

## **Annual Report of the Education PDS Committee**

2012 saw the establishment of a newly merged Education and Care Services Department, new Portfolio and in consequence a new PDS Committee.

It has been a busy and exciting year.

In line with our belief in a Member led Authority, the full Council, in January 2013, approved our Education Commitments. These set out the council's education philosophy and included 17 commitments to the people of Bromley.

As more and more schools become independent publically financed academies, the role of the Department and the focus of the Committee is changing and the Committee therefore commissioned a report on the future role of the Local Authority. As part of the review and arising out of our Education Commitments a new Education Covenant has been produced. This sets out for the first time the respective rights and duties of the Council, schools, parents, local businesses, pupils and the community at large.

At the inaugural meeting of the Committee it was decided that the objective for the year would be to work with the Portfolio Holder and Department to improve school, pupil and governance performance. A central principal of improvement is the provision of performance data. In the past this has been anonymised and confidential. In a new spirit of transparency and accountability the information is now publically available for all schools in the Borough. The Committee has warmly welcomed the new approach and asked that the information be circulated for consideration by all school governing bodies.

Cllr Stephen Wells, the Portfolio Holder, has been assiduous in keeping the committee informed of his reform agenda and his Executive Assistant Cllr Pauline Tunnicliffe has also reported on a regular basis on her work as the Children's Champion.

The newly merged Education and Care Services Department is led by Terry Parkin who joined the Council in October. Dr Tessa Moore has rejoined Bromley as the Assistant Director in charge of the education side of the department. We are grateful for their leadership of the new Department and support to the committee particularly in responding to our requests for detailed statistical information which has been of great benefit in formulating our policy proposals.

The Committee also introduced a number of administrative reforms to ensure efficient use of the Committee's time. Information items are only discussed if 24 hour notice is given; officers no longer give oral introductions to reports. Agenda setting meetings are held at the beginning of the committee cycle and the draft agenda is then circulated to the committee and members of the committee are invited to contribute questions and information they wish to see included by the author in the

report. Much of the detailed work is undertaken in advance by sub-committees or working groups. During the year the Budget Sub-committee under Cllr Neil Reddin has not only scrutinised the budget for the coming year but undertaken a series of efficiency reviews of different parts of the budget. The PDS Vice Chairman, Cllr Lydia Buttinger chaired the Primary Places Working Party which has identified schools which can be expanded to meet the increase in primary aged children in the Borough. I thank both for their work and support. As Chairman I have chaired two working groups looking at Behaviour Services and School Governance. I am confident that we can create a new Pupil Referral academy run by a school consortia and ensure that we have in place a fit for purpose behaviour policy. The Governance Working Group conducted a survey of LA governors and has made a number of recommendations for improving their role in school governance.

In July 2012, the Committee held a one off select committee hearing on the future of sold services. The committee report made recommendations for outsourcing the services and for the way further hearings should be organised.

In the autumn an education seminar was held for all members of the council, attendance was disappointing but it is proposed to hold a further one in the coming municipal year.

Child Protection is a major duty of the Council and responsibility for the scrutiny of the way it is conducted is shared between the Education and Care Services PDS committees. A joint session of the committees is to be held on May 7<sup>th</sup> to examine the arrangements in place by the Council and its principal partners in this area – the police and the NHS. The review will cover both organisation and more importantly practice.

Finally I thank all members of the PDS. Attendance at meetings has been excellent and colleagues have worked well together and co-operated in ensuring meetings have finished at a reasonable hour without compromising proper debate and scrutiny. It has been a pleasure and an honour to chair the new committee in its first year.

**Cllr Nicholas Bennett**

**Chairman**

**Education PDS Committee**