

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 February 2013 at 6.30pm

WRITTEN MINUTES – PART A

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Chairman)
Councillors Graham Bass, Richard Chatterjee, Jason Cummings, Donna Gray,
Tony Harris, Steve Hollands, Yvette Hopley, Adam Kellett, Bernadette Khan,
Terry Lenton, Michael Neal and Carole Bonner

Co-opted members:

Parent Governor Representatives: Mr James Collins
Mrs Vinoo John

Diocesan Representative: Mrs Elaine Jones

Non-voting teacher representative: Mike Dawson

A1/13 MINUTES OF 9 OCTOBER MEETING (Agenda item 1)

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 17 and 25 July 2012 be signed as a correct record.

A2/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 2)

Apologies were received from Cllr Clare George-Hilley (reserve: Cllr Adam Kellett) and Cllr Manju Shahul-Hameed (reserve: Cllr Carole Bonner).

A3/13 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST (Agenda item 3)

Disclosures were made by the following councillors:

Cllr Jan Buttinger (Corporate Parenting Panel)

Cllr Donna Gray (Corporate Parenting Panel)

Cllr Bernadette Khan (Fostering Panel)

Cllr Jason Cummings (Chair of Governors at Woodlands CC and spouse employed by Jubilee Parenting who deliver courses commissioned by the Council)

A4/13 URGENT BUSINESS (Agenda item 4)

There was none.

A5/13 EXEMPT ITEMS (Agenda item 5)

There were none.

A6/13 THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE AND REVIEW OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 6)

The following officers were in attendance for this item:

- Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director of Children Families and Learning
- Anna Mansaray (Head of Learning Access)
- Cathy Moore (Strategic Lead Education Standards)
- Joyce Lydford (Improvement Adviser Teaching and Learning)

The Chair also welcomed Jenny Slark, Assistant Head Teacher of St Andrew's C of E School and the group of pupils from the school.

The Executive Director gave an overview of current educational issues. He stated that most schools were now self-governing, managed their own budgets and decided when to make use of local authority services. He added that the Secretary of State for Education was taking a more assertive view on the academisation process: a new Ofsted framework had been introduced in September 2012, raising the bar in expected standards and improvement, and schools requiring improvement were being directed to become sponsored academies.

However, the Executive Director of Children Families and Learning emphasized the need to maintain good working relationships with local schools in order to act as effective champions of educational excellence in the borough in partnership with educational establishments. He added that while academies were accountable to the Department for Education, councils retained the responsibility for ensuring minimum levels of academic success in the borough.

Safeguarding was highlighted as a key element of children's services. Members acknowledged the importance of these services and sought assurances that sufficient resources were available to ensure that children in the borough were not at risk. They were advised that despite significant cuts over the next two years, children's social care budgets would not be reduced. Officers detailed proposed efficiencies such as obtaining a greater proportion of children's foster carers in-house. They observed that early prevention represented a challenge: while these services were not statutory, reducing such preventive care was likely to be counterproductive.

The Executive Director announced that a report was scheduled to be presented at the March meeting of the Cabinet, describing the evolving role of the Local Education Authority and its relationship with local schools.

Members agreed that the changing role of the local authority would impact on the scrutiny of educational matters. Possible models for the future included

focusing on partnerships and principle-based leadership, with a view to adding value to educational services in the borough.

The above discussion was followed by questions to members and officers from the pupils of St Andrew's C of E School.

In answer to a question on one to one support for students with behavioural difficulties, officers explained that this was provided in different ways by primary and secondary schools, and that decisions on how to provide such support was largely in the hands of schools: primary schools had access to support services provided by a team of council officers offering a wide range of mechanisms to reduce behavioural problems, as a result of which they had had no exclusions for the previous 12 months. Pupils were advised that secondary schools offered support through Pupil Referral Units, statementing and indirectly through school partnerships. In addition, schools were able to fund additional support through the people premium. This funding was introduced in April 2011 and is allocated to schools to work with pupils who have been registered for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

In answer to a question on the availability of spaces for quiet study, the Executive Director stated that the council was to spend £60-70 million over the next two or three years to build new schools to address the significant rise in pupil numbers.

Pupils questioned officers on the quality of resources offered to young people to do their revision. They were advised that the council had powers to provide help to schools which required improvement, by helping to direct resources more effectively, improve teaching, etc.

The pupils' last question related to the need for additional support for talented pupils e.g. mentoring. The More Able Learners' Project was highlighted. In addition, Members highlighted opportunities for able young people to use their talents through volunteering.

A7/13 SCHOOL STANDARDS (Agenda item 7)

The following officers were in attendance for this item:

- Paul Greenhalgh, Executive Director of Children Families and Learning
- Anna Mansaray (Head of Learning Access)
- Cathy Moore (Strategic Lead Education Standards)
- Joyce Lydford (Improvement Adviser Teaching and Learning)

Members questioned officers on the performance of children and young people in Croydon for 2012 as well as on school attendance and exclusions.

Officers were asked whether schools were doing enough to enable and encourage young people to aim for challenging qualifications. The Executive Director explained that many schools in the borough were at a very early stages of introducing A levels. They were having to develop a good track record in providing good examination results in order to attract more young people to their courses. He assured that most schools wanted

to encourage young people to take the “English Baccalaureate” (E-BACC), which is a performance measure recognising the attainment of GCSEs in selected subject areas (maths, English, languages, humanities and science) at Grades A* to C.

Members were advised that the post-16 educational agenda now constituted a focus area. The Council had appointed a dedicated 14-19 link officer and set up a post-16 learning network which was attracting a good attendance from academies.

Members discussed the attainment of different ethnic groups. They were informed that pupils who spoke English as a second language often outperformed other ethnic groups, particularly when these pupils constituted a large group within a given school. Officers added that schools had sophisticated data systems for monitoring the performance of different groups of pupils and that Ofsted could fail a school inspection if one particular ethnic group was not given the support it needed.

Officers explained that all pupils were supported by very detailed tracking from entry to school to departure. Teachers were all required to attend pupil progress tracking meetings and to provide a profile of the pupils in their classes, which could help to underpin interventions for individual pupils requiring additional support.

Members questioned officers on school attendance levels. They were advised that unlike other boroughs, Croydon’s secondary schools were outperforming primary schools in this respect. This was due to effective early intervention, preventing young people from becoming persistent truants.

Members examined exclusion statistics and observed that there had been a significant reduction in permanent exclusions whereas fixed term exclusions were still worryingly high. Officers stated that more effective schools tended to have lower fixed term exclusions while less effective schools which had high levels of exclusions lacked a wide range of systematic interventions to tackle poor behaviour and the imagination to establish such interventions.

Archbishop Lanfranc school was quoted as an example of an effective inclusive approach to dealing with behavioural issues and preventing exclusions, and drew members’ congratulations on its approach and success.

Members asked what agencies were called upon to deal with persistent harmful behaviour. They were advised that the Common Assessment Framework was used to identify the individuals’ specific needs and the agencies to involve in addressing these issues. Officers explained that a strong focus was placed on their families in order to understand and address underlying problems which might be the cause of persistent harmful behaviour. They added that parental aspirations were known to be a chief driver of children’s educational success and that the lack of it could be the cause of poor educational outcomes in white boys.

Members questioned officers about the monitoring of home educated children and young people. They were advised that a specific officer was responsible for out of school education, and that two reports a year were presented to the Children and Young People Management Committee. Members were advised

that about 100 such children were being tracked in the borough.

Members questioned officers on speech and language therapy services. They asked whether the council was addressing shortages in specialists in this field. Officers explained that one to one specialist support was required for some children and young people. However, speech and language specialists were working in a collaborative way with teachers in schools and nurseries to share their knowledge and skills and enable teachers to provide support, in an endeavour to reach more children and young people in need of these services.

Members were advised that speech and language therapy services had previously been commissioned by the council as well as the Primary Care Trust. The next contract, however, is to be a joint contract, which will lead to a better integrated service.

Members were reminded that an update report on the implementation of recommendations arising from the Task and Finish working group on speech and language therapy services was scheduled for the 16 April meeting of the Health, Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Members asked for future reports to the sub-committee include more detailed data on the equalities implications of the topic under scrutiny.

The assistant head teacher and pupils of St Andrew's C of E school were thanked for attending the meeting.

A8/13

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROVED SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE IMPACT OF ACADEMY SCHOOLS AND FREE SCHOOLS ON SCHOOLING IN CROYDON (Agenda item 8)

The Chair of the task and finish working group thanked officers for the update and requested more detailed financial information.

Members discussed the usefulness of brokering partnerships between schools as 19 partnerships had been brokered so far by the Schools forum. They were advised that these had been established for a wide range of reasons, including leadership issues in a small number of schools and that the impact of these partnerships was being monitored closely. So far, evidence suggested that they had brought about improvements. For instance, the effectiveness of the partnership brokered for Benson Primary School had been commented on positively by Ofsted. .

Members wondered whether the above-mentioned partnerships were being undermined by the Department for Education. Officers replied that educational duties were currently being centralised by the Department which was becoming more proactive in its dealings with schools.

Members questioned officers regarding the performance of traded educational services. They were advised that this had been very positive so far and had raised a good level of income. However, Members were warned that future funding cuts would represent a real challenge for these

services, which would have to generate income quickly enough to remain solvent despite much reduced funding levels.

A9/13 RECENT INSPECTION OUTCOMES (Agenda item 9)

Members questioned officers on Ofsted inspections carried out during the autumn term 2012. Officers observed that the tougher inspection regime introduced in autumn 2012 had replaced the previous grade 3 judgement of 'satisfactory' with 'requires improvement' and had led to a number of schools being instructed to become sponsored academies.

Members asked how the council helped schools to maintain a "good" judgement. They were advised that the council's link advisor worked with all local schools to retain a good or excellent judgement or to improve further. This entailed helping schools to understand what "good" meant in the eyes of Ofsted inspectors. Members were also informed that the council's traded services offered detailed mock Ofsted inspections, to prepare schools for the real ones.

Officers were thanked for attending the meeting.

A10/13 SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY TOPICS 2013-2014 (Agenda item 10)

The following suggestions were made:

- Early intervention: challenges for the service
- Looked after children and safeguarding
- Education: equalities issues
- The use of the pupil premium and its impact
- How to engage with academies and free schools
- Exclusions and policies governing them
- The shape of the future scrutiny of education

Members suggested that officers explore the possibility of holding one meeting at an academy.

PART B

None

The meeting ended at 9.25 pm

