

EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 23 March 2017

Present:

Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Kathy Bance MBE, Kim Botting FRSA,
Mary Cooke, Judi Ellis and Chris Pierce

Emmanuel Arbenser and Tajana Reeves

Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services
Councillor Tom Philpott, Executive Support Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alan Collins.

Apologies for absence were also received from Mary Capon, Joan McConnell and Alison Regester.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No additional declarations of interest were made.

36 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2017 AND 15 FEBRUARY 2017 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 17th January 2017 and 15th February 2017 be agreed and that matters outstanding be noted.

37 QUESTIONS TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

38 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

39 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder gave an update to Members on work being undertaken across the Education Portfolio.

Inspections of the Bromley Adult Education Service and the Youth Offending Service had recently taken place. The provisional feedback from these inspections was that significant progress had been made and that although there was still a need for improvement, services were now well-placed to move forward. The second Ofsted monitoring visit of children's services had taken place in February 2017, and provisional feedback suggested that improved practice and pace had been identified and that in respect of the cases reviewed, no children were unsafe in Bromley. Work was now being undertaken to identify how children's services could best be represented through the Council's Portfolio arrangements from the 2017/18 municipal year. The Chairman led Members in thanking the Director: Education and the Head of Service: Adult Education for their excellent work in the reorganisation of the Bromley Adult Education Service and requested that the Head of Service: Adult Education provide an update to the next meeting of the Committee. In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he was a member of the Youth Offending Service Board and that measures had been introduced to support Board Members in better understanding the pathway for young people entering the service. The inspection reports for these services would be provided to the Committee when they were published.

The SHaW Futures Academy, which was an innovative 11-19 school specialising in science, health and wellbeing, was working closely with all partners to resolve any issues relating to its permanent site at Westmoreland Road, Bromley and was planning to open in September 2019. Planning applications for two other secondary schools had been considered by Development Control Committee at its meeting on 25th January 2017, at which planning permission had been granted for Eden Park High School, Beckenham. Following a vote by Members, planning permission for the proposed Bullers Wood School for Boys, Bickley had been refused by a narrow margin and the school's management was considering whether to appeal the decision or submit an amended planning application.

The Portfolio Holder had met with representatives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark to continue discussions around the possibility of establishing a Catholic secondary school in the Borough to open in September 2018. A site had been identified that would require minimal capital

works, and the Chairman requested that the Director: Education contact the Archdiocese for an update on the proposed scheme. A Member requested that the Portfolio Holder also work with James Dixon Primary School around the need to meet an expected increase in the demand for school places in relation to a large residential development in the Crystal Palace area. The Portfolio Holder had met with Nick Gibb, Minister of State at the Department for Education to discuss funding pressures in the High Needs funding block for schools. The Chairman requested that the Portfolio Holder send a letter to Head Teachers, Governors and Members of the Council outlining the current position on the proposed national funding formula for schools which was likely to reduce the funding received by some primary schools, although the immediate impact of this would be mitigated by the minimum funding guarantee.

With regard to progress within the schools' academisation programme, the Portfolio Holder reported that there were nine primary schools, one secondary school and three special schools that had not yet become academies. The Local Authority continued to support schools to move towards academisation, including a recent event to promote the benefits of joining a multi-academy trust at which standalone academies and smaller multi-academy trusts had also been encouraged to consider joining a larger multi-academy trust. St John's Church of England Primary School was part of the Aquinas Trust and following a recent inspection by Ofsted, significant improvement had been identified at the school that was now rated as 'Requires Improvement'. The Chairman requested that an information item on the Ofsted ratings of Bromley schools be reported to the next meeting of the Committee, and that the papers for future meetings of the School Partnership Board be provided to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Chairman noted that St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School was the sole remaining Local Authority Maintained secondary school and requested that the appointment of the Local Authority representative to St Olave's Governing Body be progressed.

Lord John Nash had responded to the Leader's letter raising issues identified with elective home education through the review of the Education Select Committee on Alternative Education. In discussion, Members generally felt this response did not address the safeguarding issues raised and the Leader of the Council would be sending a further letter to highlight key concerns.

RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder update be noted.

40 EDUCATION INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings of Education Budget Sub-Committee held on 31st January 2017 and 15th March 2017.

41 EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Report CSD17050

The Chairman advised Members that the meeting of the Education Select Committee due to take place at 7.00pm on Tuesday 27th June 2017 would now be held at the later date of Wednesday 28th June 2017. It was proposed that this meeting focus on the theme of child protection and the significant increase in the number of children looked after since May 2016. Possible witnesses could include the Chairman of the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board, the Chairman of the Bromley Children's Service Governance Board, the Executive Director: Education, Care and Health Services and the Interim Director: Children's Services.

The Chairman proposed that an additional meeting of the Education Select Committee be held in May 2017 to consider the work programme for the 2017/18 municipal year and this was generally agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Education Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

42 THIRD REPORT OF THE EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

Report CSD17051

The Committee considered the third report of the Education Select Committee that had been drafted following the meetings on 17th January 2017 and 15th February 2017. The theme of the enquiry had been to examine the reasons why some groups of pupils underperformed and what might be done to improve performance.

RESOLVED that the third report of the Education Select Committee be reported to Council to be referred to the relevant Portfolio Holders for consideration and response.

43 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Ms Betty McDonald, Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service who had joined the Local Authority in November 2016 after a number of years working as the Head of the Tri-borough Youth Offending Service for the Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea to the meeting.

The Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service was pleased to report that following the recent full joint inspection of the Youth Offending Service led by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, the inspectors had given positive feedback around progress made in improving the service over the past 15 months and the management capability to support continued progress, although it was identified that a number of issues still needed to be addressed. A range of work to drive improvement across the service was underway, including the development of staff and a continued focus on

making a difference for young people. The inspection report would be published in April 2017.

With regard to staffing, the Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service reported that there were 25 staff within the Youth Offending Service, which included 12 frontline practitioners. A number of staff members were inexperienced, particularly around the theoretical elements of their role, and work to recruit qualified social workers would continue. A Member queried if the introduction of the 'Caseload Promise' within Children's Social Care services which aimed to allocate no more than 12-15 cases per social worker would assist recruitment. The Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service explained that caseloads worked differently in the Youth Offending Service, but that lower caseloads would be helpful in promoting the Local Authority as a good place to work.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service confirmed that the Youth Offending Service worked closely with the National Probation Service as young people transitioned to adult services, but that there was a need to develop stronger links with the London Community Rehabilitation Company which had undergone a number of changes to its operational delivery model and had recently stopped providing the unpaid work service for the Youth Offending Service.

A Co-opted Member queried how data was used by the Youth Offending Service. The Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service explained that due to the process for analysing and authenticating reoffending data there was a delay of approximately 18-24 months before this information was provided to the Local Authority. To address this, the Youth Offending Service was gathering 'live' data to track the existing cohort young people within the Youth Offending Service to better understand their activity and identify effective interventions. The Youth Offending Service supported young people aged 10 to 18 years. In considering current caseloads, the largest group was young people aged 17 years, but young people aged 10 to 13 years currently made up 20% of the cohort which was a concern, and early intervention work was being undertaken to divert these young people away from offending.

With regard to the issue of parenting orders, the Head of Youth Support and the Youth Offending Service confirmed that parenting orders were still pursued where appropriate, but that the Youth Offending Service preferred to refer parents to early intervention services or parenting classes that could provide the required support outside the Court system.

The Chairman requested that a further update be provided to the Committee at its meeting on 17th October 2017.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

44 SEND UPDATE

The Committee welcomed Ms Debi Christie, 16-25 Commissioning Manager (SEND) to the meeting.

The 16-25 Commissioning Manager (SEND) gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the new SEND Ofsted and Care Quality Commission Framework that had been introduced by the Department for Education in April 2016 to evaluate how well local areas were implementing the reforms of the Children and Families Act 2014. Inspections under the Framework would concentrate on how the local area identified, assessed and met the needs, and improved the outcomes of children and young people with SEND from birth to 25 years. Of the inspections completed so far, 20 local area outcomes letters had been published, five of which required their local areas to produce a written statement of action on how performance would be improved, and there was an expectation that improvement plans would be developed by all local areas to maintain and develop the strengths identified through an inspection and to address any weaknesses.

The Local Authority and its partners had participated in a pilot inspection programme in October 2015 to support the Department for Education and its partners in refining the Framework. Preparations were now underway for the local area's formal inspection under the Framework which was expected to take place shortly. A proposed structure had been developed to support the governance of SEND provision which included the establishment of the SEND Reforms Governance Board that would be chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and include representation from key partners from across the local area including the Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group, schools, the voluntary sector and parents and carers.

In response to a question from a Member, the 16-25 Commissioning Manager (SEND) confirmed that the 'local area' as defined within the Framework referred to the Borough's geographical area, and that should the local area be issued with a written statement of action to improve performance, the Local Authority and Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group would have joint responsibility for addressing the identified weaknesses. The Chairman underlined the need to identify best practice from high performing local areas, and requested that an update be reported to the Committee following the local area's formal inspection.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

45 NEET UPDATE

Report ED17043

The Committee considered a report providing an update on the Borough's performance relating to support for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET and the

strategies in place to increase the participation of young people in education, employment and training (EET).

The Education and Skills Act 2008 introduced a duty on all young people to participate in EET until their 18th birthday. Within this requirement, young people were able to choose from three options comprising full-time education (including school, college or home education), work-based learning with training (such as an apprenticeship) or employment, self-employment or volunteering with accredited training.

In Bromley, the NEET figures for 2016/17 demonstrated a significant improvement on the previous year for both the NEET and the 'Not Known' categories. The percentage of young people within this age group who were NEET had decreased from 1.8% to 1.7% between 2015/16 and 2016/17, and the percentage of young people whose EET status was 'Not Known' figure had reduced from 3.5% to 1.8% during the same period. The percentage of young people within this age group who were either NEET or whose EET status was 'Not Known' had reduced from 5.3% to 3.4% between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

46 REVIEW OF SELECT COMMITTEE PROCESSES

The Committee considered an evaluation of Education Select Committee questionnaires which had been provided to all Members of the Select Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services and the Executive Support Assistant for Education and Children's Services in March 2017, and aimed to assess the success of the Education Select Committee model which had been trialled for the 2016/17 municipal year. Questionnaires had also been provided to witnesses to the Select Committee, as well as to the Director: Education and the Clerk to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked Members who had responded to the questionnaire and requested that all other Members return their completed questionnaires by 5th April 2017. The Chairman requested that a further paper copy of the questionnaire be provided to witnesses to the Select Committee for their response.

RESOLVED that Members' comments be noted.

A CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION WITNESS SESSION

The Committee had been provided with written evidence in advance of the meeting that included a report giving an overview of children missing in education in Bromley and a briefing note on court action pursued by the Local Authority concerning children missing education. A written submission was

also received from the Bromley Youth Council providing their views on why young people may not be attending school.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Ms Jenny MacDonald, Senior Education Welfare Officer, Ms Linda King, Youth Support Programme Manager (Universal) and Ms Stella Marshall, NEET Support Programme Officer to the meeting.

Jenny MacDonald, Senior Education Welfare Officer

The Senior Education Welfare Officer advised Members that there were a number of reasons for children missing education, including families frequently changing addresses. There were currently 300 Bromley families in temporary accommodation, many of whom were housed out-of-Borough, and work was being undertaken to develop a dual registration scheme with schools in the area where families were housed to support children in maintaining their education.

In response to a question from a Member about a tragic case in another local authority where a mother had hidden her deceased child for over a decade, the Senior Education Welfare Officer reported that there was no single database system that brought together information from all key partners to track children from birth to school age. An IT system that provided this safeguarding functionality had been decommissioned by the Government in 2010, and the Member underlined the need to develop a similar information sharing system for Bromley. Once a child had entered formal education there were systems in place to monitor their activity and a new requirement had been introduced from 1st September 2016 for all schools to work more closely with the Local Authority in tracking pupils as they moved schools, including where families were moving overseas. Additional discretionary powers had also been provided to the Local Authority to require the same information from schools about standard transition points, such as when a pupil left school at the end of their final year.

In considering attendance at school, the Senior Education Welfare Officer confirmed that schools were expected to notify the Local Authority of any child that failed to attend school for ten consecutive days who they were unable to trace. Schools were also required to notify the Local Authority on a termly basis where a pupil had attendance of 90% or below, including authorised leave. The Local Authority took action when needed to ensure that parents were held to account around their children's regular attendance at school, and had previously issued penalty notices for non-attendance where schools reported that unauthorised leave had been taken. The Education Welfare Service worked to support improved attendance at schools in the Borough; however academy schools could choose to buy in their own independent educational welfare provider and were not required by law to make referrals to the Local Authority where concerns were identified. Some parents who had been subject to court action by the Local Authority with regards to their child's attendance had subsequently chosen to electively home educate their child. This had been challenged by the Local Authority in Court for some cases on

the grounds that there was no evidence that suitable education was being provided.

The Virtual Head Teacher closely monitored the school attendance of all children looked after. There were currently four children looked after who were missing from education which was due to recent changes to their placements and the need to identify specialist education provision, and one-to-one tuition was provided to all children looked after missing from education for up to 15 hours per week.

Ms Linda King, Youth Support Programme Manager (Universal)

The Youth Support Programme Manager (Universal) advised Members that all young people were classified as being NEET where they were not in education, employment or training up to the end of the academic year in which they turned 18 years, including young parents.

The NEET Support Programme worked with young people on a one-to-one basis to identify an appropriate route into education, employment or training; however, the Participation Formula used by the Department for Education to identify NEET status did not take young people's personal circumstances into account and young people accessing short courses or in part and full-time employment where the accredited training requirement was not met were classified as being NEET.

Young people were provided with a range of targeted services to support them in moving into education, employment and training including access to the Bromley Youth Employment Scheme, Bromley Education Business Partnership and work experience opportunities. Where appropriate, young people were also given the opportunity to participate in a mentoring arrangement.

Ms Stella Marshall, NEET Support Programme Officer

The NEET Support Programme Officer advised Members that the participation status of 'Not Known' within the NEET statistics applied to young people who had been recorded as being within the Borough in academic year in which they turned 17 and 18 years old, but whose current whereabouts were unknown. The NEET Support Programme worked with partners to locate these young people but could not remove them from Bromley's NEET cohort until their new address had been confirmed, and there were 90 young people classified as 'Not Known' in Bromley in January 2017. The 'Not Known' classification regarding EET status, was entirely different to children identified as being missing from home whose cases was taken forward as a priority by the multi-agency Atlas Team.

The Local Authority was performing in the top fifth of London Boroughs in supporting young people into education, employment and training and was in the top two-fifths for identifying the status of 'Not Known' young people, but as

the NEET cohort grew smaller it would be more difficult to deliver this continual reduction.

The Chairman thanked Ms Jenny McDonald, Ms Linda King and Ms Stella Marshall for their excellent contribution to the Children Missing Education witness session.

RESOLVED that the witness session be noted.

47 COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee agreed that a further meeting of the Committee be arranged once the minutes had been published to enable Members to contribute to the report that would be presented to the next meeting of the Council.

The Meeting ended at 9.17 pm

Chairman