



MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 10 February 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor A Choudry (Chair), Councillor Colwill (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Allie, Daly, W Mitchell Murray and Southwood, together with Ms Christine Cargill, Mr Alloysius Frederick and Dr J Levison

Also Present: Councillors S Choudhary, Filson, Harrison and Moher (Lead Member for Children and Young People)

Apologies were received from: Councillors Oladapo and Shahzad, Co-opted Members and appointed observers Jenny Cooper, Lesley Gouldbourne and Chrissy Jolinon

1. Declarations of interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 January 2015

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 January 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Current Status of Systems Resilience Group and Winter Pressure Update

The Chair began by stating that this item had been requested to inform the committee what steps were being taken to address the increase in demand for healthcare over the winter period. On behalf of the committee, he expressed its disappointment that there were no representatives from the London North West Healthcare NHS Trust despite having received earlier confirmation that they would be attending.

Rob Larkman (Chief Officer, Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Groups) gave a presentation on this item and advised that the Systems Resilience Group (SRG) was a partnership group set up to respond to pressure on health services, not just during winter but also where elective demand rose. This winter had seen unprecedented pressure on services for the North West London Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) as well as the rest of London and also nationally. Members heard that the SRG worked as a network and it had been identified that the Accident and Emergency (A and E) Unit at Northwick Park Hospital (NPH) had

not been performing at the desired level, where 85% of patients had been seen within four hours, although some A and E units in London had lower rates than this. Rob Larkman advised that the A and E unit was operating safely. He explained that investment for the winter period had been unpredictable in the past, however now funding for this was allocated nationally and so the SRG could plan and respond to demand accordingly.

Bernard Quinn (Director of Delivery and Performance, North West London CCGs) then drew members' attention to the membership of the SRG, which included representatives from NHS commissioners, NHS providers, local authorities, London North West Healthcare NHS Trust, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, London Ambulance Service, NHS England, patient representative and urgent care centres (UCCs). Members noted the governance arrangements for the SRG and a breakdown of costs for each scheme in tranches one and two. Bernard Quinn advised that a comprehensive escalation system was now in place and that efforts to improve A and E performance at NPH had increased the proportion of patients seen within four hours to 88%. He added that the local aim was 93%, whilst the national average was around 95%.

During members' discussions, a member asked what the total funds were to manage winter pressures and what defined the winter period. Since funds had been received, further information was sought on the SRG's method for addressing winter pressures and the action plan in respect of London Ambulances not arriving on time, whilst it was also asked what the average wait for an ambulance was in the last week. Another member asked how many beds would be in Robertson Ward following the funding for three additional beds and for further details in respect of costings for Furness ward and Willow ward. She also requested if the report on how to improve patient flow could be made available. In respect of work undertaken by Capita on behalf of hospitals, she enquired what areas this was addressing. The member also sought clarification on total bed numbers at Central Middlesex Hospital (CMH), including a breakdown of the total beds per ward. She commented that around 75% of visitors to her councillor surgeries complained about health services and that quality of care was a real issue in the borough. She felt that the report did not give a clear picture as to how Brent residents are served and that it appeared that changes only happened following a particular incident.

The committee commented that they had been told at previous meetings that transferring staff from the closed A and E at CMH to NPH would lead to improvements in staffing levels and clarification was sought as to whether this had been demonstrated. An explanation of the difference between bank and agency staff was requested. A member asked what the ring fenced grant in respect of delayed transfers of care was specifically for and what was the size of the grant. He added that he had a positive personal experience when he had needed to visit the A and E at NPH around Christmas time and the service he received was efficient.

In reply to the issues raised, Rob Larkman advised that the winter period was defined as until the end of the financial year, at the end of March 2015. The SRG met monthly and worked as a network, escalating action where necessary and looking at capacity across the whole of North West London. In respect of London ambulances, the target of arriving at the patient's location within eight minutes of the call being made for cases classified as severe was not being met, with only

60% of ambulances arriving within this time against a target of 75%. As part of a wider action plan, the CCGs were working with London Ambulances to see if more investment could be made available and consideration of how resources were deployed was being undertaken to improve performance in this area. Rob Larkman explained that the issue was exacerbated by a shortage of acute beds in hospital beds and winter resilience funds were being used to address this. A business case was being made for another 66 acute beds and it was hoped that this would be agreed this year and there were also plans to increase the number of community beds and improve patient flow. Rob Larkman agreed to see if the report from NPH in respect of improving patient flow could be made available to members. He advised the committee that Capita were involved in an initiative on looking at capacity and demand in respect of shortage of beds and Bernard Quinn was to provide funding details of this. Rob Larkman also agreed to provide total bed numbers and bed numbers per ward at CMH. Members noted that funding for delayed transfers of care was for patients who had been discharged and were medically fit, but had nowhere to go. He added that the CCGs would encourage those who wished to make or forward complaints so that they could learn from these to improve services.

Professor Ursula Gallagher (Director of Quality and Safety, Brent Harrow and Hillingdon CCGs) emphasised that as well as providing additional beds, these needed to be sufficiently staffed and consideration of this was being undertaken across all services. She felt that staffing levels at NPH had improved and most nurses who had previously been at the A and E at CMH were transferred to NPH with no redundancies and the situation continued to be monitored to ensure the right concentration of staff. Professor Ursula Gallagher advised that the NPH did set out the difference between bank staff and agency staff and she would seek to provide this information to members, adding that NPH continued its efforts to reduce the number of agency staff.

Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive, Brent Council) advised that £350,000 funding had been allocated for delayed transfers of care.

There was discussion about future health items at Scrutiny Committee meetings and it was noted that submitting questions in advance, particularly if they were of specific nature, was desirable as it would give health colleagues sufficient time to provide responses. The Chair added that in some reports, the information was provided was not always as clear as it could be and was difficult to explain to residents and he asked that this be taken into account in future reports. He asked that an update on the SRG be provided at a future meeting.

5. Brent Education Commission - six month update on the implementation of the Action Plan

Gail Tolley (Strategic Director, Children and Young People) introduced the report that provided an update on the implementation of the action plan agreed by Cabinet on 15 September 2014 following the recommendations made in the Brent Education Commission (BEC) report. She advised that there had been slippage in some of the deadlines specified and there had been some adjustments to the action plan, however it continued to focus on the areas identified in the report, which were:

- Improving strategic leadership of education across the borough
- Planning school places
- Knowing Brent schools
- Promoting and supporting school to school networks
- Providing challenge to address weaknesses
- Improving school governance

Gail Tolley advised that the council was progressing a shared approach to supporting schools with educational partners including Brent Schools Partnership (BSP) and two Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) and representatives from these organisations were also present to respond to questions from members.

During members' discussion, a member asked for further information about how knowledge of schools in the borough had improved, what had been learnt and what steps were being put in place in schools as a result. It was asked whether the School Effectiveness Partnership Group's role was primarily strategic and how did its work differ from that of Ofsted. In terms of expectations, the committee asked whether schools in the borough were starting from a relatively low base and were dramatic improvements expected in the next two years. A member enquired what measures were being put in place to improve partnership working and to develop the BSP and what responsibilities would remain with the council. She felt that the School Effectiveness Partnership Group was working well and in terms of leadership she asked what steps were being taken in attracting and retaining the best headteachers. She referred to the responsibility of the 'family of Brent schools' for all children in the borough and sought assurances that there were sufficient resources in maintaining and strengthening this family. In noting the BSP's intention to improve schools and provide further professional development, a member asked whether there was a sufficient number of such staff to facilitate this.

A member asked what strategy was in place to enable development of classroom skills for teachers. Members expressed hope that better opportunities for higher level teaching assistants would arise and what assurances could be given that schools would not be receiving negative reports in two years' time and would there be regular monitoring of schools to ensure that there was significant improvement. One member asked how many schools in the borough were part of BSP and she suggested that there should be annual general meetings and more parent and governor representation on the BSP Board. She added that the terms of reference and the composition of the BSP Board should be made clear in the report. Another member requested that future reports include explanations of acronyms and enquired whether some priorities listed were higher than others. Alloysius Frederick commented that he was working with two Brent schools around issues of governance and structure and in ensuring the right training was available. One of the schools was also supporting another school in coming out of special measures.

In reply to the issues raised, Gail Tolley advised that BEC's report had identified that a number of schools in the borough had been underperforming, with some significantly so. London overall performed better than the national average, however Brent underperformed in comparison with its London statistical neighbours. Gail Tolley advised that the aim was to have all schools in the borough rated as good or outstanding by 2017. To date, there had already been some progress in improving primary schools, however there was more work to do on

secondary schools. Members noted that there was some 'catch up' to do, and a structure and system was being put in place with an ambitious approach to bring schools up to a higher level. Gail Tolley advised that the achievement and standards report for the next item on the agenda had set a target of 85% schools being good or outstanding in 2014, with the figure achieved for that year being 78% of schools. There was also a need to increase the number of schools currently rated good to outstanding. The committee noted that there was a wide diversity of governance arrangements in Brent schools and advised that academy schools were part of the BSP and there were also two TSAs. Academy headteachers also contributed significantly to initiatives such as the School Effectiveness Service. Gail Tolley advised that the Action Plan set out six main priorities.

Sarah Conway (Strategic Coordinator for School Improvement) advised that data was now being stored centrally and there were performance profiles for each school which they received in the autumn term. The information identified schools that were at risk and those that were performing particularly well. Sarah Conway advised that the School Effectiveness Partnership Group's role was more than just strategic and that it worked with schools to improve performance and undertook robust monitoring of schools on a half termly basis. There had already been considerable improvement in five schools through this work and these schools were now graded as good. Measures were put in place where there were concerns about a school and an action plan would be drawn up. The School Effectiveness Partnership Group would then look for evidence of progress.

Karen Giles (Headteacher, Barham Primary School and Consultant Headteacher, Malorees Junior School) informed members that the School Effectiveness Partnership Group had placed an advert at the end of November 2014 inviting schools to work with them. She had responded to the advert and had been asked to support a school that was in need of increasing capacity in order to have a positive effect on the quality of the school.

Kay Charles (Chair of Brent Strategic Partnership and Headteacher, The Village School) advised that the BSP Board was mapping out best practice to spread across schools in the borough and confirmed that 72 of 82 schools in Brent were part of BSP, although the aim was to have 100% membership of Brent schools. The BSP sought to support schools most in need and the early indicators suggested that the Rapid Improvement Group's work was effective in raising performance levels. Measures were being taken to ensure schools both had sufficient capacity and strength, whilst professional development of teachers was also a priority and Kay Charles felt there were enough staff to collaborate and harness their skills to achieve this. Members heard that efforts were being made to build the capacity of BSP to improve schools as quickly as possible and it was also important to ensure there was harmony in working with schools in Brent and to embrace the diversity and richness of this harmony. Kay Charles advised that professional learning and development of teaching assistants in Brent schools was undertaken and there were a number of different pathways to achieve this. Monitoring of teachers' support and management of teaching assistants was also taking place. Kay Charles confirmed that there was school governor representation on the BSP Board and the BSP was a not for profit limited company that had a terms of reference and teachers were also represented on the School Effectiveness Partnership Group Board.

Martine Clarke (Executive Headteacher, Brent Teaching School Alliance and Headteacher, Byron Court School) advised members that qualifications for middle and senior leadership positions was being rolled out and 70 new staff had been recruited through the Institute of Education, more than any other London borough. She added that work continued to build staff capacity.

Christine Gilbert (Chief Executive) advised that a number of BEC's recommendations were designed to build communication and bring together a family of schools in the borough. She felt that it was regrettable that proposals for a schools awards evening had not been followed through as she had seen this work well in other London boroughs and she suggested that this matter should be looked at again. Christine Gilbert emphasised the importance of delivering the BSP's Action Plan and governors were also playing their role in improving schools' performance.

Councillor Moher (Lead Member for Children and Young People) commented that there was greater enthusiasm amongst the school community now and this would help to improve schools.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the contents of the report be noted and that a further update be received in the autumn of 2015;
- (ii) that the introduction of a proportionate approach to school improvement and the more robust challenge offered to schools at risk of underperforming be welcomed; and
- (iii) that the local authority's role in progressing a shared approach to supporting schools with its key educational partners, including Brent Schools Partnership and the two Teaching School Alliances be welcomed.

6. Annual report academic year 2013-14: Standards and achievement in Brent schools

Gail Tolley introduced the annual report that set out the standards and achievements of Brent schools for 2013-14. Members heard that the overall effectiveness of Brent schools was based on the Ofsted inspection process and it included the outcomes at each Key Stage. Gail Tolley advised that the comparators in the report included those that were available at the time of writing.

During committee discussion on the matter, members asked for information on how young black male pupils were performing and the reasons for this. A member commented that the school where he was a governor excelled at results, including black male pupils, and he enquired why the school had not been approached to help other schools in the borough. Another member commented that there could be many contributory factors for black male pupils underperforming and that there needed to be greater effort into looking at the reasons for underperformance, as this was of great importance for a pupil's future. A member sought reasons for the performance disparity between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4 and what steps were being taken to address this. She also asked whether it was felt that there were enough resources to improve schools' performance. Clarification was sought

regarding the timescales to ensure that every school in the borough was rated as at least good and it was commented that every effort should be made to ensure that the Rotherham child abuse scandal could not happen in Brent. It was also asked whether there was any relationship between a school's balance and its academic achievements.

With the approval of the Chair, Mary Arnold addressed the committee. Mary Arnold sought reasons as to why there was a significant decrease in the proportion of looked after children achieving level 4 at Key Stage 2 in 2014 compared to 2013.

In reply to the issues raised, John Galligan (School Effectiveness Team Manager) advised that black male pupils were underperforming compared to the average pupil performance in terms of Brent, London and national averages, whilst black female pupils were also underperforming. He attributed the underperformance to multiple risk factors for these groups and examples of best practice not being disseminated amongst schools as actively as it could be. However, schools were working with BSP in analysing data and identifying and disseminating best practice more effectively. Although the performance gap between these groups and others had reduced to a degree, there was still a lot of work to continue progress on this. Sarah Conway added that performance was highly variable in the borough and schools were being challenged where pupils were underperforming.

Karen Giles advised that Brent was not the only borough where black male pupils were underperforming and the local authority was holding schools to account for underperformance, whilst schools also needed to do more to disseminate best practice.

Gail Tolley confirmed that performance between Key Stages 2 to 4 was above the national average, but below the London average, and efforts were being made to map and identify reasons for the performance discrepancy between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4. The Schools Forum also played a key role in improving schools performance and matters such as schools' balances and the number of children currently in schools was considered by the Forum. Since the BEC report, the last nine months had seen progress in Brent schools and although there had been some slippage in the Action Plan, this continued to be the main focus in improving schools. In terms of Ofsted grading, Gail Tolley advised that performance was stronger and improving in primary schools. Members noted that two primary schools in Brent had been adjudged as inadequate as of summer 2014. Of the four secondary schools adjudged as inadequate, Copland School had subsequently closed, whilst Crest Boys and Crest Girls Academies had merged. Two secondary schools adjudged as needing improvement, Alperton School and JFS School, had had their previously good performance at Key Stage 4 downgraded by Ofsted, however there was strong school to school support to help them, particularly in respect of Alperton School. Gail Tolley advised that the most significant underperformers were sponsored academies and in such situations the sponsor was approached to address the situation and the sponsor could be changed if deemed necessary. Members heard that there was a possible relationship between higher school balances and higher pupil attainment. Gail Tolley advised that the Corporate Parenting Committee had received a detailed presentation in respect of the decrease in performance for looked after children at Key Stage 2 and there was a renewed focus on the need to address this, whilst there was also a Pupil Premium for looked after children.

Christine Gilbert added that underperformance amongst black male pupils was also a national issue and it was important to make more funding available to share best practice in Brent.

Councillor Moher stated that underperformance of black male pupils in Brent had been a longstanding problem and there were a number of reasons why underperformance occurred, such as challenging domestic situations including overcrowded accommodation and pupils being unsupervised at home because both parents needed to work. She commented that Wembley High School was effective in identifying particular groups that were struggling and involved the family more in looking at solutions. In respect of the disparity in performance between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 4, Councillor Moher explained that there was a lot of churn in Brent schools which may contribute towards this, whilst additional attention needed to be given to pupils whose first language was not English.

The Chair requested that an update on this item be presented to the committee at a meeting in the autumn of 2015.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the priorities proposed for 2014-15 intended to accelerate improvement be noted; and
- (ii) that the progress made in the overall performance of Brent's primary schools in 2013-14 be welcomed.

7. Use of the Pupil Premium Grant Task Group - interim feedback

Councillor Southwood, Chair of Pupil Premium Grant Task Group presented the report and explained that the Task Group looked at what was available to different groups of children to close performance gaps. The interim report highlighted key areas and the final recommendations of the Task Group were soon to be drawn up. Councillor Southwood emphasised that the relationship between the local authority and its partners was crucial and the Task Group had visited a number of schools in the borough and there had also been a meeting with a virtual headteacher. Members noted that the final report was due go to the committee in April 2015.

During discussion, the committee enquired whether the Task Group had received sufficient support from headteachers and further information on potential issues was sought. It was asked whether secondary schools were cooperative in how pupils were tracked. Another member stated that there was an increasing number of homeless people in the borough that impacted on children and their education, including when they were then moved to another borough and she stressed that this needed to be looked at.

In response, Councillor Southwood confirmed that headteachers had been supportive of the Task Group. Issues to consider included the Pupil Premium in the wider context of Brent, such as the Borough Plan, and how was the Pupil Premium being currently used and how could it be used better. Other issues included eligible pupils not applying for the Pupil Premium and pupils who were technically not eligible, but in reality were living in poverty.

Karen Giles added that consideration should also be given to innovative ways of using the Pupil Premium and she added that some schools had low uptake of the Pupil Premium, even though they were located in areas of high deprivation and this was another issue that needed to be looked into.

8. Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Members discussed the Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan and it was noted that Christine Gilbert and Cara Davani (Director of HR) would be present to respond to members' queries in respect of equalities and HR practices at the 11 March meeting. Councillor Colwill requested that day care centres be added to the Forward Plan, whilst Councillor Daly requested that Alcohol Services in Brent be included as the borough had one of the highest rates of alcohol misuse in London. Councillor Southwood requested an update on the action plans in respect of previous Task Group reports on gangs in Brent and female genital mutilation. Councillor Allie asked if gambling would be able to be included in the Forward Plan.

9. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

A CHOUDRY
Chair