



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 December 2009 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Motley (Chair) and Councillors Arnold, Mistry and Tancred, together with Mr Lorenzato (Voting Co-Optee)

Also Present: Councillor Wharton (Lead Member, Children and Families) and Mrs L Gouldbourne (Observer - Teachers' Panel), Ms Jolinon (Observer - Teachers' Panel), Ms J Cooper (Observers - Teachers' Panel) and Rizwaan Malik (Observer - Brent Youth Parliament Representative)

Apologies were received from: Councillors Mrs Fernandes, J Moher and CJ Patel

1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None declared.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 October 2009 be received and approved as an accurate record subject to the following;

(i) to add Mr Lorenzato to the list of members present.

(ii) *Clause 4 – School Places in Brent, paragraph 2:*

Delete 'September 2010' and insert 'September 2013'

(iii) *Clause 6 – Annual Report of Brent Youth Parliament (BYP 2008-09):*

To add in between paragraph 6 and 7: "Members discussed the need for ensuring that information regarding the Youth Parliament gets fed back to schools. The importance of representatives sharing ideas and raising issues with their local Councillors was also noted.

3. **Matters arising**

Allocation and Funding of Nursery Places

Following a request for an update on this item, Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) informed the Committee that this issue was considered

at the Schools Forum meeting on the 9th December, on the same day that the Children's Minister announced that the introduction of the Early Years Single Funding Formula, under certain circumstances and conditions, would be delayed by a year. He explained, however, that the Government were inviting those local authorities who were ready to implement the funding formula to take part in pathfinders. He stated that therefore the Executive would need to decide whether to go ahead or to delay the introduction of the formula when the proposals go to the Executive in January 2010. Councillor Wharton reminded the Committee of the significant progress Brent had made in developing the Early Years Single Funding Formula. He added that there were a number of authorities who had suggested that they would be starting implementation in April 2010.

It was noted by the Committee that the Schools Forum had overwhelmingly voted in favour of asking the Council to delay implementation for a year. Furthermore, a view was put forward that it was not just representatives from the private, secondary and independent sector that had concerns regarding the proposals but that a number of head teachers had also expressed a concern at the Schools Forum. As a result of this and out of concern for a possible adverse impact on the private, independent and voluntary sector, Councillor Arnold proposed that the Executive be asked to endorse the Schools Forum's recommendation that the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula be delayed until April 2011 and this was supported by Councillor Mistry. The Chair and Councillor Tancred in response expressed a concern that the Committee did not have enough information before it to make such a recommendation. However, following a vote the proposal was supported.

Councillor Wharton then explained that the Executive would also be asked to agree an interim process for one year until September 2011 for the allocation and funding of full time Early Years places with implementation from September 2010. He added that the Schools Forum had agreed to this.

It was requested by the Chair that a verbal update and a copy of the report, which was due to go to the Executive in January 2010, be provided to this Committee at the next meeting in February 2010.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the Executive be asked to endorse the Schools Forum's recommendation that the implementation of the Early Years Single Funding Formula be delayed until April 2011;
- ii) that a verbal update and a copy of the report, due to go to the Executive in January 2010, be provided to this Committee at the next meeting in February 2010.

4. Youth Crime Prevention: the work of the Youth Offending Service

Anita Dickinson (Acting Head of Brent Youth Offending Service) introduced the report which outlined the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS). She began by providing the Committee with a brief overview of services provided by the YOS and the recent changes to the youth justice system as a result of the Criminal Justice

and Immigration Act 2008, including the introduction, from 30th November 2009, of the Youth Rehabilitation Order which was a new community sentence for young offenders.

Anita Dickinson then provided the Committee with an update on the preventative programmes which were being run by the YOS, including the introduction of the Triage Scheme. She explained that the Triage model was first proposed in the Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) and had been piloted by other boroughs very successfully. Brent, she stated, was currently running a pilot based on the reduced version of this full scheme. The aim of the scheme, she added, was to prevent young people from being given a Reprimand or Final Warning unless necessary. She noted that Brent was not in receipt of YCAP funds, nor had any additional monies been identified to deliver the programme. The pilot, she explained, was being run from existing resources. Anita Dickinson also highlighted some of the work which had been taking place across services, including a review of the YOS and Social Care Protocol and the introduction of the Family Intervention Project which was one of the delivery mechanisms for the Think Family approach. The Think Family approach, she explained, was aimed at transforming the way we work with families, seeking to move towards inter-agency and inter-departmental approaches to service delivery.

In the discussion which followed, the benefits of the Triage scheme were noted by the Committee. Following a question regarding whether any possible sources of funding had been identified for the running of the scheme in the future, Anita Dickinson explained that no sources had been identified. She added that £50,000 a year would be required to have a YOS staff based at the Wembley custody suite. She stated that if the funding could not be found, she would consider using funding from other interventions to fund the Triage scheme as she believed it to be such an important scheme which was proving to be very successful.

The importance of the Think Family approach was noted by the Committee. It was also noted that a task group would be looking at this approach in more detail. In response to a query regarding how many families would benefit from the Family Intervention Project, Anita Dickinson explained that funding allowed for 3 key workers who would work with 4-6 families at any one time. She explained that whilst there were more families than this who were in need, that this was a good start and that the model may be able to be adapted to accommodate more families in the future. A concern was raised that there was a danger that if the work load was to become too great, the project may not achieve its aim. It is for this reason, Anita Dickinson explained, that a key worker was not allowed to support any more than 6 families at one time.

It was noted by the Committee that overcrowding often played a significant role in young people's lives and could be a significant factor in causing young people to offend. Anita Dickinson informed the committee that it was through the Think Family approach that issues such as overcrowding could emerge. She explained that if it became apparent that overcrowding was a major problem for a family, intervention could then focus on how to tackle this issue. Following a question regarding whether the support through the Family Intervention Project would get extended to wider family and peer groups, Anita Dickinson explained that whilst it would not be a primary aim, it would be likely that in some circumstances a key worker would work with wider groups to meet the needs of the family. Following a concern raised

regarding the disproportionate amount of young people in care who commit offences and the need therefore to help these families, Anita Dickinson explained that the YOS offered parenting intervention and support to any type of carers. With regards to the Family Intervention Project, she explained that the families in the Family Intervention Project were probably more likely to be birth families as it was hoped that children in care would not be going to families who needed intensive support.

In response to a question regarding whether the Youth Offending Team should carry out preventative work on children below the age of 8 years, Anita Dickinson explained that whilst early intervention from a variety of agencies was needed below the age of 8 years, this would be too young to focus on crime. Also, she added that the team did not have the necessary expertise to work with those younger than 8 years old.

It was asked by the Brent Youth Parliament Representative how young people were being informed of the variety of orders and agreements which were used when a young person commits an offence. In response, Anita Dickinson stated that a young person would need to know about the types of orders and agreements used if they were ever brought to a police station after committing an offence and that there were leaflets available in police stations which would explain this to them. She added that the Youth Parliament could play an important role by informing young people of the impact that a reprimand and final warning could have on their life chances. In response to another enquiry, she explained that young people who were engaged with the YOS were continuously asked to provide feedback as to their experience of the service.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the report be noted;
- ii) that the Youth Offending Task Group could also explore in more depth the specific issues detailed in the report. It was suggested that the following issues be included:
 - a) the outcome of the research currently underway by London Metropolitan University into the question of gangs and how the Children and Families Department could work with partner agencies to respond to the issues identified;
 - b) the likely impact of the 'Think Family' approach on how Brent Council delivers services to reduce youth offending and reoffending alongside other unwanted outcomes for children and young people.

5. Update on the transfer of responsibility for 16-19 education

The Committee agreed to take this item before the item on improving outcomes for underachieving groups.

John Galligan (Strategic Co-ordinator for 14-19 Education and Training) introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the transfer of

responsibility for 16-19 provision from the Learning and Skills Council to the local authority. He explained that the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act had transferred the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) responsibilities for the funding and commissioning of 16-19 education provision to local authorities from 1st April 2010. He stated that the transfer of these responsibilities would help ensure that provision meets the needs of young people and that their outcomes improve. He informed the Committee that the LSC currently fund 6,048 places for 16-19 year old learning in Brent this academic year and that this represented a total budget of nearly £33 million. He added that approximately 35% of Brent's 16-19 year olds learners were from other local authority areas and that 45% of Brent's 16-19 year old residents studied in other boroughs.

John Galligan highlighted the local authority's new commissioning responsibilities as set out in the report. He added that Brent Council's Children and Families Department had established the 16-19 Funding and Commissioning Steering Group in March 2009 to plan the transfer of responsibilities. Furthermore, he informed the Committee of the 3 new national organisations which had been established to support the process. He explained that the London Regional Planning Group has been set up to lead and support local authority led 16-19 commissioning in London and that Brent would be a member of two inter-borough commissioning groups based upon the travel to lean patterns as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

John Galligan set out the proposed commissioning principles which the commissioning process must be based upon. He informed the Committee that 'value for money' had since been added as an agreed principle. He stressed the need for the other relevant boroughs to be signed up to these same principles. John Galligan also highlighted the commissioning priorities which included local, regional and national priorities. The local authority would, he explained, be responsible for monitoring the success of all provision commissioned by the LSC that finishes or starts after April 2010. He added that LSC was legally responsible for commissioning places for the academic year commencing September 2010 and that local authority officers were developing their skills by supporting the LSC's final commissioning round. John Galligan concluded by setting out some of the challenges that Brent faced, which included the need for ensuring that high quality impartial information, advice and guidance would be available to learners and the fact that whilst the proportion of Brent's young people attaining level 2 by age 19 and level 3 by 19 was above the national average, there were significant differences between groups of learners such as between those who received free school meals at age of 15 and those that did not.

In the discussion which followed, the Committee considered the implications of the new responsibilities. It was felt that the new responsibilities would provide the local authority with an important opportunity to improve young people's provision and job opportunities. It was noted that the Committee were in support of the principles of commissioning as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report. It was mentioned, by a member of the Committee, that there was a need to ensure that Brent was able to provide a wide ranging curriculum in order to encourage young people to remain studying in the Borough. The fact that a number of post 16 year olds were travelling out of the Borough to undertake foundation learning as there was a lack of provision in the Borough was discussed. In addition, it was noted that there was a need to ensure that provision was matched with current skills gaps in the Borough.

A concern was raised by Mrs Gouldbourne (Observer – Teachers’ Panel) that the 16-19 Funding and Commissioning Steering Group did not have a teacher representative on the group, thus was lacking input from those who were delivering the commissioned service. In response, John Galligan stated that he would feed this comment back. However, he noted that the 14-19 Partnership, that included representation from schools and the Secondary Education Improvement Partnership, which was made up of all headteachers and the college vice-principal, were being consulted at each stage of the planning. Legally he stated that the local authority was the lead commissioner. He explained that there must be clear separation between this role and the education providers that were being commissioned. He added that he did see a role for the Schools Forum in the future.

The importance of providing quality information advice and guidance to support young people in their choices and inform parents was noted by the Committee. The fact that often young people did not understand the transition to Level 3 and therefore did not appreciate what was involved was raised. With regards to the significant differences between groups of learners, John Galligan explained that free school meals was just one example of the gaps that needed to be narrowed. In response to a query regarding the monitoring of truancy and attendance when pupils go outside the borough, John Galligan (Strategic Co-ordinator for 14-19 Education and Training) explained that it was the responsibility of the local authority where the establishment was to monitor these.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the information provided in the report and the implications for the local authority and Brent’s young people as discussed at the meeting be noted;
- ii) that the commissioning principles, as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report, be noted.

6. Improving outcomes for underachieving groups

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director Achievement and Inclusion) introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the impact of the work which had been carried out to improve outcomes for Black Caribbean and Somali pupils and an overview of the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes for the White British, White Others and White Irish groups in Brent.

Rik Boxer highlighted the significant improvements which had been made in the outcomes for Black Caribbean and Somali Pupils. He explained that whilst these improvements were encouraging, further improvement was still needed. He informed the Committee of the ongoing work which was taking place to ensure continued improvement. He explained that an improving outcomes strategy group had been set up, as well as three multi agency groups which were responsible for looking at the following three areas; improving outcomes for 9-13 years olds, improving outcomes for 14-19 year olds and reducing Black Caribbean exclusions.

Rik Boxer then provided the Committee with an overview of the performance of White British, White Other and White Irish groups in Brent. By doing so he drew on

a range of data which was currently available to the local authority, including the fact that in 2009 31% of White British pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM) achieved 5A*-C GCSE including English and Mathematics compared to 40% of all Brent pupils in receipt of FSM. He also highlighted that whilst the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) were generally low, the number of pupils from White British heritage who were NEET was growing. In addition the Annual Activity Survey showed that the white categories had a far higher percentage of young people who were not entering education compared to all other groups. Furthermore, he drew the Committee's attention to the data available in the report on exclusion rates, the number of children on children protection plans and the number known to the Youth Offending Service from White British, White Other and White Irish.

Rik Boxer concluded his presentation by providing the Committee with some examples of the work which was being undertaken to secure future improvement, including the work being carried out to help those young people not in education, employment or training and the particular focus which the action plan, created by the School Improvement Service in partnership with three other neighbouring authorities, had on improving the attainment of white boys on FSM. He added that the improving outcomes strategy group would be looking at the additional data for these three heritage groups to consider whether or not there was a case to widen the focus of the improving outcomes group to include this strand of work.

In the discussion which followed, the Committee noted the increase in child protection plans for White British and White Other pupils. Rik Boxer explained that there had been an upward trend in the number of children who were subject to child protection plans in general. Following an enquiry, Rik Boxer explained that he was able to provide Members the data which compared the achievement of White British pupils who received FSM with other groups who were in receipt of FSM.

Harbi Farah from the Help Somali Foundation expressed a concern about the underperformance of Somali pupils. Rik Boxer explained that in recognition of the significance of this issue, there was a lot of work being carried out to tackle the problem, including, for example, tailored support within schools, the sharing of best practice and data between schools and the increase in the number of Somali teaching assistants within schools. On a more general level, he added that school funding had become more sensitive to the needs of groups who were in poverty and experiencing challenging circumstances. The Chair reminded the Committee that there had been a task group which had specifically looked into this issue.

RESOLVED:-

that the following be noted:

- a) progress to date for particular underachieving groups, namely Black Caribbean and Somali pupils;
- b) the overview of the performance of White British, White other and White Irish heritage groups in Brent;
- c) action being taken to secure future improvements.

7. **Special Educational Needs: update on progress of SEN Improvement and Efficiency Review**

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director Achievement and Inclusion) introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the SEN Improvement and Efficiency Review and other SEN developments. Rik Boxer explained that the SEN Improvement and Efficiency review was currently at the evaluation and analysis stage and that whilst interim findings had yet to be formally reported, there were a number of emerging issues which were likely to be included in future improvement programmes. He drew attention to these emerging findings, which were that there continued to be insufficient in-Borough provision for children with SEN; that there was an opportunity to explore alternative models for commissioning out-Borough placements, joining up education and social care commissioning arrangements and thirdly that the strategic management of SEN needed to be strengthened.

Rik Boxer concluded by providing the Committee with an update on other SEN developments, which included the results of Ofsted school reports since September 2006 and July 2009, the latest comparable data on the attainment and progress of pupils with SEN, the rolling programme of SEN audits of mainstream schools which had been introduced and a list of terminology that had been listed in the report at the request of the Committee.

In response to a query regarding what the increase in the number of new assessments leading to statements were, Rik Boxer explained that in the year 2006 there were approximately 200 new assessments leading to statements and in 2009 there was just short of 300. He stated that whilst there had been an increase across a spectrum of needs, there had especially been an increase in the number of children with autism. In response to another question, he explained that there were approximately 1600 statements maintained by Brent in total. In answering how many pupils needed some sort of support in Brent, Rik Boxer stated that 20-25% of pupils had some sort of need for support. It was noted that information on the shortage of school places for SEN children would be useful.

Following a comment regarding the need for quality data on the attainment and progression of pupils with SEN for all schools in Brent, Rik Boxer explained that whilst comparative information was not currently available, the new progression guidance would help ensure that more robust data would be available. Following a request for more information on the proposed transformation programme, Rik Boxer explained that there would be a number of interrelated strands of activities undertaken. He added that the programme would require some investment of resources initially in order for savings to be made in the longer term. He explained that it would be project managed by a dedicated specialist project manager and that the progress of the programme would be monitored closely. He added that it was similar to the model which had been successfully used to drive through the Social Care Transformation Programme.

It was asked whether there was a policy of ensuring that children from specialist schools spend at least some time in mainstream schooling a week. It was noted that often the distance to travel between schools and time off the timetable made it difficult to make the arrangements and that co-location would be an excellent way to solve these difficulties. In response, Rik Boxer stated whilst there was some

evidence of linkage, more could be done around this. It was asked whether the Building Schools for the Future programme would provide an opportunity for co-location as this seemed like a good opportunity to do so. In response, Rik Boxer explained that each secondary school would have a 'centre of excellence' which would provide provision for children with moderate needs. Ms Cooper (Observer - Teacher's Panel) noted that Manor School was currently applying for funding for Malorees School and Manor School to work together and that she believed that there were examples of this sort of practice happening elsewhere.

Ms Cooper (Observer - Teacher's Panel) raised a concern, in relation to the funding formula for specialist schools, that Band 6 did not allow for one to one staffing but that Hay Lane had continued to take children on who had needed one to one support. She added that there was a concern that when Hay Lane and Grove Park merged, the funding required to provide the one to one support needed for some of the children would not be available. She added that it had been assumed that the children would go to the new school and not out of the Borough. Rik Boxer explained that there were no plans for the children to go out of the Borough. He added that the funding and banding system would be reviewed on a year to year basis.

In responding to a question regarding whether resources could be allocated to a pupil with special educational needs quicker than the 26 weeks it takes for the statementing process to be completed, Rik Boxer explained that funding was currently allocated once the statutory assessment was completed and that this did take 26 weeks as set out in law. He added that the alternative would be to use a different route for individual funding for children with SEN in mainstream schools outside the formal statementing process. There would, he explained, be the possibility, in some cases, of funding being provided outside the statutory assessment process through the provision of individual pupil support agreements. Councillor Wharton explained that the Schools Forum had discussed this issue at the last Schools Forum meeting. He added that there would be cost implications because it would mean that the resources would need to be allocated to schools earlier than under the current statementing system. Rik Boxer stated that a set of proposals would be developed and would be looked at by the Schools Forum.

In order to gain a more thorough understanding of SEN provision in the Borough, the Chair requested that the following additional information be provided to the Committee in time for the next meeting; a comprehensive needs analysis with a projection of need for the future; a financial breakdown of resources used for SEN; and in recognition of the opportunity that Building Schools for the Future would provide, information on what the strategic input regarding SEN provision would be in the Building Schools for the Future programme.

It was noted that the BEST team should complete the review by the end of the year. Rik Boxer stated that a report would then be completed based on the final findings and would hopefully be available in time for the next meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the report be noted;

- ii) that the following information be provided to the Committee in time for the next meeting in February 2010:
 - a) comprehensive needs analysis and a projection of need for the future
 - b) a financial breakdown of the resources used for SEN.
 - c) what the strategic input regarding SEN provision would be in the Building Schools for the Future programme.

8. **Building Schools for the Future (BSF)**

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) introduced a report that was circulated during the meeting, which provided the Committee with an update on the Council's bid to secure early entry into the BSF process. He informed the Committee of the good news that Brent was now successfully on the programme and would be formally starting before 1 April 2010.

Councillor Wharton then set out the next steps and drew the Committee's attention to the appendices of the report which provided an outline project timetable for the first two and a half years and a procurement timetable. He then highlighted the 4 schools which would be taking part in the first phase.

In response to a request for more information on what would be happening in each school, Councillor Wharton reminded the Committee that it would be two and a half years before the building work was due to begin and so that therefore this level of detail was not available at this stage. The Chair asked whether a set of priorities for each school had been created. In response Councillor Wharton explained that they were very broad at this stage. The Chair suggested that as well as BSF being a standing item on the agenda that this information should be provided to the Committee as soon as the level of detail becomes available.

Councillor Wharton suggested that the Committee may want to consider how it would become involved with the BSF process and how it would want to be updated on progress. He added that the Committee may wish to receive the reports that would be going to the BSF Programme Board.

RESOLVED:-

that the update be noted and that information on the priorities and plans for each school be provided once available.

9. **School places in Brent**

Councillor Wharton (Lead Member for Children and Families) introduced a briefing paper that was circulated at the meeting, which provided the Committee with an update on the sufficiency of primary and secondary school places and the numbers of children currently without a school place as of 4th December 2009. He explained that the situation had not greatly changed from the last update. As part of an update

in the situation at primary level, he stated that there was still a significant shortage of reception places, but that they were looking to open up additional places in the new term. He then drew the Committee's attention to the information in the briefing note regarding the 11+ transfer for September 2010, including the fact that there would be more places available for September 2010 due to the planned opening of the Ark Academy. Councillor Wharton also highlighted the situation regarding casual in year secondary admissions and full year figures for secondary aged new arrivals. With regards to the number of secondary aged children out of school, the Committee noted that the total number of secondary aged children out of school had risen from 45 on the 20th October 2009 to 88 on the 4th December 2009.

RESOLVED:-

that the update be noted.

10. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 23 February 2009. The Chair informed the Committee that this meeting would be held at Alperton Community School.

11. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm

W.MOTLEY
Chair