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Brent

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 16 April 2024 at 6.00 pm

Held as a hybrid meeting in the Conference Hall – Brent Civic Centre

PRESENT: Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair), and Councillors Collymore (Vice-Chair), Afzal, Begum, Ethapemi, Fraser, Kansagra, Molloy, Rajan-Seelan and Smith, and co-opted members Ms Rachelle Goldberg and Mr Alloysius Frederick

In attendance: Councillor Nerva, Councillor Grahl (online)

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

- Councillor Martin
- Councillor Mistry, substituted by Councillor Kansagra
- Councillor Afzal

2. **Declarations of interests**

Personal interests were declared as follows:

- Councillor Sheth – Board Member and / or Chair of a number of education settings across the borough and within London including St Joseph's Infant and Junior Schools, Ashley College, Preston Park Primary School and Daniel's Den
- Councillor Ethapemi – spouse employed by NHS
- Mr Alloysius Frederick – Chair of All Saint's Trust and Governing Body Member for two secondary schools in the borough
- Councillor Collymore – declared a personal interest in the Brent Carers' Strategy through her employment with Brent MENCAP
- Councillor Fraser – declared a personal interest in the Brent Carers' Strategy through her involvement with the Brent Carers Board

3. **Deputations (if any)**

Two deputation requests were received from members of the public, both in relation to agenda item 6 – Annual School Standards and Achievements Report 2022-23. As there were no objections to hearing the deputations the Chair allowed both speakers up to 3 minutes to address the Committee.

Tanisha Phoenix addressed the Committee as a parent of pupils at Byron Court Primary School, highlighting that she would be speaking in relation to section 3.3.3 of the Annual School Standards Report, namely, the academisation of Bryon Court Primary School. In addressing the Committee, she highlighted that a Freedom of Information Request (FOI) had been made to help parents understand how a school which previously had outstanding teaching status had now been rated inadequate by Ofsted and hoped the Committee could help to get answers to some of those questions and concerns.

Tanisha began by advising the Committee that parents at Byron Court Primary School were aware that a Rapid Improvement Group (RIG) had been put in place at the school in September 2022, chaired by Shirley Parks (Director Education, Partnerships & Strategy, Brent Council). Parents wanted to understand why the RIG had been put in place, what issues had been identified in September 2022 and whether those were some of the same issues that had been identified in the recent Ofsted inspection, as well as what the impact of the RIG had been over the past year that it had been in place. In addition, parents had requested information on how many RIG meetings took place and what level of monitoring and support was put in place by the RIG, including any interventions that took place to ensure improvements were being made. Where issues were identified when the RIG was in place, parents wanted to understand whether those issues were escalated and where. It had been felt by Byron Court School that RIG meetings had not been as frequent as the school would have liked and parents asked whether this had contributed to the inspection rating that the school had received. Tanisha highlighted that another school in the borough, detailed in paragraph 3.3.2 of the report, had been rated as 'requires improvement' in 2022-23 and subsequently had a RIG put in place that had led the school on a journey to 'good'. Parents wanted to understand why the RIG had not given Byron Court that same journey to 'good' so that by the time Ofsted inspected the school it was rated inadequate. In concluding her deputation, Tanisha asked if the Council felt that it had done all in its power to help the school and avoid the now forced academisation order.

Vina Vekria also addressed the Committee in relation to section 3.3.3 of the Annual School Standards and Achievement Report 2022-23, namely the academisation of Byron Court Primary School, as a parent of 2 students at the school. She began by acknowledging that the Council was legally bound to comply with the academisation order, and that Councillor Gwen Grahl (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools) had reaffirmed in the Cabinet meeting on 9 April 2024 the Council's commitment to supporting and improving the school and implementing additional leadership following the Easter half term. She asked what guarantees the Council could give parents that it would follow through with the commitment to protect and promote community schools. Parents of the school were campaigning for the reinspection of the school and asked whether the Council would also commit to pushing for a reinspection. Parents wanted to ensure that, if they were successful in obtaining a reinspection for Byron Court, improvements were seen. As such, they asked what guarantees could be given that the RIG currently in place would do what is expected and required of it so that those rapid improvements could be shown to Ofsted should they reinspect the school. Vina asked what additional resources could be provided to Byron Court and who those additional leaders would be. In concluding her address, Vina asked whether the Scrutiny Committee would agree to return to the topic in a future meeting to review what had happened between now and then.

The Chair thanked both speakers for their presentations and assured them that the Committee would be keeping a monitor of the issue as it moved forward. He highlighted that officers and Lead Members may address and respond to some of their comments under agenda item 6 – Annual School Standards and Achievements Report 2022-23.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meetings, held on 12 February 2024 and 4 March 2024, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

There were no matters arising.

6. **Annual School Standards and Achievement Report**

Councillor Gwen Grahl (Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Schools) introduced a report which updated members on the school standards and achievements during the 2022-23 academic year, covering Early Years through to Key Stage 5. She began her introduction by highlighting the challenges that teaching staff and pupils had faced across Brent in recent years, including responding to and recovering from educational setbacks during the pandemic, cost-of-living pressures, the ongoing shortage of funding in the education sector as a whole, the significant rise in SEND demand, the need to improve infrastructure at some sites, and the recent changes in eligibility criteria for early years provision. In raising those challenges, she felt that, despite those difficulties, schools had delivered outstanding outcomes for children and young people. To provide an example, she highlighted that 95% of schools in Brent were graded as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. The outcomes for SEND pupils were consistently achieving above the national averages at key stages 1, 2 and 4, and at GCSE level, 38.3% of results were at A* - C grade or equivalent compared to a national average of 25.3%. In presenting the report, Councillor Grahl paid tribute to teaching and school support staff across the borough who were educating and supporting Brent's children and young people.

Nigel Chapman (Corporate Director Children and Young People, Brent Council) added to the introduction of the report, explaining that the data in terms of performance related to the academic year 2022-23, but the report also provided some updated contextual information about the current position which went beyond 2022-23. He highlighted that the performance of Brent schools remained strong and above the London average, particularly Ofsted outcomes, and the attainment in the majority of areas was well above the national average which he felt should be celebrated and reflected the strength of school leadership in the borough. In discussing attainment, he advised the Committee that the attainment of disadvantaged children was above the national average at all key stages. He also highlighted section 3 of the report which showed the targeted focus on the attainment of boys of Black Caribbean heritage, which he advised had led to improvements in achievement levels over the last 12 months. He recognised, however, that there was still more work to do with that cohort to improve attainment levels even further.

Specifically addressing the comments raised by the speakers under item 3 – deputations – Councillor Grahl thanked the parents for their comments. She advised them that she had written to the Secretary of State the previous week to pass on the concerns raised by parents, asking for the academisation of Byron Court Primary School to be reconsidered, and she committed to sharing any response received on that. At the school, an Interim Executive Headteacher had

been appointed which parents had been informed about. In relation to whether the Council would push for a reinspection, Councillor Grahl committed to doing all within her power to ask for that at the right time once improvements were put in place.

The Chair thanked Councillor Grahl and Nigel Chapman for their introduction and invited officers to provide an overview of the work being done around Byron Court Primary School. Shirley Parks highlighted that the Council had set up a RIG for Byron Court Primary School in September 2022. This was following a review by the Settings and School Effectiveness Team in May 2022 that had identified the need for improvements in certain areas as well as in response to some concerns raised by school governors. She advised members that the RIG had met regularly and dealt with and supported a range of different issues including Early Years Foundation Stage, writing, safeguarding, SEND, and leadership, as well as monitoring and tracking pupil progress. The RIG now continued to support on some of the issues identified by Ofsted and the issues that were already in progress, such as tracking the attainment of children with SEND. The Council had also brokered some consultancy support for the school to address specific issues which continued. The School Effectiveness Lead Professional, who was the key relationship holder with the school, had provided the school with detailed support on learning walks, supporting leadership and management. In concluding the overview of current support arrangements, Shirley Parks added that the school automatically received additional resources tailored to their needs from the local authority as a RIG school. In response to a query on the RIG process if the academisation went through, Shirley Parks explained that the RIG process would no longer be in place if the school academised because the Harris Federation Trust, who had been identified by the DfE to be the sponsor for the school, would have their own school improvement staff, methods and approaches and would take over responsibility for the school improvement journey. The Council was working with Harris Federation and would continue to work with them to support the school in the future, because the Council maintained the view that any child in a Brent school, whatever its governance status, was a Brent child who should be getting the best quality education. In further response to a query regarding what level of supervision the Council would have of Byron Court should it be academised, Nigel Chapman explained that once an academy order was in place and there was an academy sponsor then the responsibility for running and managing that school sat with them. The Council would retain responsibilities around education, such as elements of admissions and support for children with SEND.

The Chair thanked officers for the update.

The Committee had also been joined by two headteachers at Brent Schools and the Chair invited them to contribute to the Committee regarding the work they were doing in their own schools and any key headlines they wanted to raise.

Andy Prindiville (CEO of All Saints Trust and Headteacher of St Gregory's Catholic Science College) introduced himself to the Committee and informed members that his school had been very successful in 2023. The progress of each of the school's statistically significant ethnic groups was above the national mean for all students and across the board there were no groups of children who underperformed against

the national average. He highlighted he was particularly pleased with the school's Progress 8 Score and Attainment 8 Score for the year, both of which were significantly above the national average.

Michelle Ginty (Executive Headteacher, Salusbury Primary School & Fryent Primary School) introduced herself and added that she also led the Kilburn Cluster of 15 schools, working with headteachers of both academies and maintained schools to collaborate and support each other to ensure all children received the best possible education. She advised the Committee that the schools had done very well in the last year, and she was pleased with the progress they had made. The focus on the granular detail of how different groups were performing was a key aspect in how schools were being led, and she highlighted the impact of that work when schools connected with the local authority. She highlighted that schools received support through the work with the Inclusion Service to support vulnerable children and support for funding for the West London Zone, a charity working with 40 vulnerable families to ensure children had additional support to be successful in school. She highlighted the impact of that support for those children not just academically but also emotionally.

The Committee then moved on to ask questions of officers present with the following points raised:

The Chair welcomed Brent Youth Parliament (BYP) representatives to the meeting, who had two questions to officers in relation to the report. The first question related to section 3.12.6 of the report which laid out the anti-racist approach being delivered to school leaders and headteachers. BYP welcomed the approach to breaking down barriers and training school leaders and teachers to share anti-racist knowledge and deliver best practice. Their question related to the involvement of children and young people within the anti-racism strategy and whether there were any plans to include children and young people in the strategy so that they could have a say. Nigel Chapman asked for headteachers to provide an overview of how they involved children and young people in anti-racism at their schools, highlighting that the Council had delivered the Leading from the Top Programme that focuses on anti-racism to school leaders and a briefing on the topic to governors, led by a well-respected trainer in the field. Schools across Brent were now integrating this training through their school leadership and across the schools, including their school councils.

Andy Prindiville fed back that his school had found the programme to be very good. His school had focused on the Senior Leadership Team initially and had now asked middle managers, such as Heads of Years, and the school's Student Parliament to integrate the learning. As a result, the Student Parliament had set up an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group that had conducted a racial justice, equality and diversity audit on the school, with the school now working on the next steps to put the actions of that audit into practice. Year 11 students had also developed a set of PSHE resources for children. In terms of what good looked like, Andy highlighted that his school would aim for outstanding practice, using the Ofsted framework to help in its approach. Questionnaires to parents and students also helped understand how well these policies and strategies had been implemented. Michelle Ginty highlighted that the schools she worked with had benefited from the same programme and started with the same approach from the senior leadership down. The primary schools she worked for were very connected to their

communities, so families and children were involved in that work as well. For example, one of the leadership groups within Salusbury Primary School was the Reading Ambassadors, who had looked at the school's reading curriculum and the resources available to see how the school could ensure those resources represented all of the communities within the school. As a result texts the school now use have changed. The school had subsequently had World Book Day Celebrations where many children brought in those diverse texts and dressed as those characters which reflected their communities.

Brent Youth Parliament then highlighted Table 3 of the report which showed that only 60% of special schools in Brent had received an outstanding or good Ofsted rating compared to regular state schools, at 100%. They asked how the Council and schools planned to ensure those schools were given extra help and resources to ensure those schools were performing at a good or outstanding standard. Jen Haskew (Head of Settings and School Effectiveness, Brent Council) highlighted that, while it may appear as a large percentage, it was a small number of schools. The way the Council worked with schools to ensure it was offering all Brent children at least a good or outstanding education was to use the RIG process for maintained schools. One school amongst the special school group was a Brent maintained school and had a RIG in place as soon as the Council learned of its negative Ofsted outcome. The Council had worked with that school for over a year now and was expecting Ofsted to revisit and regrade more positively. For schools that were not a maintained school, the Council could not implement a RIG. However, the Council worked very well in partnership across the family of schools in Brent. The Council was working with the improvement groups at other schools using processes within the School Effectiveness Framework.

Continuing to respond to BYP, Andy Prindiville explained the strategies in place within his school to provide support and resource to SEND pupils. The school ran an extensive Saturday morning programme between 9am – 12pm for children to come in and every child received 45 minutes of additional teaching at the end of each day outside of their regular curriculum. Classes also took place during school holidays. St Gregory's had looked at the good practice taking place in primary school where there was a significant focus on literacy and silent reading and replicated this in the secondary school with every child in the school involved in silent reading on Thursday mornings. One-to-one tuition was also given to children with SEND and a homework club for children with SEND was available. In terms of sharing good practice across the Brent school family, Andy explained that he was the CEO of All Saints Trust which consisted of 5 schools which collectively took the same approach to SEND. He added that Brent Council had a good relationship with all of its academies which was not the case nationally, and schools worked closely with Council senior leaders around SEND and developing best practices. There was also a secondary headteachers group who met on a half-termly basis to share best practice. Michelle Ginty added that support for children with SEND in Brent schools focused on early identification, working with parents, and designing appropriate provision that was monitored and evaluated through a graduated approach of assess, plan, review. She felt this was shown when comparing performance data in Brent to national averages.

Councillor Grahl thanked BYP for their questions and correctly identifying the challenges in SEND support. She advised the Committee that there had been a large increase in demand for SEND support and schools were playing catch up to

that. The Council's SEND Capital Programme aimed to put in place 400 more places for young people so that those schools were less under pressure. There were also limitations in the provision from central government in relation to retention and recruitment which was a challenge in SEND with many schools requiring agency staff to fill those gaps. As well as this, she highlighted an increase in neurodiversity diagnoses and felt there was an inadequate model in place to provide for those young people. As such, at a political level she hoped to see a government focus on these issues and a long term plan with higher investment for SEND and the training and recruitment of staff.

In relation to SEND, the Committee asked where the successes were shared. Nigel Chapman highlighted that the report was one way to do that, and there was also a celebration of SEND that happened biannually to showcase the work being done for children and families. The Brent Parent Carer Forum also helped to amplify the work that happened locally.

The Committee asked what tangible improvements had been identified at schools where RIGs had been put in place following the implementation of actions recommended. Jen Haskew advised that RIG overall was a successful process, and the Council usually saw schools who had been subject to a RIG achieve a good or better outcome at their next Ofsted inspection. On average, there were between 4-6 schools party to a RIG at any one time, which was done through a partnership model working closely with schools, school leaders, staff and governors to monitor improvement plans, put in place necessary resources and continually evaluate the impact of that. At one school, a Section 8 Ofsted inspection identified that if the school was to receive a full inspection then the outcome may be less than good, so the Council implemented a RIG and met half-termly with the group which consisted of Jen Haskew as Chair, the Chair of Governors, the headteacher and other members of staff as appropriate. In between the RIG meetings the group carried out the actions agreed at the RIG, some of which were to put in place extra resources for writing through commissioning a consultant to work in the school amongst other actions. As a result of this work, when the school was reinspected it received a very good 'good' rating following a full Section 5 inspection with a positive report and no indication that the school was at risk of falling below good.

In relation to admissions, the Committee queried what level of control the Council had for supporting local parents to get their placement preferences. Shirley Parks highlighted that Brent was doing well in relation to parents obtaining one of their top 3 preferences of schools for their child. Following national offer day, 89% of parents got one of their first preference secondary schools. In relation to specific admissions cases, it was agreed this could be discussed offline.

The Committee commended the figures in the report showing there had been good attainment above the national average generally, but noted Nigel Chapman's statement in his introduction that there was more to do in order to increase the attainment of boys of Black Caribbean heritage. They asked what strategies were in place to improve that performance and bring them to parity with their peers. Nigel Chapman responded that there had been some improvements over a short period of time before the pandemic when there was a focused effort by school leaders to target that group with additional support. Schools also worked closely with families and parents around this. Another element of this work was the focus on Best Start for Life, which consisted of different programmes across the borough running for

the first 1,001 days of a child's life, aimed at particular groups who were often not taking up services, which included boys of Black Caribbean heritage, and encouraging those families to take up the offer of support in Family Wellbeing Centres, with a focus on early reading and school readiness.

In response, the Committee highlighted that there may be cultural reasons why some boys of Black Caribbean heritage may not want to exhibit their full potential in front of their peers and asked whether there were any strategies in place to make learning and achieving more attractive to pursue. Andy Prindiville felt that it was an important point around making potential cool, and this had been recognised in his school. One of the strategies that had been done with all groups of underachieving children in the school was to bring in a colours system where pupils could wear a coloured badge sewn onto their blazer to showcase what they were really good at. This had started for boys in particular, identifying the boys who were very good at sport and they proudly wore their colours around school which encouraged others to do so. Then the scheme focused on those who were good at geography, history, biology, chemistry and so on so that there was no stigma to having those emblems showing that they were good at those things. In addition, the school opened on Saturday mornings from 9am – 12pm for further support and all children received an additional 45 minutes of tuition in various subjects every day after school. It was important to engage with families to ensure parental support for these additional support sessions. He concluded by highlighting the importance of good role models for children and young people who were representative of the different communities within the school, and St Gregory's had actively recruited for Black male role models. Michelle Ginty added that the success achieved in primary school did not always sustain through to secondary school as children's peers became more important to them than their parents, so establishing connections and building those relationships with children and families was essential. This was done through home visits, identifying families who would benefit from additional support and helping them see the school as partners in their child's education, and having ambition for their children and describing those ambitions to the parents. In Salusbury Primary School there was also a Careers Month which brought in parents to talk about their own careers and create that ambition and enthusiasm for achievement.

The Committee requested that future reports showed comparisons over time and highlighted that there were no comparison figures for the attainment of boys of Black Caribbean heritage. They were advised that the comparison data for boys of Black Caribbean heritage was not available in the public domain as it had not yet been verified. That comparison data could be shared to the Committee following the meeting for members information.

The Committee asked for an explanation of the meaning in relation to paragraph 3.3.1, which stated that 'there are 88 state funded schools in Brent that are either maintained schools, voluntary aided schools or academies'. Nigel Chapman explained that the sentence aimed to demonstrate that there was now a mixture of schools and differences in the way they were ran and governed. The local authority was not responsible for the running and management of around 50 schools in Brent. There were 37 maintained schools and 17 voluntary aided schools in Brent which the Council was responsible for, but the remaining schools were a mix of academies or free schools. This meant there was a proportion of schools in Brent that were not accountable to the Council.

In relation to stakeholder and ward member engagement, the Committee asked how and when that was done in relation to school standards and achievements and other major changes within the education sector or for specific schools. They heard that the Council would aim to involve all relevant stakeholders regarding significant issues affecting local schools. In relation to stakeholders, the Council had a Settings and School Effectiveness Board with representatives from across the school sector and school governors which drove the strategic work and signed off the School Effectiveness Framework. In relation to ward councillors, it was the responsibility of the school and governors to engage and consult relevant parties including parents and ward members through their delegated responsibilities around school attainment and performance. Specifically for Byron Court, there had not been any specific consultation with ward members by the local authority but the school had organised meetings with parents and other parties post-inspection which ward members had been invited to. If there was a particular issue around school organisation that affected a school that the Council was responsible for, ie. a maintained or voluntary aided school, then the Council would expect to consult ward members on that. For example, ward members had been consulted on school reorganisation proposals related to pupil number changes at Leopold Primary School, which had been done before any decisions were made by Cabinet. The Lead Member would also engage ward members on wider issues affecting policy.

The Committee asked about how schools dealt with safeguarding issues and in particular peer on peer bullying. They were advised that all schools had safeguarding policies on their websites and then a range of policies that sat below that. They were advised that there was also a vibrant Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) network across Brent with every school having at least one DSL who was trained to a higher level in safeguarding. Those Leads met regularly and held a DSL conference every year, visiting particular topics and common themes across schools, where peer on peer bullying had been a topic previously. Those themes were raised as agenda items from both national issues and from DSLs themselves. Shirley Parks added that every year there was an anti-bullying campaign as part of anti-bullying week that was supported by the Council, including sharing anti-bullying materials for schools to use. This year a video by children and young people had been shared which was described as impactful. The schools also worked hard during anti-bullying week to raise the profile of the campaign and ensure children felt safe to raise issues.

The Committee asked whether there was a proactive policy in place to identify children and families entitled to pupil premium, as it was felt the figures presented an under-enrolment in that programme. Shirley Parks acknowledged the concerns. She informed members that the Council and schools were currently exploring an approach for auto-enrolment in Brent which would mean the children who were in families entitled to benefits that triggered Free School Meals and pupil premium funding would be automatically enrolled rather than having to self-refer to be assessed. Other local authorities had trialled this approach which had helped to identify more children but it would take a few months to put in place. From a schools perspective, Andy Prindiville highlighted that one of the challenges was the stigma associated with self-identifying that a family had difficulties which schools worked hard to break down. His own school had now set up a food bank and many families were accessing that who were not claiming any other benefits. Michelle Ginty added that her schools were trying to incentivise families and offered £100 towards school uniforms when the pupil joined the school and £50 twice a year

towards after school activities. The Committee heard that one difficulty was the large number of families with no recourse to public funds which made some pupils ineligible for accessing pupil premium. In order to support those individuals, the Council had allowed schools to identify where pupils had no recourse to public funds and the Council had then funded places for children where it was known they were living in challenging circumstances. Some of that work also involved connecting families with Family Wellbeing Centres.

The Committee noted the statement that '96% of schools in Brent are good or outstanding' but highlighted that the majority of schools were rated 'good' rather than 'outstanding'. They asked why more of Brent schools were not considered outstanding, particularly when this figure was compared to two years previously when that figure had been 97%. Jen Haskew explained that there had been a change in the Ofsted inspection framework. Before 2020, schools that were judged as outstanding were exempt from inspection unless something caused a concern that would require a reinspection, so many of Brent's schools sat with an outstanding judgement for around 12 years. Since then, the Ofsted framework had changed three times and it had become much more challenging to achieve an outstanding judgement. Previously, schools were rated on a best fit judgement but now needed to achieve all points in the 'good' rating and all points in the 'outstanding' rating to be rated as such. In response to whether the Council was wary that other schools might fall risk to the issues faced by Bryon Court Primary School, Nigel Chapman stated that the Council felt confident that the risk of this occurring was low. He stated that he received termly updates in relation to the performance of schools to monitor this. Councillor Grahl added that those Ofsted processes were relevant to Byron Court because it had not been examined for a long period of time and there had been a lot of changes to the school during that period. More broadly, she felt that the type of inspection Ofsted conducted with the use of single word judgements and the relationship of Ofsted with schools required improvement.

In considering the sharing of good practice, the Committee asked whether there were tangible benefits from schools engaging with each other to share good practice that officers could share with the Committee. Michelle Ginty informed members that there was a group of schools in Brent working together through peer reviews, where triads of schools worked to share good practice. For example, one school would demonstrate a part of their provision they felt was excellent and the heads from two other schools would evaluate the quality of provision and give feedback on what was done well and identify areas for improvement. In this way schools got the benefits of each other's knowledge. Andy Prindiville added that St Gregory's had some good work on transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 where primary school teachers had looked at the secondary school curriculum being offered and advised whether that level had already been achieved at primary school level.

The Chair thanked those present for their contributions and drew the item to a close. He invited the Committee members to make recommendations with the following RESOLVED:

- i) To recommend that the work happening across schools to share best practice was publicised more widely to give confidence to families that schools were working together to ensure the best education for children and young people.

- ii) To recommend that best practice continued to be shared amongst all schools in Brent.
- iii) To recommend that the Council, with the support of schools, prioritised and accelerated the active enrolment programme for those eligible for pupil premium.
- iv) To recommend the Council continues a focus on hearing the voice of boys of Black Caribbean heritage and ensuring they achieved parity with their peers.
- v)
- vi) To request that the Committee are provided with performance indicator comparisons across demographically similar boroughs.

7. Implementation of the Brent Carer's Strategy

Councillor Neil Nerva (Cabinet Member for Community Health and Wellbeing) introduced a report which outlined the development and implementation of the Brent Carers Strategy 2024-2027. In introducing the report, he advised the Committee that it highlighted the process the Council and key partners engaged in to develop the strategy and included the draft strategy alongside it. Paragraph 3.5.9 of the report outlined the 6 commitments of the strategy for the next three years, namely; access to information, partnership working, supporting wellbeing, carer awareness, reaching into communities, and supporting young people at the start of their caring journey. He was pleased to introduce Ann-Marie Morris, Chief Executive of Brent Carers' Centre to the meeting and Valerie Reid who was an informal carer in Brent.

In continuing the introduction of the report, Claudia Brown (Director Adult Social Care, Brent Council) added that the strategy had been developed and co-produced with carers and had an action plan that sat alongside it that would be implemented with carers. Lynette Gbedze (Service Manager, Direct Services) detailed some of that engagement work, explaining the importance of engagement with carers so that their voice came through the strategy. That engagement had begun in November 2022 working with Brent Carers Centre and other carer organisations within the borough such as Brent Parent Carer Forum and Brent MENCAP. Valerie Reid, an informal carer who had joined the meeting, co-chaired the Carers Board and was asked to share the engagement work that took place with informal carers.

Valerie Reid began by expressing that the engagement work that had taken place was very meaningful from her perspective because it meant the strategy was subsequently developed based on carers' voices. She highlighted that well over 150 different carers had attended those engagements and had been very vocal and honest. All carers who had contributed had their own concerns and she felt that those concerns and the voices of carers had been heard and action taken in response to that. Feedback from those engagements had been that carers felt they were not listened to, that services were fragmented, and that information was in too many different places. Based on those carers' voices the 6 commitments of the strategy were then shaped.

Ann-Marie Morris concluded the introduction by highlighting that Brent Carers Voice had been involved in getting a group of carers together to attend a consultation

meeting between both children's social care and adults' social care services. Rachel Crossley (Corporate Director Community Health and Wellbeing, Brent Council) emphasised the fact the strategy was for all ages and a joint effort across directorates.

The Chair thanked presenters for their introduction and invited comments and questions from those present, with the following issues raised:

The Committee acknowledged the importance of support for carers, for example through respite. Claudia Brown agreed, informing the Committee that the Council did work with carers to ensure they had that support which was often done through the commissioned service, Brent Carers Centre, who helped to connect with carers and work with them in the areas they chose. Valerie Reid added that Brent Carers Centre had always been there for her to provide support. She provided an example of a time where she had needed to think of contingency planning if something were to happen to the person she cared for. She had a carers card identifying her and who to contact if something were to happen to her for the person she cared for if she could not care for them, which Brent Carers Centre had helped her with. She had also been supported by CNWL who had helped her wellbeing and kept her proactive. In addition, Brent carers were provided with training courses such as manual handling.

Continuing to discuss support, Anne-Marie Morris added that, for young carers, a lot of the support was primarily around respite activities and support networks to give them the opportunity to have fun as a child because they did not always get to have those opportunities. Support was also provided to connect with the young person's family to ensure that the young person was not doing inappropriate levels of care and the person being cared for was not solely dependent on the care of the child. This could involve looking into financial support where needed and ensuring the family was getting all of the benefits they were entitled to. Star Pswarayi (Head of Service – Access Information and Wellbeing Services) added that there was a lot of partnership work to support carers, working with organisations such as Care Free to provide that.

The Committee highlighted the references to unpaid care and asked if there was any feasibility in funding unpaid carers, particularly if carers were relying solely on benefits. Councillor Nerva advised that this ask went beyond Brent Council and would need to be considered at a national level. The value of informal carers had been understood for many years but he felt that successive governments had not sufficiently recognised that value through providing remuneration which he hoped would be something the government would look to do in future.

The Committee asked if there was anything carers would like to see going forward, and heard that carers would like to have a participation day at Brent Civic Centre which helped them to feel valued. Valerie Reid hoped that carers could be further utilised, for example, through delivering training for others as there were many skills a carer could offer.

The Committee noted the visualisation in the report splitting care by different ethnic groups and asked whether the strategy recognised the different needs of care givers from different ethnic groups and whether there were different and personalised

approaches being provided to different carers. Claudia Brown confirmed the different needs of carers were taken into consideration. Beyond just the Brent Carers Strategy, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) had a big focus on carers and were looking to develop the approach across London in response to carers services. Brent had many diverse communities and developed its response to carers needs with carers in line with the diverse needs they had. She added that choice and control underpinned all of the work done within Adult Social Care.

In terms of success metrics, the Committee asked how the Council and partners would know the strategy had been implemented. Star Pswarayi would be the project worker implementing the strategy, and there would be a period of evaluation once it had been implemented which would include an invitation to carers to evaluate the implementation. Adult Social Care had also fostered a positive relationship with Brent Healthwatch who were conducting some user surveys and working with carers and service users to get feedback on how those services were being delivered. In terms of quantitative analysis, Star Pswarayi highlighted that Adult Social Care already had the numbers, for example there was an awareness that the Council was not in-reaching as many informal carers as it could, and the numbers accessing carer support were low compared to the number of people delivering care outlined in the Census 2021 findings. As such, there was a good starting point in terms of statistics and figures to be able to monitor, review and compare as the strategy was implemented. The appendix to the strategy provided the timeline up until the end of 2027 and it was expected that initial evaluation would be 6 months post-implementation.

The Committee commended the strategy document and noted that it was quite lengthy. They asked what the plans were for distribution of the document. Officers highlighted that the document was still in draft version and being finalised but it had been shared with the Carers Board and through engagement sessions, and would be taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board for final sign off. Once there was a final document, it would be made available in easy read format, including a young carer friendly version, and there would be PowerPoints available to distribute across carers organisations. Adult Social Care also planned to do some presentations to launch the strategy so everyone was aware what they were entitled to. Councillor Nerva added that this would be an important document for practitioners when meeting informal carers in their professional capacity and the document would be socialised broadly.

The Committee asked what outreach work was done to reach people who might benefit from this work. Anne-Marie Morris outlined the outreach taking place with different organisations who worked with different vulnerable groups. The Brent Carers Centre was trying to engage further with schools to help them to identify young carers. Work was done across the community to raise awareness with practitioners where they were working with children and adults to identify carers and signpost them to support. In relation to young carers, the Council had adopted the strategy of 'no wrong doors' which was a nation wide approach to ensure young carers could approach any service and their needs would be addressed.

The Chair thanked members and officers for their comments and drew the item to a close. He invited the Committee to make recommendations with the following RESOLVED:

- i. To recommend that a version of the strategy was made available for other, smaller Councils to use as a consultative tool.
- ii. To recommend that lobbying took place at the relevant level for funding for informal unpaid carers.
- iii. To request for the Committee to receive an update on the implementation of the strategy post-evaluation.
- iv. To request that future reports incorporate Sri Lankan ethnic groups.

8. **Brent Reablement Service**

which updated the Committee on the reablement service which went live in February 2024. In introducing the report, he highlighted the commissioning process that took place and new operational arrangements. He emphasised the importance of having a dedicated reablement service to enable as many people as possible, upon leaving hospital, to maximise their independence and avoid institutional support.

In adding to the introduction, Andrew Davies (Head of Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management, Brent Council) highlighted that the report described the process that the Council went through in order to arrive at the service that was now available with the three providers and the ambitions the Council had for that service for the duration of the next 5 years. He advised the Committee that the service went live 2 months ago therefore it would be premature to draw conclusions about the success of the service but would be happy to provide an interim update in the future.

Sarah Richards (Head of Intermediate Care and Principal Occupational Therapist, Brent Council) added that the work she was doing aligned with the reablement service, focusing on the right areas for assessment teams. Her team was ensuring that there was a therapy led service, in line with the NHS framework, and that the right numbers of staff were appointed to be able to assess residents as they came through the door. Having that reablement focus ensured the team was reducing, preventing and delaying the need for formal care.

The Chair thanked presenters for their introduction and invited comments and questions from those present. The following points were raised:

The Committee noted that there were now 3 providers with 3 patches and asked whether each provider covered the same level of workload. Andrew Davies confirmed that was the case, which was the basis on which the contracts were designed. He highlighted that the contracts were based on a fixed hourly rate of care at £21 per hour as of 1 April 2024, and the Council had given an indicative number of hours when it tendered the service of around 800 hours of reablement care per week spread across the 3 patches. That hourly rate would increase through the life of the contract at 50p per hour per year. In response to whether there were any risks to that

approach, Andrew Davies highlighted that there was a risk to the provider that the number of hours of care per week that the Council tendered for either fell short or was exceeded. However, the Council had mitigated that by looking at the average number of hours of care delivered over a period of time to get to a figure that was felt to be realistic. In terms of the hourly uplift, this mirrored what had been done on the homecare contract. The Council expected providers to pay London Living Wage (LLW) which the 50p uplift per hour per year would contribute towards, and whilst it was recognised that LLW had increased more than that recently it was expected to come in line with inflation over the next few years and therefore officers felt 50p was prudent. From the Council's perspective, the contract arrangements allowed the Council to know its financial commitments year on year and be confident that the amount being paid to providers was fair and enabled them to plan and manage cost.

The Committee heard that reablement was an important part of the hospital discharge process and the Council had ambitions for it to become a larger part of the approach taken in delivering Adult Social Care. This would mean if someone requested or was recommended an uplift in the number of care hours they received the Council would look to try a reablement approach first, where appropriate, to avoid that ongoing and permanent uplift in care. In doing that, officers felt that the Council would be making good use of the reablement service and providers would be delivering more hours of care in line with the hours that were tendered for to help the Council both enable people to live as independently as possible and deliver on its financial savings.

The Committee noted the details in the report regarding the need for bespoke training for providers and asked whether a skills gap had been identified. Members highlighted that those delivering reablement care needed different skills than those delivering homecare. Andrew Davies explained that the aim of the contract was to appoint three providers who would specialise in reablement and be bespoke reablement providers, which was a move away from the larger number of providers who were more generic homecare providers. He advised that, inevitably, those providers would also work in homecare and other sectors as well, so there had been a need to attract providers with an interest in the reablement line of work. The Council monitored these contracts through quality assurance processes and were working with providers and their in-house trainers to ensure that their enablers were kept up to date and trained in the most appropriate reablement techniques which required a bespoke training programme with those providers so that they worked in the way the Council wanted.

Regarding section 3.2.9 of the report, the Committee highlighted there were no figures, although the report did state that there would be a reduction in spend on care for the Council. They asked how much savings were being made as a result of the contract. Andrew Davies confirmed there was a savings target against this which could be shared with the Committee.

The Committee noted that one of the aims of the service was to reduce rates of hospital readmission, but felt that there may be circumstances where reablement was not the appropriate treatment and an individual may need to be readmitted to hospital. Andrew Davies acknowledged that there were many factors influencing hospital readmission and that, in some cases, good reablement delivered really well

could still only delay readmission. From an Adult Social Care perspective, even a delay in ongoing permanent care was better for both the person and the Council.

The Committee asked how the service supported those placed outside of Brent for care. Officers confirmed that Brent did make placements outside of the borough. When that happened, Adult Social Care spoke with the host borough and then worked with local commissioners to quality assure the provision of care. An annual statutory placement review would also take place with service users.

In terms of capacity, the Committee asked whether all those assessed as needing reablement received that support. Members were advised that there were no capacity issues with providers so if someone was assessed as needing reablement services then the providers would be able to deliver that. In terms of assessment, a patient would initially be seen at home once they were discharged from hospital or the need for reablement had been identified. That person then needed to meet the criteria for reablement and if they were eligible then they would agree their rehabilitation goals and receive that service.

As no further points were raised, the Chair drew the item to a close. In terms of recommendations, the following was RESOLVED:

- i) To request an update in 6 months' time to review how the service was doing which included more figures.

9. Recommendations Tracker

The Committee noted the recommendations tracker.

8. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 8:25pm

COUNCILLOR KETAN SHETH
Chair