections. Smaller developments include affordable housing and approval for family sized homes in developments of less than 10 units would not pass the planning inspectorate. The commission also learnt that private rented homes have been undergoing enforcement investigations and this data would be provided to the commission. Air- quality data around schools would also

be provided to the commission at a later date.

7. IMPACT OF THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS ON BUSINESSES IN SOUTHWARK

The commission then heard from Jacqueline Kneebone, Regional Director for Environment, Social, Governance, Sea Containers, Lore Group and Floris Kouijzer Hotel Manager and Pete Avery, Federation of Small Businesses on Local Businesses coping with cost-of-living crisis, especially supply chain issues.

- Impact on Budgets and Revenues
- Utility costs
- Beverage and food costs post Brexit
- Businesses not growing as a result of the pandemic and Brexit related lower staffing levels
- Recruitment events in hospitality with jobs paying above the London living wage, 25% increase in wages over a three year period.
- Supply chain issues and the need to look at multiple suppliers for the same product

The commission then discussed the following topics:

- Uncertain futures of micro businesses due to low levels of income and high expenses
- Challenges faced by small businesses to access help from Southwark Council website
- Decrease in footfall and closure of small businesses
- Data on the impact of Brexit compared to the pandemic
- Quality of labour
- Recruitment issues and reaching the unemployed
- Promoting hospitality with the council's help, bridging the hospitality skills gap
- Some dairy products have gone up by 50% and champagne by 200%
- 8 to 9 months lead time for parts for boiler repairs
- Businesses trying to align themselves with London Living Wage leading to increase in discretionary service charges for customers
- Workshops for smaller businesses, educating people in the community

- Networking helps small businesses build relationships and mental health support for small business owners is quite beneficial
- Council's role as liaison in the community connecting Globe academy run by Sea Containers hotel group to young people, introducing them to hospitality
- Apprenticeships for young people and complications within the schemes making it difficult for businesses to find time and resources to hire apprentices

8. CABINET RESPONSE TO REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2021-22: REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) PROVISION IN THE BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

9. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2021-22: PROCUREMENT, ACCESSIBILITY AND SOCIAL VALUE

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

10. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2021-22 : ETHNICITY PAY GAP IN SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

11. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMISSION 2021-22: TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN - SOUTHWARK PIONEERS FUND

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

12. PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Work Programme 2022-23 was noted by the commission.

Meeting ended at 9:15 pm

CHAIR:

DATED: