



EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 8 February 2012 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT:

Councillor the Right Revd Emmanuel Oyewole
Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Adele Morris
Councillor Rosie Shimell
Councillor Althea Smith
Councillor Cleo Soanes
Councillor Nick Stanton
Colin Elliott
Leticia Ojeda
Nick Tildesley

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

OFFICER SUPPORT: Rory Patterson : Deputy Director, Specialist Children's Services
Colin Gale: Free Healthy School Meals project lead
Julie Timbrell: Scrutiny project manager

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Hubber. Councillor Althea Smith sent appologies for lateness

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 28 November 2011 were agreed as an correct record.

5. REVIEW OF UNIVERSAL FREE HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS

5.1 Colin Gale, Free Healthy School Meals project lead, reported that he had been liaising with schools about visits to look at the delivery of the Free Healthy School Meals (FHSM) in selected schools to support the review. He is planning visits for the week beginning the 27 February and asked the committee to let him know the best dates for visits.

5.2 The scrutiny project manager explained the Islington scrutiny report on school meals take up and nutrition had been circulated to give some context and ideas to help with the investigation and visits to schools.

5.3 A member commented that one of the issues for the FHSM review is how many children take up free school meals. The member noted that one of the most successful strategies used to increase take up of free school meals has been to reduce stigma by various methods.

5.4 The FHSM project lead commented that the Hull FHSM programme concentrated on that in particular. He reported that the council are looking at the census information. He went on to say that while the figures are raw, he thinks the uptake has increased in Southwark schools, which is good news for schools and children as this increases school income. The project lead explained that the pilot has picked up around 140 children who had previously not been claiming but were eligible for free school meals. The council is developing a system that intends to miss nobody. He elaborated that as pupils move on to secondary school the council can now use the same methods to assist with greater take up; however it is more challenging for secondary children.

5.5 A member expressed concerned about the number of fast food outlets and our food culture. The project lead commented that there is a policy work on that and outlets now have increased costs.

5.6 A member asked the project lead to clarify the position on packed lunches and he responded that this is a school policy decision. He explained that many do have policies however enforcement is a different thing. He

explained that some don't allow it certain foods. It is easier to enforce a policy in primary schools but harder in secondary schools.

- 5.7 A member asked the project lead how the council intend to capture some good quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate outcomes; particularly given some children may choose pack lunches. The project lead responded that the FHSM is part of a whole school approach, and is not being done in isolation. All schools have to follow a healthy school meal programme. The question of how we can measure the pupils who took school meals or packed lunches can be considered. He said the council may be able to do some samples and undertook to take that back to consider as part of the longitudinal study.
- 5.8 A Member commented that as a community council we do not subscribe to free school; however there have been some comments on parents saving money .The member asked the project lead for clarification. He explained that the council conducted some focus groups as part of the early pilot and some parents said that they are using the extra money for books, school trips and other activities. The project lead said that he would look for this evidence and also noted that this is a matter of parental choice, some parents will do this, some will not.
- 5.9 A member asked the project lead on how the council is developing a whole school approach and he responded that this is a small cog in a whole school and whole community approach that the recent scrutiny review into Childhood Obesity and Sports Provision set out. Healthy school meals are part of a whole series of choices and environmental cues that families and children need to negotiate.
- 5.10 The project lead asked for clarification on the dates, times and content of the visits to schools. It was agreed that the 28th February would work for many of the members present and another date would be set once the chair returns from holiday. The project lead asked who members would like to speak to and members indicated that they would like to find out how catering is arranged in schools and speak to the catering staff and children. The project lead suggested trying a meal and visiting over lunchtime. A questionnaire was spoken about and there was a discussion about the young age of the children and that it would need to be very light. The head teacher representative said that his school have developed a questionnaire and suggested that the committee to visit his school, talk to the children in the school council, have a meal and meet relevant management, teaching and catering staff. Members welcomed the invitation.

ACTION

Visit John Donne School on the 28 February.

Set another date for school visits on the Chair's return.

6. REVIEW OF PARENTING SUPPORT - PART 2

6.1 Officers reported that there is local review of Short Breaks, and the committee has received relevant papers. There is also a wider review of special education. Alongside this there is the wide ranging national Munro Review of Child Protection. The review was briefly discussed and it was agreed to summarise the evidence received to date with a view to completing the review by the end of the administrative year

ACTION

The evidence will be summarised and sent to the chair and vice chair by the 21 December for comment and then circulated to the committee.

7. ROTHERHITHE SCHOOL

7.1 The report on Southwark Schools for the Future: New School Rotherhithe was noted. The vice chair commented that the committee should be looking at all free schools, not just Rotherhithe.

ACTION

A wider report will be requested covering all free schools in the borough.

8. ADULT EDUCATION

8.1 The vice chair introduced the item by explaining that officers were unable to attend tonight because of illness and had sent apologies. This item will be deferred until next committee meeting. A member of the public and service user indicated that he would like to give evidence. The vice chair invited him to do this, but explained that since officers are not available to comment it will only be recorded this evening.

8.2 The service user voiced concerns over the background information given in the published report and said that Morley College's main base is in

Lambeth. He also commented that Southwark Collage received a poor Ofsted report, but the service has made improvements to students learning goals.

- 8.3 He said that he would hope that the Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) courses are maintained and amplified. He commented that many of the courses are first steps to help get people into education, training and employment. He explained that someone he knew did a course and then went on to do further training in childcare. He stated that in his view the evidence dose not reflect this positive aspect of the service provision. The service user left some written evidence and requested that this was considered.

ACTION

This report and the item will be taken again at the next committee meeting.

9. THEMES FOR CABINET MEMBER INTERVIEW

- 9.1 The vice chair asked members to suggest themes for the cabinet member interview, which is scheduled for the next meeting. There was a discussion on the move away from individual questions for cabinet member interviews. Recent interviews have been based on themes as these allow a more discursive discussion that needs less resource support by officers in times of budget reductions.
- 9.2 A member commented that the quarterly review of the Children's and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP) has been a useful forum for the young people.
- 9.3 A member suggested a theme of mentoring, apprentices and employment support. He noted that, in particular, it would be useful to understand how much work local stakeholders offer Southwark young people and what the rate of pay is.
- 9.4 A member commented on national research that indicated that there is a relationship between gangs and the 1000 most disruptive families in a borough the size of Southwark.
- 9.5 There was a suggestion by a member that a themed discussion on the committees current review topic of universal free healthy school meals would be useful. Another member commented that it might be helpful to link that to the recent review report produced on Childhood Obesity and Sports Development. Traffic Safety was also suggested as a theme.
- 9.6 The wider overview and scrutiny committee's commitment to holding

cabinet members to account on their portfolio generally, and council plan commitments specifically was discussed.

ACTION

The suggested themes agreed were:

1. The Children and Young Peoples Plan - this will be done with the young people from Southwark Youth Council and Speakerbox.
2. Mentoring, apprenticeships, and employment support for young people (particularly work done by regeneration stakeholders and the number of placements offered to young people in the Borough as opposed to outside the Borough; and the rate of pay given to young people)
3. Gangs and the 1000 most disruptive families
4. Free school meals - linking this to the recent scrutiny report on obesity and sports
5. The cabinet member's portfolio with reference to council plan
6. Traffic safety

10. WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING

10.1 A member commented that he would like to know what the council does with the school test results and where this information gets examined. He went on to comment that there are been a redefinition of 'value added' and it would be beneficial to understand what that means. He added that it would be good to understand what the challenge process is, for example what does the council do if a school is doing well and another not doing so well.

ACTION

Officers will be asked for a report setting out:

- Where school test results get examined
- The definition of value added and any recent or proposed changes
- The challenge process for schools

