



## **EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 28 June 2011 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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**PRESENT:** Councillor David Hubber (Chair)  
Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole  
Councillor Adele Morris  
Councillor Althea Smith  
Councillor Cleo Soanes  
Reverend Nicholas Elder  
Colin Elliott  
Leticia Ojeda  
Sharon Donno

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Darren Merrill

**OFFICER SUPPORT:** Glen Garcia : Head of Pupil Access  
Rory Patterson : Deputy Director, Specialist Children's Services  
Shelley Burke : Head of Scrutiny  
Julie Timbrell : Scrutiny Project Manager

### **1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Emmanuel Oyewole and Cleo Soanes.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rosie Shimell and Councillor Sunil Chopra, who sent apologies. Councillor Darren Merrill attended as a reserve.

### **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 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

#### **4. MINUTES**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2011 were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **5. REVIEW OF PARENTING SUPPORT - PART 1 : SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REVIEW REPORT**

5.1 The committee considered both the results of the questionnaire and an email a couple of parents had sent the chair, alongside the Admissions report that went to OSC at the end of last administrative year.

5.2 Members first discussed the questionnaire and it was noted that many parents found the range of schools' admissions criteria difficult. Officers and members considered this to be an intractable problem, given the national choice agenda.

5.3 It was noted by members that parents scored 'satisfaction with communication received after the offer letter' a little low. Officers explained the school preference service met this need and that having meeting space to see parents in Tooley Street could improve matters.

5.4 Members commented that there was also a lower score given by parents who access special needs schools in a different way if their child has a statement of special needs. Questionnaire respondents requested more information, both for this process and the mainstream process used by parents/cares with a child with special needs but without a statement. Officers were asked to look into this.

5.5 There was a comment by a member that at least one school held their open day after the closing date for applications. This meant one member's child changed her mind, but it was too late. This might be a blip, however this may be a problem this year as there was a report that some schools have opening days advertised in November, after the end of October closing day.

5.6 Officers welcomed the survey and said they had already taken note of the results and comments and started to action; for example they are working to make the Guides easier to navigate and working with the Parent Participation Forum to do this.

5.7 The issue of the number of tests for entry to secondary schools was revisited; it was noted that a reduction too two is an improvement, but not ideal.

5.8 The chair read out the text of the email received from two parents raising issues concerning the admission process. This is pasted in full below:

Dear Mr Hubber

We are aware that you are holding a meeting of the above committee tomorrow evening at Southwark Town Hall, and sincerely hope you will find time to address the following issues that we and many other year 6 parents in Southwark have experienced recently.

Southwark Education Services

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*This is the department we turn to for information and advice. Sadly on the many occasions we have telephoned, we have been less than happy with the information provided. For example one operator said "you have until the 31 August to appeal against the school". This is not the case. Last week we called to find out if there were a school in Southwark who used the random allocation process when it came to school admissions. No was the response, he also confirmed this with a manager. When asked about Kingsdale, the operator was only too happy to read out the criteria from the Secondary Schools booklet.*

*you could hear him almost choking on the words "remaining places would be offered using random allocation process".*

**THIS IS THE DEPARTMENT THAT ARE SUPPOSED TO HELP AND GUIDE PARENTS THROUGH WHAT CAN BE AN ENORMOUSLY TRAUMATIC TIME!**

*Now we move on to the schools in Southwark and their different admissions criteria, Kingsdale in particular. Can you explain it?? An representative of the Education Advisory Panel, [xxxxx] visited Dog Kennel Hill School to provide some assistance after the 01 March. This was because SO MANY Southwark children did not receive offers, or received a school offer that was not on their original application. He had visited Kingsdale school the previous day and still could not explain the process to us, as it is complicated at best.*

*At the moment there are appeals being heard at Kingsdale, and it is only now that we are discovering the waiting list was generated by a priest! Not a computer system, but a man drawing names from three separate pots! Who decided this was a fair and appropriate process and would guarantee authenticity of process?*

*Having contacted other Local Authorities, it seems that Southwark is the ONLY borough that will offer a place to non-residents UNCONDITIONALLY. I Southwark children who apply to schools in Wandsworth, must sit a test and get a very high score (last year 98.6%) before they are even considered for a school place.*

*Does this sound/seem fair to you, given that at least 40 children in this borough received absolutely NO OFFER whatsoever, in the knowledge that Kingsdale is catering for many children outside of it's LA!!*

*We look forward to hearing from you and hope to attend tomorrow's meeting.*

5.9 The meeting discussed the following points:

- Parents applying to Kingsdale did not feel the process was clear , transparent or fair
- The query raised by parents via the Southwark switchboard should have been forwarded to the Admissions team as it was too complex to be dealt with by the call centre
- Officers explained that random selection is permissible under the Admissions code

RESOLVED

The Admissions report agreed by OSC will go to the cabinet along with the results of the questionnaire.

Officers undertook to look to improve information given to parents with a child with special needs / a statement of special needs.

## **6. CHILDHOOD OBESITY AND SPORTS PROVISION REVIEW**

6.1 The Chair drew members attention to the three reports considered so far; 'Tipping the Scales', 'A Tale of Two ObesCities' and 'Weighing In'. The Chair considered it was now time to draw up recommendations based on the evidence received so far.

6.2 Members noted that July's Council Assembly themed meeting is on Sports and Young people. Members stated that it was important that we listen to the evidence and debate on this theme and use this to inform the report. The chair stated that he would be making reference to this report during the debate and he urged other committee members to do the same.

6.3 There was a discussion on submitting a report to the meeting; however members decided that it was too early for this. Officers advised the committee that once the report is agreed it can be submitted to the Council Assembly; there are provisions in the council constitution that allow this. The recent Democracy Commission particularly recommended this, particularly for reports that are on an engaging and important issue for residents.

RESOLVED

Draft recommendations will be composed drawing on the evidence received so far and the three reports circulated so far:

- Tipping the scales - London Assembly report
- A tale of two obesCities
- Weighing In.

The chair will work on some draft recommendations and circulate these to the vice chair first, and then the rest of the committee.

The committee will review comments and debate from members, residents and stakeholders on the 'sports and young people' Council Assembly theme.

Officers will be invited to present on the free school meal pilot and work will be done to consider what data is needed to evaluate its impact. Officers will be asked to supply relevant information, background data, and results so far and scope for comparative study.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 7.1 The chair referred to the work programme and said he was looking forward to starting part 2 of the scrutiny review into support for parents, following on from the review into School Admissions. The chair reported that he had visited the Parents' Carers Council and he would like to invite them to a meeting so that the committee could discuss support for parents & carers of disabled children. Members also suggested consulting a BME group that works with children with autism, and it was agreed they should also be invited.
- 7.2 The chair went on to talk about a scheme initiated by CSV (Community Service Volunteers) which matches volunteers with families and children on protection plans to give practical advice and support. Information about this had been circulated to the committee last year, and with the papers for this meeting. Rory Patterson reported that Southwark is now engaged with CVS to develop a scheme in partnership with Southwark Council.
- 7.3 One of the education representatives asked if there was a role description for this as she thought that a number of parents who use Children's Centres could be excellent volunteers for this scheme. Officers responded that this is in development. The chair requested information and a presentation on this scheme at the next meeting.
- 7.4 It was noted that Adult Education undertook to report back to the committee in the autumn.
- 7.5 The committee agreed that combining the cabinet member interview with the quarterly visit by Southwark Youth Council and Speaker box would be the best use of time.
- 7.6 January will once again be used as an opportunity to look at Safeguarding and the independent chair will be invited.
- 7.7 Members discussed the planned review into universal free school meals. It was decided that officers will be invited in October and asked to present on progress so far and indicate when they understand evidence on outcomes will be available. Members commented that we need to think about the possibility of children having a healthy school meal and then going out to eat an unhealthy fast food meal after school. Members thought it was important to engage and influence parents.
- 7.8 Members asked officers why certain year groups had been selected to be the first

to received universal free school meals. Officers explained this is because they are rolling out the programme. Members commented that they would like to do comparative studies with schools who have not received this programme in order to measure the outcomes.

- 7.9 Members went on to discuss the impact of Clinical Commissioning on children's health services, such as school nurses. A joint meeting with the Health and Adult Social Care scrutiny committee was muted, however it was agreed that members concerns would be sent to the Chair of this committee.
- 7.10 An education representative noted central government's recent decisions on Early Years provision. He stated that these will have a big impact on preschool and other Early Year's providers. He commented that a written question to the cabinet lead may help address concerns.
- 7.11 The chair recommended that the committee continue to keep an eye on the proposed free school at Rotherhithe. He stated that there is an issue of accountability as there is no direct link to the local authority.
- 7.12 Sharon Donno reported that her commitment as Chair of Southwark Headteachers Executive has now ended and Mr Nick Tildesley will be taking up this role from September. The Chair and committee thanked Sharon for all her hard work and valuable contribution to the committee.

## RESOLVED

### Review of parenting support – part 2: support for parents

- Invite CSV (Community Service Volunteers) to present on their scheme matching volunteers with families and children on protection plans to give practical advice and support
- Invite Southwark Parent Carers Council to the next meeting
- Seek out and invite other organisations led by parents /carers of disabled children and invite them to attend / give evidence to the scrutiny committee
- Invite parent/cares of disabled children to give evidence on the parenting support theme

### Consider new partnership arrangements between public health, children's services, education and the new GP consortiums

Members noted that education school budgets are currently being used to pay for health care and the new partnership arrangements between public health, children's services, education and the new clinical commissioning consortiums need to be aware of this. Members will feed into a review on clinical commissioning being done by the Health and Adult Social Care scrutiny committee and the above comment will be sent to the chair.

Children and Young Peoples Plan with Southwark Youth Council – quarterly &

Cabinet member interview

The quarterly review of the Children and Young Peoples Plan with Southwark Youth Council & Speakerbox will be done in conjunction with the Cabinet lead member's interview.

The impact of services changes on the Youth service will be considered.

A written question will be submitted on the impact of services changes on the Youth service

Early Years

A written question will be submitted on the impact of recent changes on Early Years and preschools.

Rotherhithe School

A watching brief will be kept on Rotherhithe School and the possible free school.

Adult Education will be asked for an update following on from the 11 April meeting.

Safeguarding in January