

Decisions of the Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee

18 July 2017

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)
Councillor Bridget Perry (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb
Councillor Alison Cornelius
Councillor Helena Hart
Councillor Anne Hutton
Councillor Nagus Narendhira
Councillor Anthony Finn (substitute)

Also in attendance (as Co-opted Members)

Marilyn Nathan
Denis Carey
Gladys Vendy
Kevin McSharry

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Val Duschinsky

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive and Senior colleagues from Family Services to the meeting. Ms Tina McElligott, Operational Director for Early Help and Protection and Ms Brigitte Jordaan Operational Director Corporate Parenting.

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Councillor Hutton asked that future minutes on the Youth Parliament include the exact projects that are being undertaken.

Councillor Hutton also noted an error on page 5 of the minutes that should be corrected to Barnet Carers Centre.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Councillor Val Duschinsky was substituted by Councillor Anthony Finn.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Hutton declared that she was on the Board of the West Prosperity Board and Barnet Children's Centre.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. OFSTED REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

The Chairman informed the Committee that there had been an error on the cover report and the report should be classified as Key.

The Strategic Director, Children and Young People introduced the Ofsted report to the Committee.

The Strategic Director, Children and Young People explained that a number of issues surrounding the quality of Children's services had been identified and highlighted the need for greater scrutiny to improve the situation for Children in Barnet. He said he was accountable for the provision and the quality of the service and apologised to children that had not received high quality care. He stated the service would continue to strive forward with the goal of becoming the most family friendly Borough in Barnet.

The Strategic Director Children and Young People explained that part of the £5.7 million funding would contribute toward recruiting high quality social workers and that a plan had been devised to address the concerns highlighted by Ofsted to drive improvements in social work practise. The Operational Director for Early Help and Protection said a large sum of money would be put toward developing the work force and ensuring all frontline workers understood good practise across the service. She said work needed to be done to encourage good quality workers to Barnet, which would include promoting the career opportunities and developments available at Barnet. The Operational Director Corporate Parenting said housing and youth services were developing a new joint protocol to ensure there is a good robust assessment of needs. She said that there was a particular challenge around members of gangs who require 24 hour support.

Members of the Committee expressed concern that there was a lack of flow of information between committees discussing items that affect children services, affecting the ability to scrutinise decisions. The Chief Executive said that information in respect of the Ofsted report and the improvement plan will continue to be brought to the CELS Committee. He said it was essential information be brought to the Committee in order for it to be properly scrutinised. The Strategic Director for Children and Young people agreed that improvements in the quality of information represented to the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel (CPAP) were needed to enable Members to see and scrutinise the information and data. He also said deep-dives into particular areas would be done and that the results of these would be discussed at future meetings.

Members requested that reports brought to Committee were not just for noting, but were for approval and comment, enabling Members to be fully involved in decisions. The Strategic Director, Children and Young People said he was happy to make reports for approval, allowing members to input. He also said he felt further training on the key questions that should be asked and considered in terms of safeguarding and parenting roles would be helpful.

The Chief Executive said a review had been commissioned into the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Board. He said a number of recommendations had been made around the remit and make-up of the Board and how to adequately fund it which needs contribution from the Police, Public Health and the Local Authority.

The Strategic Director, Children and Young People said a complaints leaflet for Children in Care was crucial and was needed in order to outline the members of the CPAP or Local Council and reflect the critical role members play in helping children. He said the service wanted to work closely with Members to ensuring the right opportunities for engagement with young people were available to them. The Strategic Director, Children and Young People said that he would pull together a member engagement plan for the September CELS meeting and identify a number of things that can be run regularly. He said a list of how members can get involved could be drawn up as a result of the deep-dive.

Following discussion of the report Councillor Coakley-Webb moved a motion to amend recommendation six of the report to the following wording: 'That the Committee agree that Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee meeting will have a standing item on the progress of implementing the Improvement Action Plan including where appropriate deep dives into areas of concern.'

Councillor Coakley-Webb then moved a motion to include the following as a recommendation, 'That the Committee agree that Councillor Coakley-Webb and Councillor Thompstone arrange meetings to visit London Borough of Islington and Essex County Council'.

The Chairman moved to vote on all of the recommendations including the re-worded recommendation six and additional recommendation seven.

The Committee unanimously agreed to all the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:

1. That the Committee note the findings of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework carried out between 24 April and 18 May 2017 as set out in paragraph 1.13 and Appendix 1
2. That the Committee note the guidance from Ofsted in relation to Local Authorities which have received an overall judgement of inadequate as set out in paragraph 1.17 to 1.24 and Appendix 2
3. That the Committee note the guidance from the Department for Education in relation to Local Authorities which have received an overall judgement of inadequate as set out in paragraph 1.25 to 1.27 and Appendix 3 (pages 53 - 57) and note that a commissioner for Children's Services will be appointed for an initial three-month period.
4. That the Committee agree the draft Improvement Action Plan for consultation set out in Appendix 4 and delegate to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the Chief Executive and Lead Member authorisation to complete and submit the plan within the 70 day requirement for Ofsted.
5. That the Committee note the draft LSCB Improvement Action Plan for consultation set out in Appendix 5.
6. That the Committee agree that each Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee meeting will have a standing item on the progress of implementing the Improvement Action Plan including where appropriate deep dives into areas of concern.
7. That the Committee agree that Councillor Coakley-Webb and Councillor Thompstone arrange meetings to visit Islington and Essex County Council'.

Immediately after the vote the Chairman moved a motion to refer the report to Full Council as he felt that due to the important nature of the report it required greater member scrutiny.

Referral to Full Council was unanimously approved by the Committee.

8. EDUCATION STRATEGY 2017-2020

The Programme Director for Education and Training introduced the report to the Committee. She said the strategy had been refreshed to take into account national and local issues. The strategy now focused on robust governance structure, head teachers and schools participation.

The Education and Skills Director said the vision was to make Barnet a successful place for high quality education where every child in the Borough attends an outstanding school. He said there was a need to have financially sustainable schools and talks had been had with Headteachers about strategies to successfully achieve this.

The Committee enquired as to whether any secondary schools had dropped any subjects and if any emphasis was being made in schools to promote apprentices opportunities. The Education and Skills Director said the service did not track all subjects being taught at each school, she said there were always areas where less work is done than wanted but there is a strategic plan for priorities and improvements. She said the service looked to ensure opportunities were available and were committed to overcoming the challenges of communicating these opportunities to pupils and parent's

After discussion of the item the Chairman moved to vote on the recommendation as set out in the report.

The Committee unanimously approved the recommendation.

It was RESOLVED that:

The Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee approved the Education Strategy 2017-2020 as set out in Appendix A.

9. ANNUAL REPORT ON CELS COMMISSIONING PLAN AND OUTCOME

The Strategic Director, Children and Young People introduced the report to the Committee. He explained that going forward there was a need to look into both qualitative and quantitative indicators and that children's social care was a major area where this was required. He also said that Practise Improvement Plans needed to be reported to CELS, but that this would require a narrative report to be drawn up.

The Programme Director for Education and Training said the pupil referral unit was a challenging project and that the service was working with the education funding agency on this. She said the planning applications were close to being submitted and should be done by early next year. The Members conveyed their concerns around the time taken to complete this project.

After discussion of the item the Chairman moved to vote on the recommendation set out in the report.

That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee note the performance in 2016/17 in delivering the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee Commissioning Plan.

10. CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIBRARIES & SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman informed the Committee that changes would be made to the status of some of the reports from Non-Key to Key as appropriate.

It was RESOLVED that:
The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

None.

The meeting ended at 21.05