



**MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday, 9 December 2010 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Gladbaum (Chair) and Councillors Aden, Harrison, Hector, Oladapo, Abassi, Mrs L Goldbourne and Ms C Jolinon

Also Present: Councillor Arnold

Apologies were received from: Ms J Cooper and Brent Youth Parliament representatives.

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None made at this meeting.

2. Deputations

None received.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2010

RESOLVED:-

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 October 2010 be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the following corrections;

Add Mrs Abbassi to the list of those who gave apologies for absence.

Clause 11: Delete references to Councillor Hector and replace with Harrison

4. Matters Arising

Mr Lorenzo.

It was noted that the death of Mr Lorenzo, co-opted member for the Catholic Church had been notified to all members of the Committee.

My Place Project

The Lead Member for Children & Families Councillor Arnold reported that the £5million bid submitted for the "My Place Project" in conjunction with Roundwood Youth Centre had been successful. Subject to final approval of the business case, the flagship building in Roundwood Park would now proceed.

Notice of meetings

Lesley Goldbourne, an observer, informed the Committee that in future changes made to dates of meetings be notified to all members well in advance. The Policy and Performance Officer Andrew Davies took this on board.

5. Primary school expansion strategy

Rik Boxer (Assistant Director, Achievement & Inclusion) gave a verbal update on the number of children without a school place in Brent and the vacancies in each year group. In reference to a paper circulated at the meeting, members noted that the most pressure was in the years Reception to Year 2 where the number of children without school places exceeded vacancies but that there was some capacity in Years 3-6. The Assistant Director pointed out that the situation was not unique to Brent as it was a London wide problem. He then referred to the cluster map that showed the concentration of children without school places in various year groups and areas within the Borough.

Mrs Goldbourne asked what the position would be when unplaced primary school children in the south of the Borough were of secondary school ages (Year 7-11) as there were more secondary schools in the north of the Borough. Rik Boxer responded that there are current vacancies in Crest Academy and Newman College in the south of the Borough. There was an agreed secondary expansion strategy through Building Schools for the future which is now being re-worked following the cessation of BSF investment. Councillor Arnold added with emphasis that the development of a strategy to provide adequate school places across the primary and the secondary sectors was on the current administration's agenda. The Assistant Director in responding to questions about those children who parents would not would not accept places at certain schools, stated that measures were being taken to communicate the positive work of Brent schools and address any issues of misconception. In welcoming the measures, the Committee urged the Assistant Director to convey to the Children information Service, the need for their services in addressing the problem.

Richard Barrett (Head of Property & Asset Management) outlined the strategy and options for delivering additional school places adding that total funding of £967,000 had been allocated to meet the cost of temporary expansions from the Council's School Capital Programme for Park Lane Primary, Braintcroft Primary, Brentfield Primary and Ashley Gardens Early Learning Centre at Preston Manor High School. These were additional to temporary reception places at Granville Nursery School, Curzon Crescent Nursery School and College Green Nursery School. Richard Barrett continued that under the Basic Need Safety Valve (BNSV) scheme, emergency allocation of funds had been made to provide sufficient reception places by September 2011. BNSV schemes were currently in progress at St Robert Southwell RC Primary, Brentfield Primary and Newfield Primary schools. He drew members' attention to the Council's main programme of £17.01m and emphasised the need for progress on design, planning and procurement if the funds were to be spent by September 2011 subject to the Director inviting applications from all heads, otherwise the Council would be required to make up any resulting shortfall.

RESOLVED:-

That the contents of the report, Brent Primary School Expansion: Delivery Strategy 2010-10 be noted.

6. **16-19 Agenda**

The Committee gave consideration to a report that provided an update on the progress the local authority (LA) had made in planning for and delivering its statutory 16-19 responsibilities together with the national policy changes that had taken place since July.

John Galligan (Strategic Coordinator) informed the Committee that the guidance on the role of local authorities would be published in the autumn and went on to outline the main changes as follows;

- The withdrawal of the National Commissioning Framework
- The removal of the planned in-year adjustments for providers that over-recruit or under-recruit in the academic year 2010-11.
- The transfer of the direct funding of colleges and training providers from LAs to the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) from 1st August.
- The introduction of a 16-19 allocations process based upon lagged learner numbers. For the 2011/12 academic year the YPLA will allocate funding based upon the providers' autumn 2010 data returns.
- The removal of the requirement to have Regional Planning Groups and sub-regional groupings of LAs.

In drawing members' attention to Brent's main priorities as set out in the report, the Strategic Coordinator stated that the Authority would not be able to develop the details of the plan until the publication of the white paper and Commissioning Guidance. He continued that the Council had continued to plan for and implement its statutory 16-19 functions whilst awaiting the detail that would underpin the Secretary of State's announcements. He added that when the Schools White Paper and the new Commissioning Guidance were published the Council would need to make decisions on the resources required to meet its 16-19 statutory duties and whether the Brent 14-19 Partnership would be the best mechanism for their delivery.

Mrs Goldbourne, in reference to the 2011 funding formula for sixth forms which would be based on success rates, enquired as to which qualifications were being recognised in arriving at the success rates. The Strategic Coordinator responded that all qualifications excluding AS level were included and added that as from next year AS level would be included. Councillor Arnold expressed disappointment at the way the government had handled the 16-19 agenda and with the lack of guidance she felt that a vacuum would be created within the system. In response to a query by Harbi Farah, the Somali community representative about the processes for promoting apprenticeship, the Strategic Coordinator stated that the Council was working closely with all schools, local businesses and with support from the National Apprenticeship Scheme adding that the current economic climate was hampering the scheme's success.

John Galligan continued that the Council was linking up with Connexions, neighbouring Local Authorities and the College of North West London to develop more foundation work and reduce drop-out rate by reviewing the provision at year 12. In noting the report, Members emphasised the need for the Council to work in close partnership with the voluntary sector as a means of re-connecting with young people. The Chair commented that the phasing out of student maintenance allowance would have an adverse impact on the education for post 16.

RESOLVED:-

That the report on 16-19 agenda be noted.

7. Special Educational Needs: One Council project

The Committee considered this report which followed on from previous reports to this Committee outlining plans to meet the increasing demand for specialist SEN placements and to manage related budgetary pressures. Rik Boxer the Assistant Director drew members' attention to the project concept paper that had been developed as part of the One Council Programme. The paper set out a high level plan for the period September 2010 to August 2013 with the dual aim of improving local arrangements for meeting special educational needs and providing efficiency savings. The document was considered by the Capital Programme Board which agreed that a business case should now be developed based on the concept paper, setting out the costs and benefits of the project in more detail.

Rik Boxer outlined the 3 main strands of the document as follows:-

- a) strategic planning and expansion of local specialist provision for children requiring placement in additionally resourced mainstream provision or special school provision.
- b) better commissioning arrangements for out-Borough SEN placements, where these continue to be required.
- c) further steps required to increase the capacity of mainstream schools to meet a wider range of special educational needs that would prevent the need for specialist placements.

The Assistant Director continued that the project would increase in-Borough SEN provision for children with high level needs by approximately 50 places within the project period with a long-term objective of establishing approximately 200 additional high quality places by 2020. This cost effective local provision would reduce expenditure on out-Borough placements and associated transport costs with an added benefit of increasing inclusion of children with high level SEN into mainstream schools. He highlighted some of the challenges facing the service including population growth the increase in the number of children with profound learning needs, the reductions in the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) scheme and general uncertainties around lack of capital funding.

Members noted the robust measures taken by the Department including joint placement with education and social care, united efforts with other Boroughs under the West London Alliance, an umbrella organisation, had helped in driving down overall costs. Despite the difficulties being experienced, positive progress was being made including the rebuilding of Village School in Roe Green and the additional provision places at Preston Manor High School for autistic children. It was generally felt that the provision of a greater range of good educational options would benefit children and young people, families and the Council by way of reduced expenditure on out-Borough placements.

Members then asked questions about “statementing” of children and what remedies were available to parents who were unhappy with the outcomes for their children. The Assistant Director responded that differences in views and perceptions were inevitable and hence parents had recourse to a tribunal. He continued that the waiting period before assessment was 6 months as set down by statute adding that since September measures had been put in place to fast track the system thus enabling Brent to achieve a compliance rate of around 85%. In bringing the discussion to a close, the Chair emphasised the need for an early intervention to ensure effective support and action and in that regard suggested greater use of the Parent Partnership Service for impartial guidance.

RESOLVED:-

That the report on special education needs, one Council project, and the issues raised by members be noted.

8. Safety at the school gates task group follow up

The Committee considered this report which provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Safety at the school gates task group. The task group was set up following concerns by young people about personal safety as they travelled on public transport to and from school in light of a wealth of data from surveys and crime statistics showing that robberies, bullying and anti-social behaviour were prevalent at the end of the school day in areas where young people congregated. The task group was carried out in 2009/10 by members of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and reported its findings to the Executive in March 2010.

Andrew Davies Policy and Performance Officer outlined the aims and the main findings of the task group and added that although positive initiatives were taking place in Brent, the task group also found that there were specific areas of concern such as overcrowding on bus route 245, resulting in anti-social behaviour and disruption to other passengers. He drew members’ attention to the recommendations attached as appendix 1 to the report which set out details of each recommendation and progress made to date.

In discussing the report, Harbi Farah the representative from the Somali Community drew members’ attention to recommendation 1 of the appendix and noted that membership of the Safety and Security in and around Schools group did not include parents. It was generally agreed that parents should be involved in the group for effectiveness. Andrew Davies undertook to contact the officers responsible (Nicole

Rush and Inspector Hambleton of Brent Police) to ensure parent involvement in the working group on safety and security around schools. Mrs Abbasi (statutory co-opted member) informed the Committee about the effectiveness of the safety/parent parking scheme at Oliver Goldsmith Primary School in addressing parking issues around the school.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that the progress report on the Safety at the schools gates task group be noted;

(ii) that the undertaking by the Policy and Performance Officer to ensure the involvement of parents in the task group be noted.

9. **Verbal update - school places in Brent**

This item was considered with the Primary School Expansion Strategy (agenda item 5).

10. **Work Programme 2010-11**

Andrew Davies (Performance and Policy Officer) updated members on the schedule of work programme and identified the following 3 issues within the current cycle;

- i) Safeguarding update
- ii) Domestic Violence
- iii) Children in Council care

In noting the work programme, members requested further information on children's health and in particular, obesity.

RESOLVED:-

That the update on the work programme be noted.

11. **Date of next meeting**

Thursday, 10 February 2011 at 7:00pm.

12. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

H GLADBAUM
Chair