

**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday, 1st March 2007 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Motley (Chair), Councillor Arnold (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Ahmed, Mistry, Tullett and co-opted members Ms Claire Charles, Mrs Bondzi-Simpson, Rev Phil Stone and Mr Lorenzato. The following observers were also present: Mrs L Gouldbourne and Ms J Cooper.

Also Present: Cllr Wharton (Lead Member for Children & Families).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eniola, Councillor Mrs Fernandes and Councillor C J Patel. There was also an apology for absence from the observer Mr Vaughan.

1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were none.

2. Minutes of the last Children and Families Scrutiny Panel meetings:

Thursday, 11th January 2007

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Panel held on 11th January 2006 be agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following addition:

p.3 – “therefore the teaching profession was represented. *Ms Gouldbourne expressed the view that whilst headteachers were on the Board they would not necessarily be able to reflect the views of other teachers*”

3. Matters Arising

The Chair noted that there had been a delay with the Extended Services report and as a result it would not be put before the Executive Committee until April. Following discussion it was agreed that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would still consider this report at their next meeting in before it goes to the Executive. The Lead Member for Children and Families endorsed this suggestion noting that the views of the Committee would be welcomed before the report is considered by the Executive.

The Vice Chair asked whether there was any update on the application for the Young Roots Heritage Lottery Fund noting that this may be a time limited opportunity. The Vice Chair also asked about the request for a breakdown of

youth services across the borough. This was noted and it was agreed that both of these things should be followed up with the Head of Youth Services. On the issue of youth services, Councillor Mistry explained that she had recently attended a Duke of Edinburgh's Award ceremony and had found it interesting to note that some schools appeared not to participate in the programme. In light of this Councillor Mistry asked whether schools were monitored to see whether they participated and suggested that outside organisations could assist the schools in delivering the programme to encourage greater participation.

4. Item Requested by a Member of the Committee – Youth Service Provision

Councillor Arnold introduced this item relating to residents concerns about the youth service provision. Two petitions had been received from residents in the Kilburn ward highlighting the issue. The Committee were informed that in the North Kilburn area particularly there was a shortage of community facilities. Councillor Arnold suggested that the area would benefit from having a dedicated space for youth services and a youth worker to co-ordinate these services. In addition it was felt there was a lack of open spaces and concern was expressed that ball games were being prohibited. The view was also expressed that the lack of space and lack of youth services being offered had a knock on effect on crime and anti-social behaviour. Councillor Arnold introduced the following spokespersons to present the petitions.

Petition – Against the Cuts in the growth of the Youth Service

Atiya Munir explained that she had been a resident at Dunster Gardens for many years, noting that it had initially been a peaceful and crime free area. However she expressed the view that since 2005 the area had increasingly started to suffer from vandalism, increased litter and graffiti. The Committee were informed that there were a few young people who were loitering in the streets, drinking, smoking and making noise. Ms Munir explained that having sought advice from the police she had erected a wooden fence as a deterrent. However she later found it smashed up. The petitioner relayed other personal experiences of crimes suffered such as having her car broken into and having the tyres punctured and she explained that other residents had suffered similarly. It was noted that Ms Munir had also sought help from the Council and had previously petitioned for Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in November 2006. This petition was also copied to other key partners, and residents associations. Following this a multi agency walk through the area was arranged. Ms Munir stressed that to combat the problem preventative rather than punitive measures were needed and asked that the Council look into providing a dedicated area within the community for youth work. It was hoped that a local youth centre along with a dedicated youth worker would help draw young people off of the streets and into positive activities.

There followed discussion on this with Committee members. In response to questions on the budget, Councillor Wharton (Lead Member, Children & Families explained that there were no cuts proposed to the youth service

budget. Councillor Arnold expressed the view that as the Council was looking to make savings there would be less money allocated for growth in the youth service over the next year than had originally been planned for. Councillor Wharton responded by explaining that the budget for the year end had been underestimated and he gave details of the resulting overspend. Due to this some services would have to be funded through the Council's reserves. Councillor Dunn also spoke about cuts in funding and explained that he had been in contact via email with the Head of the Youth Service to get clarification on the matter. In her response the Head of Youth Service had stated that she could not confirm that there would be no cuts. It was noted from the email that the allocated growth budget for the youth service was £45,000 for 2007/08. Rik Boxer added that the proposed growth budget of £200,000 for 2007/08 would now be granted to the youth service over a period of 4 years. A resident expressed the view that the amount allocated was only a small percentage of the total growth budget for the Department. The Chair explained that the Council was facing difficult financial circumstances which had had an affect on their funding priorities.

Petition – Keep Streatley Road Scout Hut for Your Community Use

Dr Tom Dickins (Chair of the BEST Residents Association) presented this petition about the need for the Scout Hut in Streatley Road to be kept in community use. He explained to the Committee that residents of the Brent eleven streets, off Willesden Lane, had noticed an increase in anti social behaviour caused by young people hanging around on the streets. He noted that as the young people were not being provided with any positive resources they had nowhere to go and as a result were spending more time on the streets. He expressed the view that some adults were unnerved by this and as a result an uneasy relationship often developed. Dr Dickins suggested that the Council needed to invest in community buildings and providing facilities for young people. He also expressed the view that these aims needed to be at the core of any regeneration projects or maintenance plans. The petitioner added that residents recognised the financial constraints of the Council sought to work together with the Council to find a resolution. Referring to the Scout Hut on Streatley Road, Dr Dickins suggested that this resource presented an opportunity for providing a youth facility in the area.

In response to a question, Dr Dickins explained that the Scouts Association owned the site. It was noted that it had been unused for some time and had fallen into some disrepair. The Committee were informed that the Scout Association wanted to sell the property in order to release equity, however the site was bound by a Community Use Order. The Chair noted that the sale of the property was a matter to be considered by the Planning Service. Councillor Dunn spoke on the matter and provided some more information about the site and the Scout Association's wish to sell it, it was noted that this issue had been ongoing for a significant period of time. The Committee was informed that there had been negotiations with the Council about releasing the Community Use Order as this would make it easier for the Scout Association to sell the hut. It was also explained that the Scout Association were a charitable organisation and therefore had to re-invest any profit made from a sale. In

light of this the Chair asked whether a funding opportunity arose from this whereby money could be used to provide an alternative resource in the area. The Chair also questioned whether there the Council was obliged to provide a corresponding community zone should the Community Use Order be lifted. Other suggestions included attaching a section 106 condition to the sale of the site requesting that the buyer contribute costs towards community activities. Councillor Dunn expressed the view that similar suggestions had been discussed with the Planning Services however the service had shown reluctance to ring-fence section 106 funds for particular projects in this way.

Noting that residents were looking for suggestions on what could be done to increase youth service provision, Councillor Arnold expressed the view that residents sought leadership and wanted the Youth Service or some other service within Children and Families to coordinate efforts in finding a solution. Councillor Arnold proposed the use of a temporary facility to service the needs of the two areas. It was also suggested that partnership working with other departments and organisations could help to achieve something.

Noting the difficult financial constraints of the Council and limited scope for new facilities, Councillor Mistry suggested that the youth service should be looking towards promoting use of existing facilities. Willesden Green Library and Bridge Park Leisure Centre were highlighted as examples of facilities available in the south of the borough. Noting that they were not in the immediate vicinity, Councillor Mistry explained that there were good transport links connecting the areas and suggested that someone should be working with young people to help them tap into the facilities that were already there. Rik Boxer commented that the Youth Service had an awareness of the needs in the borough and that they would be happy to play a role in coordinating provision of youth services.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Committee note the petition and support the suggestion that the Youth Service play a role in coordinating services in order to meet the needs as highlighted by residents in the ward.

5. **Annual Education Standards Report 2005/06**

The Committee had before them a report setting out the key trends in educational standards at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4. This item was presented by Laura Hague (Principal Research and Statistics Officer, Children and Families) who highlighted various trends at each Key Stage. Committee members noted that at Key Stage 1 there had been improvements in reading and writing, there was steady achievement in science and declining performance in mathematics. It was explained that the gender gap had narrowed at this level, however girls were performing better than boys in all subject areas. It was also noted that the gap had also narrowed between those eligible for free school meals and those who did not. Laura Hague continued by discussing the prevalent trends at Key Stage 2. It was noted that

there were improvements in English and that the gender gap remained steady in mathematics and science but had increased with regard to performance in English. With regard to Key Stage 3 it was highlighted that the borough results were steady in English despite a decline nationally. It was highlighted that improvements were seen by Asian Pakistani, Black African and Caribbean and White other pupils in mathematics and science. The trends at Key Stage 4 were noted. These included the improvement in the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades (including maths and English). Laura Hague also highlighted that at this stage the gender gap had widened. Commenting on the achievements and positive trends highlighted, Lesley Gouldbourne suggested that the Committee should write to schools to thank them for their hard work and congratulate them on their success. This suggestion was endorsed by the Chair.

Laura Hague continued by outlining the trends with regard to looked after children noting that the Committee had previously expressed a particular interest in this area. It was noted that it was more meaningful to assess progress across Key Stages rather than measure attainment for looked after children. It was noted that from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 a large proportion of pupils were making expected or above expected levels of progress in English and science.

A member of the Committee asked about the number of looked after children in the borough at each Key Stage. It was explained that there were 16 between Key Stages 1 and 2, 23 between Key Stages 2 and 3 and 35 between key Stages 3 and 4. Acknowledging the transient nature of being looked after, the Chair asked about the effect of the length of time that children had been looked after on a child's educational attainment. Rik Boxer explained that this had not been looked into and acknowledged that this would be worthy of further analysis.

The Chair referred to a statistic in the report relating to the achievements of Black or Black British Caribbean/ Black British African young people. Noting the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* - C (including maths and English), he commented that it was shocking to see how significantly below the national average this group were. The Chair added that this highlighted the importance of the work being carried out by the task group especially in light of the fact that this group represented approximately 25% of the young people in the borough. Rik Boxer also commented that this was a very significant statistic and noted that the gender gap was also increasing at this stage. Lesley Gouldbourne also commented on the significance of this statistic commenting that this supported the view of the Teachers Panel that there needed to be a school in the south of the borough.

The Vice Chair asked about the achievements in science and whether there was a science curriculum adviser involved in promoting the subject. Noting that achievement in science had been a concern for a number of years Rik Boxer explained that there was a School Improvement Adviser with a science specialism. However there was not a dedicated team as there was for literacy for example. Jenny Cooper suggested that a science advisory team would be

a particularly valuable resource at primary school level where teachers would not necessarily be a science specialist. Committee Members were informed that the Department had made a growth bid for an advisory teacher to support the teaching of science in the borough that had been agreed however funds would not be immediately available. The Chair commented on the potential effect of mobility on attainment in science for young people. He explained that by nature science was a subject in which the teaching and learning was cumulative thus young people who moved around a lot could be disadvantaged. Laura Hague explained that the effect of mobility at each Key Stage was being investigated and the Chair suggested that this information should be presented to the Committee when available. The Vice Chair expressed the view that the shortage in funding was affecting standards in science and suggested that additional resources should be applied where needed. Committee members agreed that they would recommend for there to be a greater emphasis and more resource employed for teaching science in schools. Councillor Wharton noted this explaining that the Executive would welcome the views of the Committee when determining the budget for the next round.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That the Chair on behalf of the Committee would write to the schools in Brent to thank them for their hard work and congratulate them on their achievements for the past year;
- (iii) That the Committee recommend for greater priority be given to the teaching of science in the borough and with this in mind a Science Advisory Team should be established for Brent schools.

6. Children's Centres in Brent

The Committee had before them a report on progress to date and key issues with regard to Children's Centres in Brent. Lesley Fox-Lee, Head of Early Years, outlined the report highlighting the key issues for members. It was noted that sound progress had been made over phase 1 and five sites were approved for development. The resulting buildings were described as interesting and unique. Lesley Fox-Lee referred to the Sure Start programme which had been referred to as a model for the way Children's Centre should operate and explained that Sure Start held Brent in positive regard with regard to the development of the first phase. It was also noted that the Department had worked well with regard to forward planning and Lesley Fox-Lee explained that Children and Families had played a supportive role in co-ordinating services.

The Committee were informed about the second phase of development which was currently in progress. Lesley Fox-Lee expressed the view that this phase presented challenges with regard to the allocated budget, the number of sites

to be developed and the timeframe for delivery. It was noted that 7 sites had been approved for development and permission had been granted by the Executive to continue with the programme. Lesley Fox-Lee informed the Committee that it was hoped that phase two would complete on time, however there were concerns due to the current financial situation with regard to Brent Primary Care Trust (PCT). However the Committee were informed that the Department would still continue to work with the PCT and two of the sites identified were in existing health centres. It was explained that the Legal Services were working to try and guarantee use of the space within these centres for up to 25 years. It was also noted that there were initially plans for a health care element to be incorporated in the Children's Centre at Queens Park Community School. However a decision had been taken to scale down this project.

There followed questions, Lesley Gouldbourne referred to statements in the report that a qualified teacher should lead the learning at each centre for at least 50% of the time and asked about the practical repercussions of this. The Head of Early Years explained that through a growth bid, extra funding had been obtained and five teachers had been recruited to help fulfil this requirement. In response to further questions it was explained that the children followed the standard foundation stage curriculum at the centres. Lesley Fox-Lee further explained that representations were being made to central government for more funding to be made available to help fulfil this requirement for the second phase. Lesley Gouldbourne enquired about the Children's Centres steering group as referred to in the report. She expressed the view that it would have been advisable to have a teacher representative in the group. Noting that this had already been discussed at the Teacher's Panel, it was suggested that this be followed up for a further response from the Director of Children and Families. Lesley Gouldbourne further explained that teachers were keen to work with the Council and emphasised that it was important that concerns from union members were reflected.

A Committee member asked whether there was scope for encouraging the private sector to work in conjunction with the Council to plug any gaps in delivery. In response, the Head of Early years explained that there was no capacity for sponsorship of the Children's Centres.

Jenny Cooper asked about the level of consultation with regard to planning of the sites used. Referring in particular to the Fawood Centre, she explained that teachers had experienced problems with the cold. Lesley Fox-Lee explained that staff at the school previously situated on the site of the Fawood Centre had played an instrumental role in the planning of the new facility. She expressed the view that due to the outdoor nature of the school there were likely to be issues relating to temperature, however she also explained that children benefited greatly from learning in such a facility. Jenny Cooper acknowledged this but re-iterated the importance of providing adequate conditions for teachers.

RESOLVED: -

- (i) that the report be noted;
- (ii) that the Early Years Service be congratulated for achievements made at the first stage of the Children Centre's and that encouragement be given for continued success over the second phase.

7. Kingsbury and Stonebridge Integrated Service Programme

Christiana Baafuo-Awuah (Partnerships & Special Projects Manager) presented to the Committee a report on the Kingsbury and Stonebridge Integrated Service Programmes. The Committee were informed that the "Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme" and The Children Act 2004 placed a requirement on all local authorities and their partners to deliver integrated services. It was noted that Brent Children and Families Department had piloted Integrated Services Programmes in Stonebridge and Kingsbury with a view to learning from them and expanding the service to other parts of the borough. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah explained that so far the programmes had trained 300 practitioners and worked with approximately 100 children. With regard to the services offered, it was explained that through the programme tailored services were co-ordinated by a Lead Professional to help meet the needs of children and young people at risk of social exclusion. The Committee were informed that good feedback had been received from parents and schools on the model being used. The model was explained, it was noted that following referral a group of assessors with membership from key services would decide on the appropriate course of action. Following this a Lead Professional would be chosen who would co-ordinate the package of support for a child. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah highlighted that some of the support offered was delivered by voluntary agencies.

Committee members had several questions. The Vice Chair commended the positive work carried out by the programmes and asked about the types of professionals involved in the assessment process. It was explained that the health service played an instrumental role thus health visitors and school nurses were involved. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah informed Committee members that the Children and Families Department had recruited three Lead Professionals and that different service areas were being encouraged to identify candidates to be Lead Professional.

It was asked how the programme encouraged voluntary sector participation. The Partnerships & Special Projects Manager explained that there was a voluntary sector reference group. Furthermore to provide information and encourage involvement an email was sent to 800 voluntary agencies. The Department had also worked with voluntary agencies where there was already an existing relationship with.

A Committee member expressed concern about the financial situation faced by the PCT and the effect of this on their involvement in the programme. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah acknowledged that this had placed some constraints. Jenny Cooper expressed the view that in light of the cuts preventative services were likely to be most affected. It was noted that there was likely to be added pressure on school nurses and health visitors. The Vice Chair asked if there were any safeguards against a reduction in the number of school nurses. Councillor Wharton suggested the Council would have a role to play where there was a statutory duty to fulfil. The Chair noted that there would be a report at the next meeting on the issue of PCT cuts and the impact of these on Brent Children & Families services. Rik Boxer expressed the view that the integrated services programmes would be severely affected by the PCT cuts and explained that they would continue to work around this. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah gave an example of the impact noting that were there to be a reduction in health visitors who had a role in referring children under the age of 5, it would be harder to identify children at risk in this age group. Members of the Committee expressed their serious concerns about potential cuts in the number of school nurses and health visitors and the effect this could have on the programme.

The Vice Chair enquired whether the programme was being monitored. It was explained that an evaluation was being carried out on the impact of the programme on the children and their families. Focus groups had been involved in carrying this out. A progress report would be ready in May. The Chair commented that the Committee would consider this when it was complete.

The Chair asked if there was a statistical analysis of the ethnicity of children accessing the programme. Christiana Baafuo-Awuah explained that she did not have this information however it was felt that children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds were the prevalent user group.

RESOLVED: -

- (i) that the report be noted and the Children and Families Department be thanked for the work of the Integrated Services Programme;
- (ii) that feedback from the evaluation of the integrated service programme would be presented to the Committee in due course;
- (iii) that the Chair of the Committee would formally write to the Director of Brent PCT to make a firm request that they do not make cuts to the number of school nurses and health visitors especially in view of the effect this could have on the integrated services programme.

8. Improving Outcomes for African Caribbean and Black African Pupils – Task Group Update

Councillor Arnold provided the Committee with an update on the work of the “Improving Outcomes” task group. It was noted the task group had met twice and the work programme had substantially developed. Councillor Arnold explained that the task group had met with young people at the Press Road Youth Club, this club had recently been set up in response to incidents of gun crime in the area. To illustrate the issues raised Councillor Arnold provided some quotes from the interviews at the youth club. These covered topics such as school life, exclusions, and life on Press Road.

Referring to the interviews, Councillor Arnold explained that youth workers had expressed the view that youth clubs could promote territorialism as funding requirements were such that only young people from the designated area could join a club. Councillor Arnold discussed the young people’s views on school life and their aspirations. It was highlighted that some young people had said that once teachers had an impression of them it was hard for this to be turned around. There was a mixed response when asked about how well they got along with their teachers. Some of the interviewees had commented that better sex education was needed at school, additionally it was felt that more information could be provided about drugs. It was noted that the young people were often learning about these things from their peers. On the topic of exclusion, it was apparent from some young people that their school records were not a great concern to them however some interviewees had expressed the view that they were more likely to be deterred from bad behaviour if there was more discipline at home.

There was discussion about the impact of racism. It had been commented that black Caribbean and black African boys were more likely to be approached by the police. It was highlighted that this observation had been made by young people from various different backgrounds. In relation to this Councillor Arnold commented on responses to the question of why there was an underachievement for this ethnic minority group. Some interviewees had suggested that the discrimination experienced on the streets was also transferred into the classroom. Councillor Arnold commented that a lot of useful information had been gathered from this visit.

With regard to consultation Claire Charles asked how parents were being involved. It was noted that the task group intended to visit Kingsbury High School’s Black Parents Forum within the next week. There was also a meeting planned at the end of March with stakeholders and partners. It was noted that the planned visit to the Black Male Forum at City Academy would not go ahead as it was no longer running due to a lack of funding. However the Policy and Regeneration officer noted that the task group could visit the school to meet with previous participants. Jenny Cooper also suggested that the task group could get in touch with some of the black and minority ethnic teachers in the borough. The Chair suggested that representation from all teachers would be useful. Lesley Gouldbourne offered to be a point of contact for consultation with teachers. Councillor Wharton suggested that amongst the areas being

covered it could be useful to look at why some Brent schools were doing better than others. He also suggested that the effect of the funding formula with regard to schools in areas of high deprivation could be investigated. Councillor Arnold acknowledged that there was still a lot to achieve within a limited period of time and informed the Committee that an interim report would be ready for April with a full report to follow at the first meeting in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED: -

- (i) that the update be noted and the task group be thanked for their work so far.

9. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED:-

that the next meeting of the Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee take place on Wednesday 18th April 2007.

10. Any Other Urgent Business

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.34 pm

W MOTLEY
Chair