

Scrutiny Children & Young People Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 13 March 2018 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

- Present:** Councillor Jan Buttinger (Chair);
Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Patricia Hay-Justice, Maddie Henson, Bernadette Khan and Andrew Rendle
- Also Present:** Councillor Alisa Flemming, Councillor Margaret Bird, Barabara Peacock, Executive Director of people
- Apologies:** Councillor Maria Gatland,
Dave Harvey and Elaine Jones

PART A

10/18 **Apologies for absence**

Councillor Maria Gatland gave her apologies, Councillor Margaret Bird attended in her absence.
Dave Harvey gave his apologies, Elaine Jones gave her apologies.

11/18 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2018 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

12/18 **Disclosures of interest**

There was none

13/18 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There was none.

14/18 **Children's Improvement Plan - Options Paper**

The Executive Director of People was in attendance to present to the Sub-Committee a report which recommended that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee take the lead role in the scrutiny of the progress of the Children's Improvement Plan.

The Chair and Sub-Committee Members welcomed the proposals and acknowledged that under the current arrangements there was a degree of overlap. The Sub-Committee would be better placed to receive reports and

deliver in depth scrutiny of the progress made against the Children's Improvement Plan.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee would still receive periodically, high level progress summary.

RESOLVED: that

(i) The content of the report be noted, and

(ii) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub Committee would lead on the scrutiny of progress against the Children's Improvement Plan and would hold officers and Cabinet Members to account.

15/18 **Cabinet Member Question Time: Children Young People and Learning**

The Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning provided a presentation to the Sub-Committee which included some of the highlights in education and youth engagement. It also included the achievements, priorities and challenges of the Children's Services improvement Plan.

The Sub- Committee learned that the education standards for Croydon schools were continuously improving and attainment levels were above the national average at the end of early year's foundation stage and KS4. Children Looked After (CLA) pupil outcomes at the end of KS1 had also improved. 50% of Croydon pupils attend an outstanding school and 86% attended a good school.

A lot of work had gone into school place planning, including extending and modernising of many schools and purpose building of new schools.

The 0-25 SEN service had been moved under the directorate of the youth and engagement department. Officers had been working with Croydon College on inclusive post 16 provision. There was also a new Free School planned to open by 2020.

Members were informed that the Children in Care Council had been relaunched as part of the improvement plan for children's services to encourage looked after young people to help shape the services they received. Approximately 68 young people aged 11-18 took part in a successful takeover challenge exercise in November 2017 where they took over the role of the chief executive and partners such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other voluntary sector organisations for the day.

The Croydon Young Mayor elections was due to take place later this month. There were 28 very strong applications received from ambitious young people who were dedicated to making the borough better for young people.

There had been ongoing improvements made to children's services as part of the improvement plan. Investment through an increased budget to deliver the

improvement plan had been agreed. Recruitment and retention of social workers and support staff remain a priority and the Strengthening Families social work practice model had been adopted. The Children's Safeguarding Board had been strengthened under the guidance of the new Chair.

In response to a Member question on the provision for children on the Autistic Spectrum, the Cabinet Member stated that one of the key priorities was for education provision as a high number of young people were still travelling out of borough for education. The Cabinet member acknowledged the importance for pupil transition to mainstream schooling with remained a challenge as some schools were still not accepting children. There had been a lot of work completed by officers on the local offer and a single point of contact for families to obtain information on what was available in the borough. Increased provision in the borough would address issues related to demand on transport for children, many of whom attended schools out of the borough. Moving forward, local schools for local children was a key priority.

Members commented that more focus was needed on ensuring appropriate training for staff at mainstream school to enable provision to be made available for children with Autism. A request for data on children with EHCP plans was made by the Sub-Committee Members

Members further stated that St Nicholas school was a very good provision and enquired as to possible expansion of the school. Officers responded that the school had recently expanded from one to two form which would make a difference to young people and their families and whilst it would be good to expand further, the site does not allow for further expansion.

In response to a Member query on what action had been taken on management of caseloads, improving supervision of social workers, and recording of information on systems, officers stated that all areas highlighted remained a priority and were consistently monitored. Recording had improved as a result of an upgrade and better understanding of the systems. Social workers received regular ongoing supervision with a focus on the Croydon way of working. Caseloads remained a challenge due to an increase in referrals and the assessment service social workers still retained high caseloads. Further staff had been bought in to assist to manage the demand and recruitment drives were ongoing.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Strengthening Families Model was expected to be formally launched in April 2018 and an update would be provided at a later Scrutiny meeting on the impact to services. Staff had received training with additional training planned for elected Members after the elections in May 2018.

A Member queried the progression of commissioning for Best Start and in addition the education offers for children. Officers stated that commissioning of services had mainly been through the children's centres. Services were due to be recommissioned and would look at alignment of services such as the health visiting service and how to ensure a one stop service at children's

centres to provide all services in one place. Additionally the provision of services at suitable times of the day as needed by parent to suit their schedules.

A Member commented that there has been good development of the service with areas of weaknesses improved. The Best Start services had been better integrated with increased opportunities of support for parent and children made available.

The Vice Chair asked for an update on the relationship between the Council and Academy Schools. The Cabinet member stated that relationships had improved and commended the outreach work completed by Director of Education and Youth Engagement and Head of Education Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion who held regular meetings to discuss issues. As a result, there had been improved engagement with the schools.

The Vice Chair expressed concerns regarding some of the Federations approach to exclusions and whether the Council was notified when children were moved around the Federation. The Cabinet Member responded that historically there had been issues with high exclusions which had still not been totally resolved but there was increased engagement with schools and families which was a step in the right direction for young people. The high cases of exclusions on BME boys had seen some improvement although there was still a lot of work to be done. Head teachers had been held accountable by the fair access panel to ensure all had been done that's was necessary before young people were brought before the panel. The Council was not notified when children were moved around the federation as this happened as a managed move and not an exclusion. The Council continued to seek information on the journey of children around federations through examination of pupil data upon their entry at school and at the end of the school year.

Members commented that the presence of some of the Academy federations was lacking in workshops and events around the borough. The schools should be encouraged to get involved in Croydon wide events.

In response to a Member query on the budget overspend in children's services and how to prevent overspend in future years, Officers responded that regular meetings had been held with finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury had worked closely with officers to ensure that we were driving forward improvements there were cost effective and spending was streamlined.

In response to a Member queried on lessons learned as a result of Ofsted findings, the Sub-Committee was advised that the voice of frontline staff was of importance, in particular issues within the departments and staff morale. Further work was needed to incorporate the voice of young people on strengthening service provision.

The Sub- Committee was further informed that the line of sight document enabled transparency of services and the role of lead members. Senior management had more interaction with staff and the document allowed for further scrutiny on outcomes of their involvement with staff. The Executive Director of Children stated that she would welcome being held to account that she had done what she had stated she would.

In response to a Member question on what had being done to encourage and improve partnership working, the Cabinet Member stated that there had been regular meetings with the Police and Children’s Safeguarding Boards. The relationship with health was also improving and more partnership work was being carried out through public health officers.

The Cabinet Members and Officers were thanked for answering questions, their commitment to the improvement of services and their engagement with Scrutiny.

The Chair and Members of the Sub-Committee were also thanked for their participation and ongoing commitment to Scrutiny.

Conclusions:

- (i) That further information was needed to enable scrutiny of children subject to managed move;
- (ii) Detailed information on children on ECHP plans to be circulated to the Sub-Committee.

16/18 **Responses from Cabinet**

The Sub-Committee noted the responses from Cabinet following the recommendations made by the Committee at the meeting on 19 September 2017.

The Sub-Committee further noted that the response to recommendation 2 and stated that the training offered was useful and would be beneficial to new councillors.

Members stated that training sessions at the beginning of appointments to the Sub-Committee should be pre requisite with ongoing training throughout the year.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the responses from Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Signed:

Date:

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