EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 17 January 2017

Present:

Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Chairman)
Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Kathy Bance MBE, Julian Benington, Kim Botting FRSA, Alan Collins, Mary Cooke, Judi Ellis and Ellie Harmer

Mary Capon, Emmanuel Arbenser and Mylene Williams Tajana Reeves and Alison Regester

Also Present:

Councillors Peter Fortune and Tom Philpott

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Christopher Pierce and Mrs Joan McConnell. Councillor Julian Bennington attended as substitute for Councillor Pierce.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Declarations of Interest made at the meeting on 25 May 2016 were taken as read.

Councillor Bennington declared that he was a governor at Charles Darwin Primary School.

23 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 were agreed, and signed as a correct record.

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

No questions had been received.

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

No questions had been received.

26 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder gave an update to Members on work being undertaken across the Education Portfolio. A number of visits to primary schools in the Borough had been undertaken since the last meeting. From these visits it was clear that a number of the schools offered high quality provision and achieved excellent results. The Portfolio Holder highlighted concerns around the widening gaps in achievement and reported that this would be a key focus for the Portfolio.

Since the last meeting the Portfolio Holder had attended the Bromley Trust Academy (BTA) Awards Ceremony. The Portfolio Holder highlighted how pleasing it was to see the young people being rewarded and recognised in this way for their achievements.

Arrangements were in place for the next meeting of the School Place Planning Working Group. The first meeting would take place on 7th February 2017 and an email had been sent out to members of the Committee in relation to membership of the working group. The Portfolio Holder stressed the importance of this work and the need to identify more school places across the Borough. Members attention was drawn to the consultation that was currently being undertaken in relation to a Health and Wellbeing School in the Borough which was an exciting and innovative initiative. The Portfolio Holder also reported that, with the support of colleagues in Education, an appeal had now been lodged in relation to the refusal of the planning application relating to Farnborough Primary School. Two school planning applications were due to be considered by the Development Control Committee at its next meeting. One was recommended for approval and one for refusal but efforts would be made to support the schools to get their applications approved by the Committee. The Portfolio Holder stated that he believed that the need for the additional capacity that these applications would deliver had been firmly established. In response to a question concerning community use of school sites, the Portfolio Holder reported that a number of schools were opening their facilities for wider community use in an effort to engage with and inspire parents and pupils.

The Portfolio Holder reported that 8 out of the 10 remaining primary schools in the Borough were in the process of converting to academy status. Consideration now had to be given to how the support for the remaining schools was configured as the Local Authority was now reaching the tipping point where in was no longer viable to maintain the current level of support for so few schools.

Since the last meeting the Community Learning Advisory Consortium (CLAC) had been established. The Consortium, chaired by the Portfolio Holder, was tasked with supporting the adult education service to target and gain access to the most vulnerable adults in the Borough so that the funding received could be prioritised for those most in need of learning interventions. The consortium met for the first time in October 2016 and the next meeting was planned for 21 February 2017.

Inspectors would be back to re-inspect the Youth Offending Service on 23 January 2017. The Portfolio Holder stressed that whilst improvements had been made in relation to strengthening governance arrangements there was still a lot more to do. It was expected that the YOS would be judged to have made some improvement. The Chairman noted that the Committee had previously raised concern about YOS case files and the quality of the work that was undertaken, concerns that were now acknowledged by the new Head of Service. In response to a question, the Director of Education reported that in addition to the Youth Offending Service the Head of Service had responsibility for the Education Business Partnership, Targeted Youth Services and, Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Work was being undertaken to identify how services could be reconfigured to strengthen the relationship between the YOS and schools as it was important to develop an holistic plan for the vulnerable young people who were accessing these services.

Finally, the Portfolio Holder reported that that, following a review of portfolio responsibilities, children's social care had been moved across to sit within the Education Portfolio. At the moment this would not impact on the terms of reference of the Education Select Committee, the Portfolio Holder would be required to attend meetings of the Care Services PDS Committee for scrutiny of children's social care. There was also no intention, as yet, to move housing into the Education Portfolio although the opportunities presented by this had been raised with the Leader of the Council. There was currently no detail in relation to what the reconfigured Portfolio may be called.

The Chairman reported that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Southwark would be meeting representatives from Bromley Council (including the Chairman of the Select Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Education) the following week to discuss the provision of a Catholic Secondary School in the Borough. The Government had indicated that it was planning to remove the 50% faith admission bar on Free Schools and in light of this the Catholic Church was willing to consider opening a Free School.

The Chairman also reported that he had met the Secretary of State for Education at a function before Christmas and had taken the opportunity to raise the issue of acadamisation and tipping points. It was likely that Bromley was going to be left with 5 maintained schools out of 100 and it was not practical to maintain an Education Department to support so few maintained schools. The Chairman had written to the Secretary of State to follow up the conversation and would be providing the Portfolio Holder with a copy of the letter.

27 EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Report CSD17011

The Committee considered its work programme for 2016/17. Members noted that the update it was due to receive on the Youth Offending Service improvement Plan had been postponed until 23 March 2017. At the next meeting Members of the Committee would be asked to complete a short questionnaire concerning their experience of the select committee process in order to evaluate the pilot.

RESOLVED: That the updated work programme be noted.

28 EDUCATION PORTFOLIO PLAN 'RAG' RATING

The Committee considered an information briefing which provided the Education Portfolio Holder and the Select Committee with an update on progress against the 2016/17 Academic Year Education Portfolio Plan priorities as agreed following the Education Select Committee meeting on 15th September 2016.

A member raised concerns surrounding the objective of reducing exclusions suggesting that the objective should be reworded to differentiate between short-term and permanent exclusions. The Director of Education agreed that the objective should be reworded to place an emphasis on reducing permanent exclusions. It was important that schools were identifying pupil needs as early as possible. There were currently a worrying number of primary permanent exclusions as children should have their needs identified early in order for the right support to be provided. Members discussed the challenges faced by schools in terms of delivering an engaging offer for all pupils with a narrowing of the curriculum.

In response to a question relating to respite offered prior to a permanent exclusion the Director of Education reported that there was a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in the Borough which was an academy. This offered both primary and secondary provision. The Local Authority had a contract with the PRU and purchased a number of places. Schools were then able to refer through the Core Panel which also provided the opportunity for consideration of whether respite would be appropriate. A Member suggested that it would be helpful for the Committee to be provided with information concerning the total number of applications made by schools for respite and the number of these applications which had been successful. This would help the Committee to evaluate the success of the interventions.

In relation to Priority 3 – Encouraging excellent educational opportunities from the early years through to further and higher education for all Bromley children and young people, including those with Special Education Needs – the

Chairman requested that the Committee be provided with information (ward by ward) on the number of children (including percentages) that had to go out of the Borough for their education.

The Chairman noted that at a future meeting the Committee would be evaluating the reforms to Adult Education that had been implemented.

29 SUPPORTING UNDER PERFORMING PUPILS WITNESS SESSION

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Ms Rachael Dunley, Bromley Children's Project Manager; Ms Jaki Moody, Primary Education Advisor for English; Mr Kieran Osborne, Chairman of the Schools' Partnership Board; Ms Mary Çava, Joint Head of SEN; and Ms Helen Priest, Head Teacher of Bromley Virtual School to the meeting. In advance of the meeting the Committee had been provided with a range of written evidence including a report providing an overview of performance in Early Years, KS1, KS2, GCSE and A-Level, a report providing an overview of the outcomes of pupils with statements of SEND/EHC Plans, a report providing an overview of the education outcomes for LBB children in care, a report providing an overview of early years including information on families accessing children's centres and, an articles from October 2016, November 2016, and December 2016 editions of The Times Magazine. In addition to the information provided in the agenda the Committee were provided with supplementary information on transition from early years into schools and some further information about the pupil premium including a scholarly article about why it is so difficult to know about the impact.

Ms Jaki Moody, Primary Education Advisor for English

As part of its review, the Committee explored the accuracy of data in relation to the performance of pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM) compared to the accuracy of other available data such as ethnicity, English as a second language and immigration status. The Primary Education Advisor for English confirmed that there was a range of data that could be used to track performance and different conclusions could be drawn when analysing different data.

The Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board suggested that the group that was the main cause for concern in relation to underperformance was white working class boys. The Committee heard that the 'perfect storm' in terms of underperformance was white, working class boys identified as having special educational needs.

The Pre-School Settings and Early Years representative suggested that it would be helpful for Members of the Committee to be provided with information on all the assessments that were done in pre-school settings before the end of the Foundation Stage. This could include the number of referrals for SEN as this was the group of children identified as not making the progress expected in the earliest stage of education.

The Committee explored the new system of assessment that had been introduced in 2016. This had considerably raised the bar in terms of expected achievement and a number of children, especially those that had been struggling to meet expectations had not had sufficient time to adapt to the new assessment criteria in order to demonstrate improvement in performance. As a result of this, in 2016 there had been an increase in the gap between the achievement of pupils eligible for FSM and those that were not eligible. In 2015 the gap had narrowed. The Chairman noted that in relation to KS 4, when narrowing the Attainment 8 measure down to just pupils whose attainment was grade A* to C in both English and maths, the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils increased considerably to 31%. In response to the Chairman's question surrounding why this was the case it was suggested that a contributory factor could be that levels of engagement were lower from families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The increase in the gap at KS4 was a national trend which appeared to demonstrate that there needed to be a review of the support provided to young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board highlighted that Bromley Schools had been successful at keeping levels of performance higher but a consequence of this was that the gap between the highest performers and the lowest performers was widening. It was important for schools to share best practice across the Borough and ensure that the curriculum on offer supported all children regardless of performance and ability.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board suggested that families categorised as "Just About Managing" (JAM) were struggling in terms of driving improvement. A programme designed to encourage aspiration and resilience was run at Hayes School and was aimed at families and children who could be described as JAM. It was a challenge for schools to raise aspiration however it was important that pupil premium funding was targeted at the pupils who would benefit the most. The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful for the 'Closing the Gap' programme to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

The Committee considered the issue of the lack of male role models within schools and Members learnt that the Local Authority did not collect any data in relation to the profile of teaching staff within the Borough of Bromley as HR was now a sold service to schools. The Portfolio Holder reported that this had been raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner as no one body was responsible for collecting this data.

The Primary Education Advisor for English reported that there was evidence that if young people attended a school that was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted they had a better chance of making progress, catching up, and keeping up. The evidence suggested that that in a good school pupils that were eligible for FSM and those that were not eligible for FSM performed equally well. There were a large number of Bromley schools that had been judged by Ofsted as 'requiring Improvement' so one of the challenges for the Local Authority in

relation to improving the performance of pupils was to drive an improvement in school standards thus giving all pupils every available opportunity.

Ms Rachael Dunley, Bromley Children's Project Manager

The Bromley Children's Project Manager explained that one of the challenges within her service was the sharing of information between pre-school and early years settings. The Committee noted that a number of schools were not aware that children were accessing the services that were available in children's centres and this meant that pre-school and early years setting were working in total isolation, unaware of interventions that were being put in place to support a child's development. The Bromley Children's Project Manager highlighted that parents needed to give express consent for professionals to contact pre-school settings and this consent was not always given.

The Bromley Children's Project Manager reported that her service worked closely with health visiting teams and public health in the commissioning of future services. A new, exciting initiative that had been introduced was for health visitors to gather information on any pre-school or early years settings that children may attend and to seek parental consent for contact to be made with the settings. There was also a lot of positive work being undertaken with GPs in this respect.

The Committee noted that there was not a uniform process for sharing information as children and young people transitioned through education. The Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board indicated that, certainly in terms of secondary schools, the transition process did nothing to aid and support pupil progress. There was a long time lag between KS2 assessments in year 6 and the start of secondary education in year 7. There was also still a great deal that secondary schools could learn in terms of building on and developing what pupils learn at primary. In relation to the transition between pre-school and primary the Pre-School and Early Years representative reported that it was not just about completing paperwork. The most valuable aspect of the transition process was when primary teachers visited pre-school settings. This enabled pre-school settings to provide advice and assist with any behaviour issues that could arise. When visits were undertaken pre-school settings were able to give anecdotal advice, such as tensions between certain pupils, which would help smooth the transition to primary school.

In response to a question, the Bromley Children's Project Manager confirmed that data that had been gathered demonstrated that parents were willing to travel to children's centres if there was not one in their local area. This was especially the case to access specialist provision such as speech and language therapy. The services that were available at children's centres were well signposted by health visitors and other professionals.

Mr Kieran Osborne, Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board

Mr Osborne explained that the Schools Partnership Board represented an attempt to co-ordinate across all schools for the benefit of pupils in the

Borough. The aim of the Board was to overcome some of the silo effects that had developed between academies, multi-agency trusts, other agencies, and schools. The Board was looking to support the progress of all children in the Borough and was still in its infancy. There remain a degree of mistrust and uncertainty which would take time to overcome.

One of the main challenges that faced schools was that in pursuit of the headline performance figures in key areas that were used to judge schools, performance in other areas could fall away and consequently have a negative impact on pupils that were struggling to meet expectations.

The Committee considered the London Challenge what had been very successful in driving improvement across the Capital. London was now one of the few capital cities where performance outstripped the rest of the Country. This was down to a number of factors such as funding, ethnic mix, and quality of teaching and learning. A number of lessons could be learnt from the London Challenge and rolled out to other areas of the Country. Bromley was performing well as an outer London Borough however the challenge was to now match the performance of the inner London boroughs.

In terms of getting the indigenous population to understand and appreciate the value of a good education, the Chairman of the Schools Partnership Board suggested that it was important to lay the foundations in the early years, developing and establishing aspirations, resilience and the importance of family involvement early on. Currently great progress was being made in the early years and the challenge was to ensure that the aspiration remained with the young people and their families when they were in their early teens. Another important factor was to ensure that there were also exciting and viable options for young people who did not want to, or could not afford to, go to university. In recent years an emphasis had been placed on university education however, there had to be clear aspirations for those pupils who were not interested in pursuing a university education. More needed to be done to develop pathways for these young people.

The Committee considered the provision of careers advice and heard that the quality of provision varied across the Borough. Whilst it was clear that careers had a big part to play in raising aspiration, schools needed to place a value on the careers service. It was suggested that the Schools Partnership Board could be the perfect vehicle for co-ordinating the provision of careers advice across the Borough.

Ms Mary Çava, Joint Head of SEN

In response to a question concerning whether the interventions that were put in place when a child was identified as having special educational needs were reviewed, the Joint Head of SEN confirmed that reviews of outcomes were undertaken. If the review demonstrated that the intervention had been successful no further action was taken, if it was considered that further interventions were necessary these would be arranged and outcomes reviewed.

The Committee considered the importance of early diagnosis for improving performance and the Joint Head of SEN explained to Members of the Committee that there were a number of ways in which identification and diagnosis of SEN took place. Health professionals were trained in identifying additional needs and once additional needs had been identified health professionals had a duty to contact the Local Authority to raise awareness of the potential special education needs. The Local Authority would then work with parents and/or the pre-school setting to deliver any additional support that may be necessary.

The Joint Head of SEN reported that support was focused where it was needed and all specialist provisions were audited.

The Chairman noted that there was further investigation into the achievement levels for reading at KS1 for those children with a statutory plan as this had been a cause for concern. The Chairman asked for the outcome of this investigation to be provided to the Committee when it was available.

Ms Helen Priest, Head Teacher of Bromley Virtual School

The Head Teacher of Bromley Virtual School reported that Children Looked After had historically under performed at school. Virtual Head Teachers were champions and advocates for young people in care, working with schools to provide support and opportunities to improve performance and ensure that children looked after were in an appropriate setting, making progress and had all the support they needed. The Virtual Head Teacher was a statutory role meaning that every local authority was required to have a designated Virtual Head Teacher. In Bromley, the Virtual Head Teacher were responsible for overseeing the education progress of approximately 292 children varying in age from 2 to 18 years old.

In response to a question, the Virtual Head Teacher reported that around 30 16-18 year olds were currently pursuing apprenticeships with more children looked after being encouraged to embark on apprenticeship schemes.

In terms of the provision of information, the Committee heard that academies were co-operative, working with the external provider responsible for gather information in order to provide the relevant information. In Bromley there was 100% compliance in relation to submission of end of term data.

The Committee learnt that adopted children remained the responsibility of the Virtual Head Teacher until the final adoption order was issued, with support being provided during the period of transition. The Virtual Head Teacher reported that in its recent White Paper the Government had indicated that it wanted to bring adopted children into Virtual Schools. This proposal would need to be carefully considered and managed as it would have significant implications on resources, more than doubling the workload of Bromley Virtual School. In addition to this there were also implications in terms of parental responsibility.

The Chairman asked that some of the success stories of Children Looked After be shared with the Committee as it would support Members in their role as corporate parents.

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for the fascinating information they had shared with the Committee.

30 COMMITTEE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The Meeting ended at 9.38 pm

Chairman