



MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **Wednesday 24 February 2016 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Kelcher (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Daly, Farah, Long, Stopp and Tatler, together with co-opted member Iram Yaqub

Also Present: Councillors Hirani, Moher and Southwood

Apologies were received from: Councillor Miller, co-opted Members Ms Christine Cargill, Mr Alloysius Frederick and Dr J Levison and appointed observers Lesley Gouldbourne and Jean Roberts

1. Declarations of interests

The following interests were declared:

Councillor Tatler – employed at Crest Academy and LEA governor at Mount Stewart Infant School.

Councillor Stopp - LEA governor at Alperton Community School

Councillor Long – LEA governor at Newfield P School

Councillor Daly – husband governor at Mount Stewart Primary School

Councillor Colwill – governor at St Gregory's school and wife a governor at The Village School.

Iram Yaqub – voluntary position at 1 Voice Community and governor at Oliver Goldsmith Primary school

2. Chair's introduction

The Chair reported that Full Council had agreed a new scrutiny structure to be put in place for the 2016/17 municipal year. He also stated that feedback from the recent LGA peer review had identified that the information sought by the committee was sometimes not contained in the reports submitted and to address this a pro-forma was to be developed so that questions could be asked before the meeting and answers prepared. Finally he added that a more thematic approach would be taken to developing the scrutiny work programme.

3. Deputations

None.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2016 were tabled.

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 February 2016 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. **Matters arising**

None.

6. **Education Commission update including the Annual Standards and Achievement report 2014-2015**

Councillor Moher (Lead member for Children and Young People), Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People), John Galligan (Head of School Effectiveness) and Karen Giles (Head, Barham Primary School) were present for this item.

Gail Tolley introduced Karen Giles as Head of Barham Primary School and also a School Effectiveness Lead Professional. Gail Tolley set the context by pointing out that all schools were self-managed and a significant proportion of them were now self-governed. Over the years education funding for local authorities had reduced as it was allocated directly to schools.

John Galligan submitted a PowerPoint presentation which outlined the percentage of all Brent schools judged good or outstanding over a three year period and attainment levels at key stage 2 and 4. He added that there had not been many recent school inspections so it was difficult to demonstrate the continued trend towards achieving higher targets.

Members acknowledged the strong improvement in some areas which was a credit to the schools and teachers concerned. However, the poorer performance in the secondary sector was noted, specifically by black Caribbean boys. John Galligan stated that progress on improving attainment levels was good but needed to be stronger in order to get up to and beyond the London average.

Discussion took place around the new requirements for reporting at key stage 1 and 2 levels and the introduction of a new curriculum that was more demanding. John Galligan explained that the lack of information concerning testing meant that secondary schools had not been able to fully prepare for the new requirements. In recognising the demands being placed on schools, Gail Tolley stated that work was being undertaken to develop aspiring headteachers and that Brent was aiming to be at the forefront of this work. The Brent Schools Partnership had undertaken work on trying to address the issue of teacher retention/recruitment which was recognised as a national problem and one on which further work was required. Addressing questions on the national funding formula, Gail Tolley explained that a government consultation was being undertaken but her understanding was that there was recognition of the higher costs in London and that the scheme would not seek to achieve equalisation but would seek an allocation based on need. She added that she also anticipated that there would be a significant period of phasing in of any changes.

In response to questions regarding the number of school exclusions, Gail Tolley explained that this was a responsibility of the Inclusion and Alternative Education

service. It was requested that a report on the number and breakdown of exclusions be circulated to all members of the committee.

In answer to questions concerning the performance of Academies and Free Schools, Gail Tolley pointed out that it was the Government's stated aim that all schools should become academies and this would lead to responsibility for school performance being taken away from local authorities. However, in her position she remained responsible for the wellbeing of all children and young people and she considered that this included their schooling. It would therefore be a matter of developing strong professional relationships with schools in order to fulfil this responsibility.

In answer to a point being made that there was not much mention of the role of the parent within the report, Gail Tolley accepted that the key role parents had during pre-school and early years should be acknowledged. Karen Giles added that the views and contributions of parents was part of the OFSTED framework.

A member of the committee felt more comparative data with neighbouring boroughs should be provided and expressed the view that in some communities it was customary for children to receive supplementary education thereby driving up performance. The point was also made that the situation regarding the performance of black boys was a long standing one. The request was made for statistics on how many Brent children went on to one of the Russell Group universities, broken down by ethnic groups.

Requests for information/questions:

- Details of exclusions from schools in Brent.
- Statistics on how many Brent children go on to one of the Russell Group universities, if possible broken down by ethnic groups.

RESOLVED:

that the report and comments made at the meeting be noted.

7. **SEND reforms and implementation**

The committee considered the report on key changes arising from the Children and Families Act and updating members on Brent's progress in delivering the national programme of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reforms.

Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) introduced the report by stressing the partnership approach between the Council and health providers in delivering the SEND joint commissioning strategy action plan. She also pointed out that this was another area in which schools were having to implement new requirements.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Carmen Coffey (Head of Pupil and Parent Services) explained the changes that had taken place and what they meant in practice. She outlined the key responsibilities placed on councils and governors and how the SEND 0-25 framework was being implemented.

In answer to a reference to the 20 week target for completing assessments, it was stated that the Council was meeting the target in 90% of cases. This was down from 100% under the previous framework but it was hoped it could be improved upon. Similarly the 2 year target for converting learning difficulty assessments to an education, health and care plan was acknowledged as challenging but achievable.

The point was made that completed care plans were bulky and not practical for everyday use and it was explained that work had already been done with schools to improve the production of these plans. The number of 2, 3 and 4 year olds with statements was reported as being very low (less than 5), but the new code extended the age range so that the range of issues broadening into care needs would be addressed, some of which would benefit from early intervention. A request was made for the number of children with neuro-developmental disorders who had a statement or plan.

The committee was re-assured that schools were resourced to cope with implementing the new arrangements and Karen Giles (Head of Barham Primary School) outlined the support schools were able to offer. The point was made that facilities in Brent were good and that the Village School was a leading school in providing support.

In answer to a question regarding physical accessibility of schools, it was explained that all schools were responsible for ensuring their premises were accessible but some operated from old buildings that were expensive to adapt and so were not fully accessible.

It was explained that the biggest reason for rejecting drawn up plans was the lack of information submitted and that more plans were agreed than rejected. Information on this could be made available. The point was made that external organisations were able to play a role in developing plans for children and Carmen Coffey explained that independent support existed for parental support and capacity with the voluntary sector was being developed. She stated that through the joint commissioning planning this point would be taken account of and the contribution from the voluntary sector would be welcomed.

The committee was informed that Carmen Coffey would soon be retiring and wished her well for the future.

Requests for information:

- the number of children with neuro-developmental disorders who had a statement or plan.
- figures on the number of rejections for EHC plans and the outcomes at Tribunal level, if possible on a geographical basis within the borough.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the progress on implementing SEND reforms and the areas to be developed be noted;
- (ii) that issues identified within the report be identified for reporting back in more detail to future meetings of the appropriate scrutiny committee.

8. **Adult Social Care Local Account 2014/15**

The committee considered the report which attached the Local Account 2014/15 report.

The Lead Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Hirani was in attendance and, in answer to a question, undertook to ensure that details of assessments for the provision of care provided at substantial and critical level would be provided to members of the committee. Phil Porter (Strategic Director, Community and Wellbeing) explained that services were intended to intervene at the point where there may be a risk of harm to the individual. He explained that it was difficult to monitor the impact of services on residents because if they did not meet the criteria of substantial and critical they were provided with advice, information and guidance for onward care. The point was made that there needed to be monitoring of assessments to identify where cases had been refused and to ensure resources were being used most effectively.

The provision of respite care was raised and Phil Porter explained that a relatively small number had directly applied for respite care but that a much larger number accessed other forms of support. The provision of incontinent pads was raised and the request was made for the Council to check that the appropriate ones were being issued. Phil Porter undertook to raise the issue with the CCG, home care providers and through the carers hub to ascertain if there was an issue with this. It was suggested that any information forthcoming from these enquiries could be relayed to the chair of the appropriate new scrutiny committee. Referring to the Carers Hub, Councillor Hirani stated that this had been established in 2012 and the issues arising from consultation workshops had been incorporated into a contract to provide. The Chair asked what number of people using the hub received this support. Phil Porter replied that this would be picked up in the review of the Carers Hub.

A member of the committee recounted their personal experience of their son being under adult social care but he had not received an assessment. It was submitted that it was difficult getting to see a Brent Carer and a lot of support from other sectors was needed. Phil Porter responded that people had a right to an assessment and this message may need to be strengthened.

RESOLVED:

that the performance and contextual information contained in the Adult Social Care Local Account 2014/15 report be noted.

9. **Brent Safeguarding Adults Board - governance arrangements**

The committee considered the annual report from the Safeguarding Adults Board. The Independent Chair of the Board, Fiona Bateman introduced the report and responded to a point made about following up information arising from crimes. She explained that a new requirement was for the police to take the lead on cases where a crime had been committed. A stronger emphasise was now given to looking at how the police engaged with the victim and the restorative actions taken.

Since the time of the annual report, an audit of police engagement where sexual harm or exploitation had occurred had been carried out which showed an improvement but more still needing to be done. Fiona Bateman referred to the very low prosecution rate for disability hate crime which had been identified for further work with the police. It was important to teach people the skills to identify when they were being abused and how they could protect themselves. Phil Porter (Strategic Director, Community and Wellbeing) explained that a multi-disciplinary adult safeguarding team had been established some time back which was able to provide support to people subject to abuse but where it did not meet the level required to secure a conviction. Councillor Hirani (Lead Member, Adults, Health and Wellbeing) asked that more information be provided in the report next year on what actions were taken against the perpetrators.

It was agreed that clearer messaging was needed on what was adult safeguarding with reference to case studies and the impact on carers.

The committee was informed that Fiona Bateman would soon be stepping down as chair of the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board and wished her well for the future.

RESOLVED:

that the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report for 2014/15 be noted and suggestions made for next year's report be addressed.

10. **On-Street Parking Service Offer and Charges in Controlled Parking Zones; and Parking Statutory Guidance**

The Chair explained that the report before the committee setting out a series of changes to the way in which the Council manages and charges for on street parking was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 14 March 2016. This gave the Committee the opportunity to submit comments.

Councillor Southwood (Lead Member for Environment) was present for this item. She undertook to further discuss outside the meeting the parking issue raised by a member of the committee concerning Draycott Avenue/Woodcock Hill area.

The Chair raised the potential equalities impact of reducing the number of permits to two per household with certain communities more likely to have multiple generations living at the same address. Councillor Southwood acknowledged the point and stated that the proposals would be subject to extensive consultation and the equalities impact would have to be carefully considered. The proposal was to introduce the new limit of two permits as they came up for renewal. Lorraine Langham (Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment) pointed out that the space available was not enough to allow for households to have three permits. A view was expressed that the message was not getting through that there were too many cars in the borough for all of them to have parking spaces and that planning policy needed to enforce this message.

With reference to off street parking, Councillor Southwood pointed out that the paving of front gardens could contribute to flooding and the provision of dropped kerbs meant no-one else could park in that space.

In answer to questions about the impact on those with informal care support arrangements, Councillor Southwood explained that those eligible for social care support would not be impacted. Efforts would be made to prioritise those with informal care arrangements but it was not possible to devise a system of eligibility. It was acknowledged that Brent Carers needed to be involved in the consultation.

Reference was made to giving consideration to larger motorbikes requiring a permit on the basis that the polluter pays. The increased level of parked commercial vehicles causing disruption to residents was raised. It was explained that outside CPZ areas certain powers could be used against vehicles obstructing the highway. Within a CPZ the permit allowed vehicles of a certain size and action to withdraw the permit would be taken if it was found to be used for an oversized vehicle. It was suggested that a range of pricing for larger vehicles should be considered as well as for engine size.

RESOLVED:

that the comments made above be taken into account during the consultation on the street parking service and charges.

11. Data request log

The request was made for the information sought on the number of social housing units within the Kilburn regeneration area requested at the meeting of the committee on 2 December 2015 be forthcoming.

12. Scrutiny forward plan

NOTED

13. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm

M KELCHER
Chair