

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Councillor Motley (Chair), and Councillors Butt (for Councillor Eniola), Mistry, CJ Patel, HM Patel (for Councillor Mrs Fernandes), and Thomas (for Councillor Arnold) and Mr Lorenzato.

Councillors Farrell (part), Tancred and Wharton (Lead Member, Children and Families) and Ms Jenny Cooper, Mrs Lesley Goldbourne and Dr Gill Reed (for Mr Tony Vaughan) also attended the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Arnold, Ahmed, Eniola and Mrs Fernandes and Dr Levison.

1. **Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interest**

There were none.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

3. **Matter arising**

*Language in schools*

The Chair asked for a response to the issue raised regarding directing resources towards supporting Somali parents. The Committee was informed that the report later on the agenda headed *Review of Funding Formula* showed that Somali boys were identified as an under performing group and as such specific funding would be allocated to schools to support Somali boys. The Chair acknowledged this but felt that there would continue to be a demand for additional services/resources to support this group which the Council would need to continue to be aware of.

4. **Overview of the Youth Offending Service**

The Committee considered the report which outlined the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) including the statistical profile of young offenders, information on the programmes of work undertaken with them and YOS prevention programmes for those at risk of offending.

Anita Dickinson, Acting Head of Brent Youth Offending Service, introduced the report. She explained that the Youth Offending Team was a multi agency team that worked with 10 to 17 year olds who had been found guilty of offences. The team was governed by national standards and utilised a range of interventions and preventative programmes on children and young people made up of mainly young males who formed 86% of the client group. Within this group there was over-representation of some communities including Black-Caribbean boys. It appeared that over the last three years the levels of offending and the numbers of offenders have remained relatively stable however, there was concern that the severity of the crimes had increased. It was pointed out that those young people received by the Youth Offending Service were referred by the Police having been caught offending and so the figures could in part be affected by the targeted activity of the Police. The increase in knife crime shown in the report included everything related to knife crime from carrying a knife to using it. There was evidence that many young people carried a knife because they felt they needed to protect themselves but in reality were unlikely ever to use it. Linked to this was the recognised problem of school time robberies which left many young people as victims of crime.

Anita Dickinson explained that a key issue for the Service was the changes introduced by the Youth Justice board which would introduce the need for a more risk based approach to intervention which would demand the services of experienced staff which were hard to recruit. There was a more general concern regarding the need for additional resources as a result of the estimated 73% increase in the workload since the service was established in 1999.

The Committee welcomed to its meeting Chief Inspector Stewart Smith who explained the work of the Metropolitan Police as a key partner in dealing with young offenders. He stated that the police could not tackle the problem of youth crime on its own thereby emphasising the partnership approach. Evidence showed that the impact of crime by young people had a disproportionate effect on the community. The police were currently undertaking Operation Curb which focused on the violent side of youth crime. The schools were key partners in tackling such crime and Chief Inspector Smith stated that the relationship between the police and schools had developed very well over the last couple of year. All secondary schools and the Pupil Referral Unit had signed up to a knife protocol so that a consistent approach across the borough could be taken

against anyone taking knives into schools. In addition a security review had been undertaken on each secondary school in the borough. Resources had been put into establishing a safer transport scheme so that a more co-ordinated approach to providing safer journeys to and from school could be adopted. A gap had been identified comprising those children not in school and so a new Youth Engagement Team had been established to work with these young people outside the school environment. The approach adopted in identifying these people was intelligence and risk led.

The Committee also welcomed to its meeting Mr Melvyn Davis, Director of the Male Development Service. Mr Davies explained that the Centre offered a mentoring service primarily to boys and their families of Black-Caribbean descent. It had operated in the borough for about 10 years. It was clear that many young people were very concerned about their safety with the advent of post code gangs and the carrying of knives. There was a feeling amongst young people that adults were unable to deal with the threat they saw and so this encouraged them to carry knives for self defence. Mr Davis felt there was not enough resources to sustain the work that was needed to support young people. He came across parents who were worried about their children staying out late and mixing with the wrong crowd but were reluctant to refer them to the Youth Offending Service for fear that it would label them a trouble maker. This represented a group that needed support. Mr Davis referred to the cultural aspect of some parts of the black community which felt that the odds were stacked against them and so they turned to crime. There not the programmes to meet the specific needs of this group despite them being responsible for the majority of crime committed by young people and this needed to be addressed.

A question was asked whether the work with schools had made a recognised impact given that it appeared from the evidence submitted to the Committee that the work of the Police and the experiences described by Mr Davis did not appear to be joined up. Chief Inspector Smith replied that there had been positive feedback and connections with children from across the spectrum had been established.

A further question was put asking whether the root causes of the problem were being tackled and in response Anita Dickinson stated that the Service was having an impact and that this could be seen by the levels of offending being static despite a growing population but she accepted that there was still work to do to improve the situation. However this in turn demanded extra resources.

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member, Children and Families) informed the Committee that there was a Government initiative supported by some

additional money called Targeted Youth Support. This would involve working with those children that had already been identified as being a problem and the aim was for the Council to produce a plan for this by the end of March.

Concern was expressed that much of the work was with those young people already in trouble and not with the sort of children identified by Mr Davis who had yet to offend. It appeared that there was a lack of resources to support these children. The Chair pointed out that the following item on the agenda on Integrated Services sought to address this need. Councillor Wharton added that some money in the funding formula for schools was to be retained by the Council in order to implement the Common Assessment Framework. The Chair offered the Committee's support to this.

Mr Davis was asked if his organisation worked with all schools to which he replied it did but schools had to pay for the work so it came down to which ones had the resources to support the work. With reference to paragraph 3.3 of the report, it was confirmed that the assessment of a young person would include identifying any behavioral needs that might increase the likelihood of the person offending. It was also confirmed that the work in this field included an element of restorative action whereby the perpetrator of a crime might meet the victim or, if the victim was unwilling, would exchange letters in order for them to see the consequence of their actions.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Stewart Smith and Mr Melvyn Davies for attending and Anita Dickinson for her report and sought the Committee's agreement on the issue for a task group to investigate.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that a task group be established to explore in more depth the safety of young people in and around schools, particularly the work being undertaken to reduce levels of 'school pupil' robberies;
- (ii) that Councillors Arnold, Mistry and CJ Patel serve on the task group.

**5. The Schools Budget and Review of School Funding Formula 2008/09 to 2010/11**

The Committee considered a report which set out details of the Schools Budget (SB) and the proposed changes to the Fair Funding Formula for Brent schools in respect of factors relating to Additional Educational Need

(AEN) and the delegation of the budget for Threshold and Performance Pay for the three year period 2008/09 to 2010 /11.

The proposals in respect of the SB had been discussed by the Schools Forum at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and the Executive had confirmed the Forum's recommendations at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and they would now be subject to approval by Full Council as part of the consideration of the Council's budget for 2008/09.

Councillor Wharton, Lead Member for Children and Families, added that the proposals were the result of a lot of work and a long period of consultation through the Schools Forum.

Mustafa Salih, Assistant Director – Finance and Performance, Children and Families, introduced the report stating that it showed that the schools budget for Brent had increased by 5% compared with a national average of 4.6%. He explained that there had been changes to the formula which focused on deprivation to a greater extent and enabled an increase in funding by £10M over the next 3 years.

The Chair added that there was a minimum funding guarantee that existed alongside the formulae which ensured all schools received an increase in funding of at least 2.1%. There was an issue around the funding of small schools which would need reviewing.

It was pointed out that the budget for funding teachers moving on to the upper pay scale (Threshold and Performance Pay) had been delegated to schools and so there was the fear that this may not be paid on merit but on what schools could afford. This matter had already been raised with the Director of Children and Families by teacher representatives. Mr Salih reported that this matter had been considered by the Schools Forum. It was recognized that the previous arrangement had been an anomalous one which the Government had taken the opportunity to change and by adding the funding to the delegated budget, which was in line with their general approach to school funding.

The Chair raised the issue of funding for early years education and the effects of changes proposed to be introduced in 2010/11, the likely outcome of which was that additional funding would be made available for the private voluntary and independent sector at the expense of the state sector.

In response to concerns expressed that the budget appeared to assume a level of savings in Special Education Needs (SEN) provision and that if this was not achieved whether there existed sufficient funding to maintain the quality of in-borough provision that currently existed, it was explained

that the savings were from the review in SEN provision some of which had been re-invested in the service and not savings expected from the provision of the service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the Committee's comments referred to above be taken into account by the Executive when it considers the recommendations set out in the report.

**6. 14-19 Development report**

The Committee considered a report which explained that the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gave local authorities a new strategic duty to promote choice, diversity, high standards and the fulfilment of potential for every child. Central to meeting this duty is a 14-19 partnership that ensures the successful implementation of the government's 14-19 reforms. A Brent 14-19 partnership was established in 2002 to implement a three year plan that addressed the issues identified in an inspection of Brent-wide post-16 provision. The partnership includes all Brent secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral units, city learning centres, work-based learning providers and alternative education providers, the College of North West London, Brent and Harrow Education Business Service, the Learning and Skills Council, Brent Connexions, Brent Alternative Education Service and Brent School Improvement Services.

John Galligan, Strategic Co-ordinator for 14-19 Education and Training, introduced the report by pointing out that the partnership's delivery plan for the diplomas, included the Catholic Consortium, the North Brent Consortium and the South Brent Education Improvement Partnership. No one provider would be able to deliver all the diplomas so it was expected that providers would work in partnership to offer them. It was pointed out that Brent performed well on the performance indicators as set out in paragraph 2.2 to 2.6 of the report. The low uptake of apprenticeships shown in paragraph 2.5 of the report was put down to the lack of provision. A facilities audit was being carried out to assess whether there needed to be additional resources bid for. Finally, John Galligan explained the various funding issues and sources of funding.

In answer to a question on if all 17 diplomas would be provided in Brent it was explained that a staff skills audit would also be carried out to see where there were gaps in provision and that the outcome might be to work with other authorities in order to be able to offer all 17. Concern was expressed that the diplomas were not viewed as a second rate qualification but it was stressed that a lot of work had been undertaken

with Universities to ensure the diplomas were fully accepted. There was a lot of academic rigueur behind each diploma in order that they were not viewed as a lower qualification.

Members commented that the proposals should be viewed positively because it allowed for different ways of learning but it was recognised that the attitude of young people towards it would be critical in whether it was a success or not. The proposals were currently on target to meet the government's target of giving all 14-19 learners an entitlement to study the specialised diplomas by 2013. All Brent secondary schools and providers had agreed to be part of the audit of resources. Schools had been asked to provide a realistic estimated cost of bringing facilities up to the necessary level and whilst there was currently revenue funding available, capital costs would have to be met from the Council's existing capital programme. Concern was expressed over how the Council would be able to finance the results of the audit.

**RESOLVED:**

that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the results of the audit of school facilities.

## **7. Kingsbury and Stonebridge Integrated Services Programme**

The Committee considered a report on progress and achievements in the Kingsbury and Stonebridge Integrated Services programme since a report submitted to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

Christiana Baafuo-Awuah, the Integrated Services Manager, introduced the report by saying that the pilot programmes which had been running for over one year had been successfully completed and the model rolled out. This had a radical change on the way staff worked and it was still proving difficult to get a buy-in to the new model from other agencies such as the PCT. The Chair commented on the joined up way of working and early identification as key aspects and stressed the need for continued funding if this was to be maintained. It was pointed out, as set out in the report, that around 300 children, young people and families had been identified with unmet needs through two pilots. As knowledge increased this figure could rise to 500-700 across the borough. Janet Palmer, Assistant director of Children and Families stated that at present it was not known what the ultimate demand might be and that it might outstrip resources. The Chair commended the scheme and again re-iterated the importance that funding remained in place to support it. It was hoped that would have an impact on reducing youth offending.

RESOLVED:

that the progress made to date be noted..

8. **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2008.

9. **Future agenda item**

It was requested that the report on the implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be also presented to the Children and +Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information.

The meeting ended at 9.45pm

W MOTLEY  
Chair