

Open Agenda



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 11 April 2011 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

- PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Adele Morris
Councillor Rosie Shimell
Councillor Althea Smith
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Reverend Nicholas Elder
Colin Elliott
Leticia Ojeda
Councillor Martin Seaton (reserve member)
- OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Catherine McDonald
- OFFICER SUPPORT:** Gill Davies; Strategic director for the environment
Jane Bailey: Assistant Director Children's Services; 11-19 and Youth
Sam Fowler : Southwark Schools for the Future project director
Dolly Naeem : Head of Southwark adult learning
Harriet Duncan: Adult learning service
Jackie Cook: Head of quality assurance
Caroline Essiet; Rights and participation officer
Davina Bailey : Youth participation coordinator
Julie Timbrell: Scrutiny project manager
Deon Kritzinger : Environment account department
- PUBLIC:** Stephen Swatay : Southwark Youth Council
Alexander Fefegha : Southwark Youth Council
Abubathar Rojas : Southwark Youth Council
Martina Ewohime: Southwark Youth Council
Marein Hiber: Southwark Youth Council
Ibrahim Bah : Southwark Youth Council
Vincent Brown: Save Southwark Adult Learning
Shenika Hylhon: Speakerbox
Osa Obasohan: Speakerbox chair

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lorraine Lauder.

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

2.1 There were no urgent items.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2011 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN (CYPP)

5.1 The chair welcomed representatives from Southwark Youth Council (SYC) and Speakerbox to the meeting , as well as Cllr Catherine McDonald, Cabinet lead for children's services.

5.2 The chair invited Cllr Catherine McDonald to say a few words and the Cabinet lead for children's services commented that the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) is a key plan, developed with partners. The statutory obligations have been removed, however she stated that it is her hope that the partners will still want to work together.

5.3 Jane Bailey, Assistant director for children's services, introduced the report circulated by commenting that she hoped everybody present had had a chance to contribute to the plan; over 1000 voices had been recorded in the course of the plan's development. The Assistant director reported that 5 key priorities had emerged: thinking family, narrowing the gap, raising the bar, succeeding into adulthood and working together – children safeguarded from harm and neglect.

5.4 The Assistant director reported that the 'thinking families' theme had emerged because many people had said it was difficult to cope with so many agencies. 'Narrowing the gap' was focussed on everybody receiving high quality services and 'succeeding into adulthood' was focused on learning and ensuring that young people can enter the employment market, particularly young people at risk. Safeguarding from harm was focused on reducing abuse and neglect.

5.5 The Assistant director then moved on to looking at performance issues. She reported that there had been an emphasis on getting the Family Information Service information accessible and up to date. The youth service is committed to

devolving 20% of its budget and intends to work with SYC on this issue. A strategy has been developed on children and families keeping to a healthy weight. There is now one family centre for children in need.

- 5.6 The officer reported that 'looked after' children's educational performance remains a concern. A virtual head overseeing this area has been made a permanent head. There has been good progress on Southwark's GCSE results with 56.1% getting 5 GCSEs. There is now an independent chair of the safeguarding board to give challenge.
- 5.7 The chair invited representatives from the Southwark Youth Council to ask questions. A representative referred to the table circulated with the report detailing progress and asked who is going to be operationally responsible and what are their targets and aims. For example on 'narrowing the gap' you mentioned higher GCSE result, but what about better facilities at schools? Sam Fowler, Project Director for Schools for the Future, commented that there is a schools' investment programme. The Assistant director responded that the CYPP is about setting high level strategic aims. Responsibility for delivering the plan ultimately rests with the Strategic director of children's services, Romi Bowen, alongside Cllr Catherine McDonald, the cabinet lead for children's service. There are specific managerial responsibilities for different sections and objectives; the CYPP sets the whole agenda.
- 5.8 The cabinet member for children's services emphasised her personal accountability to the representatives present, as well as commenting that the Children's Trust has a range of partners , such as the police, and they are also accountable. The Cabinet lead asked representatives from SYC is they are happy with the amount of consultation. The representatives commented that they would like more communication on outcomes, for example they would like more feedback on the results of the views they have put forward.
- 5.9 The chair invited representatives from Speakerbox to ask questions. A representative asked if, in the light of cuts, you are going to be able to support school leavers in local authority care who go to university. Another member asked, in light of the cuts, is there is still help for young people to get a job and training. Officers and members assured representatives that there is detailed financial assistance available for looked after children who go to university. The cabinet member for children services drew representatives' attention to the £1million fund that is being developed to ensure young people are supported to continue their education and training. The fund will assist young people to stay in collage and university. The cabinet lead also said that she wanted the fund to help young people to get job experience as she knows this is so important.
- 5.10 A young peoples representative asked if young people are still going to be able to devolve 20% of the youth budget. The cabinet members said that is still the intention; there are different models and she said she would like the SYC's help; noting that she is coming to a meeting on the 10 May.
- 5.11 A representative asked if young people are represented on the Children's Trust? The Cabinet lead for children's services commented that this is an excellent point and she will take this away to consider further.

- 5.12 Representatives from SYC asked if council had looked at apprenticeship programmes. Officers present detailed a number of initiatives including Southwark corporate apprenticeship scheme; funding received from the Shard development to fund training by Southwark College so local people can access jobs at the Shard and a scheme developed by Southwark Schools for the Future. Officers undertook to get more details on these initiatives to SYC.
- 5.13 The chair invited members of the committee to ask questions and a member asked about the Family Information Service advice and directory. The Assistant director said this is focused on ensuring that information online is available and easily accessible. The member asked about families not online. The officer commented that universal services such as schools have a role in giving out information to families. The member requested that at a future meeting on the CYPP that members are given more information on how families can access information, both online and offline.
- 5.14 It was agreed that the next time the CYPP plan is reviewed representatives from SYC and Speakerbox will be invited to submit a few questions in advance so that officers have an opportunity to gather information ready for the meeting.

ACTION Children's Services officers undertook to get back to Southwark Youth Council with details on apprenticeship programmes, on behalf of cabinet lead ;Cllr Catherine McDonald.

Officers undertook to come back to the next quarterly meeting with more details on how families can find out about services both offline and online.

6. ADULT EDUCATION

- 6.1 The chair invited the Strategic director for the environment, Gill Davies, to open the discussion. She began by noting that at the last meeting the committee asked the officers and the cabinet member to go away and consider the issues. As a result of this we have reflected and we do think we can involve adult learners more in the decision making process all the way along.
- 6.2 The Strategic director reported that officers had met with adult learning services users and there remain some different views. In particular the discussions have not changed the council's views on fees.
- 6.3 The Strategic director reported that there is now a new focus on policy; the lead member has asked us to do some visioning. This will ensure our service reflects our purpose more clearly. Officers reported that they had talked to Morley College and other providers. The council has started to think about our role in consultation with other colleges and officers reported that they would welcome the opportunity to come back at a later stage to report on this.
- 6.4 Officers reported that the figures for the cuts have come back and they are not as bad as had been feared, however they are in the order of 10%.

- 6.5 Members asked what the timescale for the visioning would be. Officers reported that they would be ready to report in September.
- 6.6 The Chair invited Vince Brown from Save Southwark Adult learning (SSAL) to comment. He raised concerns that many adult learners on Personal Community Development Learning course are leaving and classes are closing. He requested data on this as a matter of urgency. He said he would particularly like to know the amount of adult learners on benefits leaving and to know how many learners are going to other adult education providers.
- 6.7 The Strategic director reported that she understood that numbers of learners for English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) and literacy are going up. She commented that this brings us back to service priorities. Officers reported that they are analysing the figures, although comparisons will be easier to understand at the end of the academic year, and undertook to provide this information to SSAL.

ACTION

A report on the vision for Adult Education will come to the scrutiny committee in September. This will identify service priorities and polices. Service users and other adult education providers will be consulted.

Officers undertook to provide figures on services users of Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL), at the request of Southwark Save Adult learning. In particular information was requested on:

- a) Number of participants on benefit?
- b) Who has left?
- c) Where have they gone?

7. ROTHERHITHE SECONDARY SCHOOL

- 7.1 Sam Fowler, Project Director of Southwark Schools for the Future, introduced the topic and referred to the paper circulated.
- 7.2 A member said she understood the present Rotherhithe site may no longer be available. The officer agreed that things are changing and that there is an evolving action plan. He reported that there will be a need to identify sites and talk to existing local schools. The Project director reported that the council is seeking clarity from central government . The council will make a robust case as possible for a Rotherhithe school.
- 7.3 A member asked when the council expected a response and the Project Director reported that they expect this very soon; there are many stakeholders concerned.
- 7.4 The Project director reported that demand for places has remained consistent. The council is seeking to maximise places under Building Schools for the Future. There are a number of factors: the need for local school places and borough wide demand.

- 7.5 A member asked if the government are clear that this is a peninsula that makes it harder for children to travel. The Project director assured members that the business case had included the local context and that the intention is to maximise funding.

8. REVIEW OF PARENTING SUPPORT - PART 1: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: REVIEW REPORT

- 8.1 The chair drew members' attention to the draft school admissions report circulated and invited comments from the committee.
- 8.2 A member commented that a common test for all secondary schools would be very welcome, adding that as a mother the current practice of children being tested by every school they apply for had been terrible for her child. The Assistant director for children's services, Jane Bailey, agreed it is very difficult, but commented that this is the competitive nature of schools. The local authority's role is being weakened, rather than strengthened, under the new government's policy; however she reported that officers had been working with schools to negotiate a better arrangement. Next academic year it looks as if there will be two tests: one for the Harris academies and one for all the other local secondary schools.
- 8.3 Members asked if it was useful for the scrutiny report to recommend one common test. The Assistant director reported that that this could provide further challenge. One member pointed out that parents could still apply out of the borough and then their children would still need to do another test. Another member said the best outcome would be for a common London wide test.
- 8.4 A member asked if IQ is being tested and the Assistant director responded that most tests have a 'CAT' (Cognitive Ability Tests) component, which measures educational potential. Alongside this individual schools may measure specific aptitudes related to their specialist status; for example music or maths. This is one of the difficulties in arranging a common test.
- 8.5 It was agreed that some context on the common test issues should be added to the report.
- 8.6 A member noted that the report recommended more information and support be given to parents on waiting lists around the time school places are offered. He asked the Assistant director if there is the capacity within the department to do this. The Assistant director that that the pressure of cuts will limit capacity. Members commented that this might be able to be delivered by volunteers. The Assistant director commented that the local authority has statutory duties in relation to the admissions process.
- 8.7 A member commented that extending membership of the Admissions board to local business and equality representatives could make the forum more dynamic.

- 8.8 The scrutiny project manager reported that a questionnaire is being circulated to parents asking for feedback on secondary school admissions and details will be sent to committee members. The survey will be completed in about three weeks.

ACTION

The committee resolved to send an interim report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). The report will be finalised once the survey on secondary school admissions survey results have been completed and the results reported.

9. CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND SPORT PROVISION : REVIEW INTERIM REPORT

- 9.1 The committee reviewed the interim report circulated with the papers. It was noted that a major report on childhood obesity is due to be published very soon by the GLA.

ACTION

The committee agreed to continue this review for a while longer and OSC will be informed that the committee is part way there. The GLA report on obesity, due to be published shortly, will be considered.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

- 10.1 The update on Adult Education in September will be added to the work programme. The impact of services changes on the Youth service will be considered.