

Decisions of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

18 November 2021

Councillor David Longstaff (Chairman)

Councillor Felix Byers (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Julian Teare

Councillor Linda Freedman

Councillor Val Duschinsky

Councillor Reuben Thompson

Councillor Rohit Grover

Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb

Councillor Anne Hutton

Councillor Danny Rich

Councillor Nagus Narenthira

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was noted that the information referred to on pages 6 and 8 of the previous minutes would be presented at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee held on 13 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

Apologies for absence was received from:

- Councillor Julian Teare who was substituted for by Councillor Saira Don.
- Councillor Danny Rich who was substituted for by Councillor Arjun Mittra.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS

Councillor Mittra declared a pecuniary interest in relation to items 9 and 10 by virtue of the Councillor's mother owning a nursery in the Borough.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)

None.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

7. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The item was published in error.

8. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PLACES PLAN

The Director of Education and Learning, Ian Harrison, presented the report.

The plan indicated proposals to increase the provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to accommodate the growing need for specialist places in both mainstream and special schools.

The different types of SEN provision and allocation of the Special Provision Fund were noted by the Committee.

Members enquired whether the special schools named in the report had enough resources to accommodate the growing number of children with Autism. It was noted that extra place funding and top up funding were available to meet the extra costs.

Changes made to the Children & Families Act 2014 in relation to eligibility criteria and age range were probable causes for the rapid increases in demand for specialist places.

Members asked whether the proposals would be shared with governing bodies and stakeholders and whether the Committee would be made aware of any feedback that may require further changes.

It was noted that the proposal was developed in consultation with school representatives and any major changes would be reported back to the Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED:

-That the Committee approves the Barnet Special Educational Places Plan Consultation Document which sets out proposals for additional provision of specialist places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the proposed use of the Special Places Fund, and that the committee authorises the Executive Director for Children's Services to carry out consultation on the draft plan.

-That the Committee following consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and in the light of the responses to the public consultation, finalises the Special Educational Places Plan and proposals for use of the remaining Special Places Fund allocation.

9. BUSINESS PLANNING

The Executive Director of Children and Families, Chris Munday, introduced the report. The year's financial strategy incorporated the model of a balanced budget based on current expenditure.

Members sought clarification of the report in relation to 'remodelling of contact centres to create staff savings'. The Executive Director confirmed that numbers of staff would not be reduced but the cost of staff would be reduced which would result in savings.

It was noted that the small increase in fees and charges to afterschool provision would affect only the users and it was much lower in comparison to other providers.

In terms of staffing cost there is a proposal to reduce agency spend through a range of initiatives including overseas recruitment. In relation to the provision of home to school transport for families with SEND, there was evidence of significant pressures due to increased demand. It was, however anticipated that by 2025, families would be more comfortable with the use of public transport.

More funding would be received for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children because numbers went above 0.07.

A Member noted that the income targets for Finchley Youth Theatre were challenging and, in his view, the staff needed more support to deliver them. The Executive Director offered an opportunity for the Member to discuss with the relevant senior officer.

Following discussion on the report, the Chairman moved to vote on the recommendations as set out in the report.

The Votes were recorded as follows:

For	7
Against	4
Abstain	0

RESOLVED:

-That the Committee agrees the revenue savings programme listed in Appendix A for recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee in December. Taking account of the equality impacts of such savings.

-That the Committee notes the risks associated with these savings proposals. These risks relate both to impact on services and residents and deliverability of savings.

-That the Committee agrees the changes to fees and charges as set out in Appendix B for referral to Policy and Resources Committee.

10. FAMILY SERVICES QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Executive Director for Children and Families, Chris Munday, introduced the report. The Bright Spots report to Members was considered in detail. The overall findings from the survey that had been conducted was positive and it was encouraging that a large number of children and young people had responded

Some issues arising out of the survey related to service delivery during the pandemic, including the need for further contact between young people who were in Care and their families. Children who had no contact with any family were offered contact with independent visitors.

Further work needs to be undertaken to ensure that children and young people understand the reasons for being placed into Care.

Children who said they felt unsafe in their area would be considered in greater detail and findings would be presented at the Corporate Parenting and Advisory Panel. Following approval at the recent Housing and Growth Committee, an additional 14 flats had been purchased for Care Leavers in Barnet.

Members highlighted the number of children who said that they did not have at least one good friend. It was noted that a lot of the provision with activities had closed as a result of Covid-19 which may have left many young people feeling isolated. Although most activities had resumed and young people were being well supported, continuous reflection was needed on loneliness amongst our care leavers.

Members commended the Brights Spots Survey on its presentation and for being child friendly. The Chairman said that further training with schools could help ensure

that all people were treated in the same way and be included in all aspects of school life.

It was noted that young people had the opportunity to analyse data via the provision Barnet on Point (#BOP) which was being further developed on reporting and feedback mechanisms.

RESOLVED:

-That the Committee notes and provide comments on the CHAT performance report summarised in the report and provided in Appendix 1.

-That the Committee notes and provide comments on the LIA performance information summarised in the report and provided in Appendix 2.

-That the Committee notes the outcome of the Bright Spots Survey and provide comments on the findings published in the report provided in Appendix 3 and 4.

-That the Committee notes the interim report of the Competition and Market's authority provided in Appendix 5.

11. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the Work Programme.

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

None.

The meeting finished at 8pm.