

Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

19 January 2022

Members Present:-

Councillor David Longstaff (Chairman)

Councillor
Pauline Coakley Webb
Councillor Linda Freedman
Councillor Rohit Grover
Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Nagus Narenthira
Councillor Danny Rich
Councillor Julian Teare
Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Also in attendance

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Felix Byers

Councillor Val Duschinsky

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee held on 18 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence was received from:

- Councillor Felix Byers
- Councillor Val Duschinsky who was substituted for by Councillor Saira Don

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

None

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb was invited by the Chairman to introduce the item. Councillor Coakley Webb gave a summary of the issues and requested that the Committee give support to this item.

The Chairman agreed that it was a reasonable request in relation to children specifically and that further information be requested from responsible organisations.

RESOLVED that the Home Office and/or Springboard be invited to a future meeting in order to provide the information requested.

7. ANNUAL REPORT ON SCHOOL FUNDING IN BARNET FOR 2022-23

The Director of Education and Learning, Ian Harrison, presented the report and summarised the implementation of the authority's funding formula as well as expenditure of balances carried forward.

An underspend of £4.959m was forecasted by the end of the financial year, resulting from an underspend in growth funding. A portion of that money would be spent on secondary schools, high needs provision, early years and migrant support.

The need for additional resources in nursery schools leading to long term financial issues would be alleviated by the lump sum of £100,000.

Schools receiving Hong Kong migrant children would be paid pro-rata for the time the child was in school. This year, no funding had been provided to schools that incurred additional costs for asylum seeking children. Therefore, some of the underspend funding go towards those schools next year.

Members queried the coping mechanisms for Moss Hall that reported a deficit of over £150,000. It was noted that the payout based on the funding formula would mitigate long term financial risks and any additional funding would need to be raised from the school's recovery plan.

Approximately 200 Hong Kong and asylum seeking children were in need of education in the last three months alone.

RESOLVED that the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee:
-Notes the annual report on school funding in Barnet.

-Approves the formula funding to be used in the Authority Proforma Tool (which specifies the authority's funding formula for schools) on the basis of paragraphs 1.26 to 1.35, which includes a Minimum Funding Guarantee of +2.0%, which means that every primary and secondary school will receive an increase in funding per pupil of at least this percentage in 2022/23, (through the pupil-led element of the schools funding formula), while any schools gaining from the introduction of the National Funding Formula will not have their gains capped.

-Authorises the Executive Director, Children's Services to approve the final Authority Proforma Tool for submission to the DfE.

-Notes that the overall Schools Budget will be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting on 9th February 2022 for onward submission to full council as part of the budget setting process.

-Recommends to Council that any changes to the Schools Budget reasonably required as a result of the final 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant and Post-16 settlement are delegated for decision to the Executive Director, Children's Services in consultation with the Director of Finance.

-Approves in principle the proposal to pay a lump sum of £100,000 to each of Barnet's maintained nursery schools using carried forward underspend from the Dedicated Schools Grant to fund this and authorise the Executive Director, Children's Services to consult early years settings and the Schools Forum on this proposal and then to decide on whether the proposal should be implemented in the light of consultation responses and in consultation with the Chairman of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee.

-Approves the proposal set out in paragraphs 1.50 to 1.60 in principle to provide up to £1.0 million of funding, from carried forward Dedicated Schools Grant underspend, to support schools with additional costs arising from the enrolment of children of newly-arrived Hong Kong families and children of asylum seeker families living in designated asylum seeker hotels after the October census date during the school year 2021-22 and authorise the Executive Director, Children's Services to consult with the Schools Forum and to make final decisions on the methodology for allocating the funding and allocation of the carried forward funding to eligible schools for one year only.

8. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS UPDATE

Ian Harrison presented the report on the school improvement three-year strategy based on recommended priorities outlined in the report.

A whole range of partnership initiatives across the Council were taking place in areas involving recovery, mental health, early years and mentoring.

It was noted that the overall ranking of Key Stages 4 and 5 placed Barnet in the top 5% of the country.

Low attainment results for Post 16 pupils in vocational subjects due to focus placed by schools on academic subjects, were being addressed by the Post 16 strategy.

Members observed lower attainment levels amongst Black, Chinese and Looked After Children and queried options for them. It was noted that Black pupils in Barnet are in the top 10% of achieving black pupils across the country. Cultural and background issues as well as moving families were addressed through best practice in terms of engagement, mentoring and execution.

Members highlighted the excellent results achieved by Key Stage 4 pupils and requested that a letter be sent to Headteachers and staff commending them for their hard work on behalf of the Committee.

Members pointed out that three Barnet schools moved from outstanding to good and raised concerns parents might have in relation to the quality of the schools.

It was noted that 97% of schools in Barnet are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding'. The framework for schools had changed, making it very difficult to reach 'outstanding'. The School Improvement Partnership Board advised that the move from outstanding to good did not impact on the quality of those schools. The School Improvement team met regularly to discuss all schools especially those that were causing concerns.

Members suggested that such communication sent to schools be shared with the Committee.

In relation to Post 16 transition, the Director explained that during the pandemic, places were offered to every school leaver. In addition, Post 16 advisors worked on building on the young person's profile and mapped out vocational education options with Heads of schools to develop vocational qualifications across the Borough. Sixth form centres were also being developed with other colleges to establish suitable provisions for particular specialisms.

Members found the transition of Post 16 pupils very promising.

RESOLVED that the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee:

- Notes the report, including the Education Recovery update in Appendix 1 and the report on Educational Standards in 2021 in Appendix 2.

- Approves the proposed priorities for the School and Standards Improvement Strategy in 2022, as set out in section 1.7.

9. SEND STRATEGY (2021 - 2024) UPDATE

The Executive Director of Children and Families, Chris Munday, introduced the report. It was noted that on completion of the latest Ofsted inspection, members would be provided with a copy of the report.

In Barnet, children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) had access to an outstanding range of provision.

Ian Harrison highlighted the updated priorities which were added to the current SEND Strategy. The range of provision had been further developed during the pandemic and post pandemic and additional resources were invested in therapies. The children most affected by the pandemic were disabled children. Therefore, priorities within the strategy aimed to address all issues affecting the children including their social, emotional and mental health functions.

Members queried whether parents of SEND children had opted for home education and what challenges were faced from being educated at home. It was noted that many children were being home educated. The increase in children with Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) required different means to be supported but that provision was being monitored continuously and welcomed by parents.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report.

The Chairman informed the Committee that it was Ian Harrison's last meeting before his retirement. The Chairman thanked Ian Harrison for all his hard work and contributions on behalf of the Council.

10. BARNET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Chris Munday presented the report containing two parts; the annual report and partnership arrangements as well as the independent scrutiny report by Red Quadrant which provided recommendations to the partnership.

It was noted that the last year was most challenging in terms of professional working and managing the pandemic. The Director commended Social Workers and other professionals who despite barriers, continued to work throughout the pandemic even when other services were closed.

It was noted that the lack of information with regards to the safety of children who were being home educated was still an area of concern. However, checks and balances were in place and 99.9% of parents did a very good job of educating their children at home.

Members requested for more detail on key recommendations and how they would be implemented. Members also requested that the contact for the new LADO be circulated to all Members of the Council.

Regarding the sustainability budget, it was noted that the Police had not made financial contributions to London's safeguarding arrangements the way other partners have been. A new approach for Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LSPRs) was also being looked into for a cheaper but more effective process. Regular attendance at the Leadership Forum enabled further insight as part of ongoing works.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes and considers the reports and appendices and provides any comments on the annual report prior to final approval by the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.

11. FAMILY SERVICES QUARTERLY UPDATE

Chris Munday provided an update to the Committee.

Members pointed out the dental checks and adoption figures were considerably low. It was noted that the low adoption figures was raised with Adopt North London at the last Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. An updated report on the figures was due to be expected.

The Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) developed by Ofsted, pulled data from all local authorities and therefore not reflective of actual figures.

It has been a challenge getting older children to visit the dentist. The service continues to work with providers to get children to see a dentist.

Members questioned the high numbers of absences and missing children. The Director said that the data for England was outdated and absence figures related to children who were late for curfew. The same young person could be reported missing many times for a wide variety of reasons which also added to the data.

Other key issues included the timeliness of assessments. However, re-referrals were lower which suggested better quality of assessments. The number of re-entries into Care were higher, possibly due to higher numbers of adolescents.

The Committee noted the annual self-evaluation which sets out the quality of social work practice and priorities.

RESOLVED that the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee:

-Notes and provides comments on the CHAT performance report summarised in the report and provided in Appendix 1.

-Notes and provides comments on the LIIA performance information summarised in the report and provided in Appendix 2.

-Notes and scrutinises progress of performance against our Ofsted Self Evaluation provided in Appendix 3.

-Notes the report from the Annual Engagement meeting held with Ofsted as part of their inspection framework.

12. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the work programme.

13. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (IF ANY)

None.

The meeting finished at 8.32pm.

The meeting finished at Time Not Specified

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