

Decisions of the Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee

15 November 2017

Members Present:

Councillor Reuben Thompstone (Chairman)

Councillor Bridget Perry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Councillor Alison Cornelius

Councillor Helena Hart

Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Nagus Narenthira

Councillor Kath McGuirk

Councillor Val Duschinsky

Also in attendance:

Denis Carey (Co-Opted Member)

Kevin McSharry (Co-Opted Member)

Gladys Vendy (Co-Opted Member)

Apologies for Absence:

Marilyn Nathan (Co-Opted Member)

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Councillor Reuben Thompstone, Chairman of the Committee welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The Committee thanked Ms Val White, Programme Director, Education and Learning for all her work over the years at Barnet particularly with schools, review of library services and planning of school places.

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee held on 18 September 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Ms Marily Nathan, Co-Opted Member

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

The following declarations were made at the meeting:

Councillor	Agenda Item(s)	Declaration
Anne Hutton	Various items	Declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Trustee of the Barnet Carers Centre and Barnfield Children's Centre
Kath McGuirk	Various items	Declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being board member of Arts depot.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

Details of the questions asked and the published answers were provided with the agenda papers for the meeting. Verbal responses were given to supplementary questions at the meeting. The Chairman invited Mr Roger Tichborne who joined the table and addressed the Committee with a Public Comment.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. PETITION - FUNDING FOR BARNET SCHOOLS

The Chairman invited the lead petitioner, Ms Lisa Hayes to join the meeting. The speaker presented the petition to the Committee about the potential impact of the new National Funding Formula.

Mr Chris Munday, Strategic Director for Children and Young People noted the importance of the issues raised and proposed that this action be linked to the wider partnership network of London Councils.

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb moved the first motion:

1. *That the Committee instructs the Strategic Director for Children and Young People to prepare a report for the January meeting with:*
 - a) *An update on the funding for Barnet Schools, and*
 - b) *Any response from the Government on lobbying efforts undertaken by London Councils to ensure no Barnet school loses out under the new National Funding Formula.*

The motion was seconded and having been put to the vote, it was unanimously **agreed** by the Committee.

For	9
Against	0
Abstentions	0

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb moved a second motion:

2. *That the Chairman of the Committee writes to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer setting out that:*
- a) *The Secretary of State promised that no school would lose funding under the new National Funding Formula*
 - b) *In fact 100 Barnet schools out of 115 will lose funding next year under the formula;*
 - c) *The Chancellor and Secretary of State for Education should protect our children's education, and therefore*
 - d) *In next week's Budget, funding for schools should be levelled-up, not down, to ensure that no school loses out*

The Chairman welcomed the motion and commented that the most effective route to address the concerns would be through a partnership approach via London Councils.

The motion was seconded. Having been put to the vote, the motion was declared **lost**.

For	4
Against	5
Abstentions	0

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

That the Committee instructed the Strategic Director for Children and Young People to prepare a report for the January meeting with:

- a) **An update on the funding for Barnet Schools, and**
- b) **Any response from the Government on lobbying efforts undertaken by London Councils to ensure no Barnet school loses out under the new National Funding Formula.**

8. UPDATE REPORT ON PROGRESS OF BARNET CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Chairman welcomed the progress report and noted the extensive amount of work carried out by Children's Services since the inspection took place.

The Strategic Director for Children and Young People, Mr Munday presented the report and summarised the key issues and the critical areas of continued improvement. He briefed the Committee about the work of the Children's Services Improvement Board towards implementing a culture of change.

Mr Munday briefed the Committee about the first Ofsted Monitoring Visit which focused on front line services, including a review of the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and DATS (Duty and Assessment Teams).

The feedback received from inspectors was that the Council could not have done more since the inspection, which was encouraging. Visits to children and young people must be purposeful and appropriate. Furthermore, that it is crucial for staff to understand the underlying issues about quality, performance and that they feel supported.

Mr Munday noted that time management and quality issues continue to be addressed with children being placed at the centre of visits. He noted that following publication of the DfE Commissioner's report, the Secretary of State will issue statutory direction which must be followed by the Local Authority.

The Committee noted the appointment of the new Chairman for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, Mr Andrew Fraser former Director of Children's Services at Enfield.

Following a query from the Committee about making continued improvements, Mr Munday emphasised the importance of making significant improvements in light of the reviewed cases which were inadequate.

Ms Tina McElligott, Assistant Director Family Services provided an update on the Children's Services recruitment campaign. She noted the importance of ensuring that managers are equipped with the relevant skills to challenge and scrutinise effectively which will contribute to making better assessments.

Following a comment from the Committee about working together with other departments, the Chief Executive, Mr John Hooton noted that other parts of the Council have been encouraged and are working on improving the work that Children's Services are doing. He also confirmed that the Council was working with its partners and that this continued to be a top priority.

The Committee queried the progress made towards quality recruitment. Ms Brigitte Jordaan, Operational Director Corporate Parenting informed the Committee that the Service continues to work in a way which is child focused.

Ms Jordaan explained that the Service must continue to ensure that social workers are confident in their work towards assessing the needs of children and young people. She also noted the importance of effective management in respect of oversight of the process.

In respect of levels of staff, Ms McElligott noted that the last six months had been challenging with progress being made and that much work still needed to be done. This includes supporting staff with training.

In response to a query about children coming into care, Ms Jordaan answered that data was comparable to other local authorities and that there was an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

The Committee asked about the approach to prevent children and young people being groomed into criminal and gang related activities. Ms Jordaan informed the Committee about the work of the Reach Team which consists of a dedicated mixed workforce including social workers and therapists. It was noted that the Team works in collaboration with Police and Health partners to disrupt and prevent grooming and other criminal activities as much as possible.

The Committee asked questions about how all members and other committees could be involved. It was noted that an area of focus must be ensuring that the governance arrangements enabled all councillors to be involved in safeguarding and that there was input of other committees into the work of this committee.

The Chairman thanked Officers and the Committee for their contribution. It was unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- 1. That the Committee noted the finalised Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2. That the Committee noted the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.8 to 1.70.**
- 3. That the committee noted and scrutinised as above the performance information provided in paragraph 1.71 to 1.82.**
- 4. That the Committee noted the Barnet Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) annual report as set out in Appendix 3, and the appointment of Andrew Fraser as the new independent chair.**

9. PROMOTING ARTS AND CULTURE IN BARNET

The Chairman introduced the item and welcomed Ms Val White to present the report.

Ms White provided an update on the development of the Arts and Culture Strategy for Barnet. Following the Public Comment made at this meeting, Ms White noted that engagement and feedback will be used to shape the Strategy which will be reported back to this Committee.

The Committee queried whether arts and culture activities could be promoted through a central hub. Ms White noted the recent launch of the online Community Directory where a large number of organisations have registered.

The website contains a list of organisations and activities – the Committee requested that other related activities also be included and promoted more widely.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED**:

- 1. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the partnership activity to date to develop a strategic framework for arts and culture.**
- 2. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee agreed the vision and priorities for the further development of the strategy.**
- 3. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee agreed to the use of council monies to fund a time limited resource of £25,000 to kick start the use of incidental and 'meanwhile use' space in the borough.**
- 4. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee supports the ambition to work towards becoming the London Borough of Culture in 2021.**

10. FAMILY SERVICES COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

Mr Munday presented the report which provides an overview of the complaints and compliments received in Family Services from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

He also encouraged more feedback which will be used to further improve service delivery.

It was RESOLVED:

That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the report and appendix.

11. BUSINESS PLANNING 2018/19

The Strategic Director for Children and Young People, Mr Munday presented the report and the proposed revenue savings as set out in Appendix A to the report.

It was **RESOLVED that:**

That the Committee recommended the savings programme as set out in Appendix A to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Votes were declared as follows:

For	5
Against	0
Abstentions	4

12. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGY 2017-2020

The Chairman introduced the report and welcomed Mr Simon James Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion.

Mr James presented the item and noted that the Strategy has been developed by the Council through a partnership approach. He informed the Committee about the vision of the Strategy and the six strategic priorities. The Committee also noted the importance of effective joint commissioning and integration of services.

Following a question from the Committee about promoting integration of services, Mr Simon noted that one of the key steps going forward is to establish a joint social communication clinic in order to enhance access to appropriate services.

In response to a question raised by the Committee about The Windmill – Mr Simon noted that this will be a new free school which has been approved for opening.

Ms Val White informed the Committee that the Council is working with the DfE to identify a site for the new free school – she noted that it is important to find the right site to meet the needs which includes transport needs.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for the discussion.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee approved the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2017-2020 (Appendix A) for consultation with stakeholders as set out in paragraph 6.2 below.
2. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee delegated the final approval of the strategy, taking account of the consultation, to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People.
3. That the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee noted the proposal to commission additional specialist places for children and young people as set out in Appendix (ii) and delegated the approval of decision making in relation to the location of new specialist places in Barnet maintained schools, subject to consideration of consultation responses, to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People.

13. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the standing item on the agenda which provides an overview of the business items at future meetings.

It was **RESOLVED**:

That the Committee noted the Forward Work Programme for 2018.

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

None.

The meeting finished at 9.40 pm