

Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

11 January 2021

Members Present:-

Councillor David Longstaff (Chairman)

Councillor Felix Byers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Julian Teare

Councillor Linda Freedman

Councillor Val Duschinsky

Councillor Reuben Thompstone

Councillor Rohit Grover

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Anne Clarke

Councillor Nagus Narenthira

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

No declarations were made.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

There were no public questions or comments received.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no Members Items.

7. BARNET SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The report was presented by the Executive Director for Children's Services, who highlighted the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements regarding the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership which was established in 2019. He also gave a brief update on the arrangements for independent scrutiny and noted that a virtual visit had been undertaken by a team of scrutineers from Red Quadrant, and highlighted some key points of feedback from their report.

The Director of Children's Social Care then gave an update on the work on cross border issues across the partnership. The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report in depth.

RESOLVED - That the Committee considered the reports and provided comments on the annual report prior to final approval by Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.

8. CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

The report was presented by the Executive Director for Children's Services, who thanked the Early Years/Primary Strategic Lead for her hard work in producing the sufficiency assessment during a very challenging time. He confirmed that there is sufficient provision in Barnet to meet need at the present time, but noted that there may be an impact into future years due to the pandemic. He also noted that officers would be doing a specific piece of work with the Department for Education to encourage uptake of the provision for 2yr olds.

The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report.

RESOLVED - That the Committee note the Barnet Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2020 attached to the report as Appendix A.

9. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS IN BARNET IN 2020

The report was introduced by the Director of School Improvement who gave a summary on educational standards in Barnet and noted that the report has been impacted by the pandemic as there has been no published data for individual schools in 2020 and no data on primary or early years. He noted that the report shows that there is still a very high quality of schools in Barnet and standards have remained high.

The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report.

RESOLVED - That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee note the report in Appendix A: Educational Standards in Barnet in 2020.

10. LIFE CHANCES STRATEGY 2020-24

The report was introduced by the Executive Director for Children's Services who noted that the Life Chances Strategy had been reviewed in detail and updated to take account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. He highlighted that officers had engaged with over 700 young people to flag what they felt were important issues for them in terms of life chances moving forward. He noted that it had been out to consultation through the Council's consultation process and the results were detailed in the appendices.

The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report.

Officers agreed to confirm with Members when the next data regarding child poverty would be available, and the Executive Director noted that he would have a further conversation with Councillor Narenthira to look at programmes in place across Colindale that identify a range of initiatives going on in that area.

Officers also agreed that in regard to the prospects of young people who have been furloughed, they would check with colleagues in the employment team for any insights, and whether furlough data could be further broken down by Ward.

RESOLVED - That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee approve the Life Chances Strategy 2020-24 and appendices.

11. ANNUAL REPORT ON SCHOOL FUNDING

The report was introduced by the Executive Director for Children's Services, and the Chief Executive of BELS. They highlighted the main points in the report, including that grant funding had been given to maintained nursery schools taking account of the fact that they do not qualify for DfE Covid funding to schools or for the rate relief available to private, voluntary and independent early years providers. The report asked the committee to approve the funding formula for schools which is based on the national funding formula, details of which were in the report.

The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report. Councillor Coakley Webb moved that the following recommendations should be added to the report;

That the Committee;

6.1 Note the additional funding of £15K for each maintained nursery school, but that this does not cover all the Covid costs and income losses incurred by the schools.

6.2 Note that the maintained nursery schools are still projecting a budget deficit in April 2021, which they cannot cover.

6.3 Agrees to fund whatever budget shortfall the nurseries have and cannot fund themselves at the end of this financial year.

6.4 Requests that P&R Committee reviews the detail of the financial settlement for nurseries once confirmed by Government, and considers meeting any shortfall Barnet's maintained nurseries may have following that announcement.

The additional recommendations were discussed in detail. Following debate Councillor Coakley Webb withdrew recommendation 6.3, on the basis of officers querying whether the Committee could lawfully agree this. The Executive Director for Children's Services suggested that recommendation 6.4 should refer to the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee, rather than the Policy and Resources Committee and confirmed that it should relate to 'maintained nursery schools'. The recommendation was updated accordingly.

Following discussion of the report and proposed additional recommendations, Councillor Coakley Webb MOVED a motion that the Committee agree the additional recommendations as follows:

That the Committee;

6.1 Note the additional funding of £15K for each maintained nursery school, but that this does not cover all the Covid costs and income losses incurred by the schools.

6.2 Note that the maintained nursery schools are still projecting a budget deficit in April 2021, which they cannot cover.

6.4 Requests that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee reviews the detail of the financial settlement for maintained nursery schools once confirmed by Government, and considers meeting any shortfall Barnet's maintained nursery schools may have following that announcement.

Votes were recorded as follows:

For	4
Against	6
Abstain	1

The motion was therefore LOST.

RESOLVED –

That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee:

1. Note the annual report on school funding in Barnet.

2. Approve 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 1.27 to 1.36, which includes a Minimum Funding Guarantee of +2.0% and means that every primary and secondary school will receive an increase in funding per pupil of at least this percentage in 2021/22, (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.

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

4. Note that the overall Schools Budget will be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting on 8th February 2021 for onward submission to full council as part of the budget setting process.

5. Recommends to Council that any changes to the Schools Budget reasonably required as a result of the final 2021/22 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.

12. FAMILY SERVICES QUARTERLY UPDATE

The report was introduced by the Executive Director for Children's Services, who drew Members attention to the recommendations for housing for care leavers and the information in Appendix 5. He noted that the report sets out the latest set of performance figures, which remain affected by the Covid-19 pandemic but compare reasonably similarly with the rest of London on most indicators. He noted that the two annual conversations on education and children's social care had gone well.

The Director, Children's Social Care, Early Help & Safeguarding and the Director of Children's Social Care, Corporate Parenting and Disabilities then provided a brief update on safeguarding and corporate parenting respectively.

The Committee had the opportunity to question officers and discuss the report. During the discussion Councillor Hutton suggested that it would be helpful for a member of the housing team to attend a future meeting of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee to be part of the conversation with Members about housing needs for young people.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the performance information provided in Appendix 1 and 2.

2. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the Self-Assessment in Appendix 3.

3. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to review and comment on the recommendations set out in Appendix 5 and refer it to Housing and Growth Committee for consideration.

13. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

There were no urgent items.

The meeting finished at 19.37