

## **EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 13 March 2019

### **Present:**

Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P. (Chairman)  
Councillor Neil Reddin FCCA (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Marina Ahmad, Kathy Bance MBE,  
Yvonne Bear, Judi Ellis, Chris Pierce, Will Rowlands and  
Stephen Wells

Reverend Roger Bristow and Joan McConnell  
Emmanuel Arbenser and Michelle Fribbens  
Angela Leeves and Tajana Reeves

### **Also Present:**

Councillor Nicky Dykes, Executive Assistant to the Children, Education  
and Families Portfolio  
Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and  
Families

#### **47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In respect of Minute 57 (St Olaves Update), Councillor Wells declared that he was a Member of the Court of St Olaves and St Saviours.

In respect of Minute 53 (questions to the Portfolio Holder), Councillor Fortune declared that he was a Member of the Board of a Clarion Charity.

#### **49 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION, CHILDREN & FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2019**

A Member noted that Minute 42 referred to the 'Corporate Parenting Fun Day'. This should say 'Celebration of Achievement'.

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2019, were agreed, and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment outlined above.

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

No questions had been received.

**51 MATTERS ARISING AND WORK PROGRAMME**  
**Report CSD19049**

The Committee considered a report dealing with the Committee's business management.

In respect of matters arising from the previous minutes, a Member reported that following the Select Committee meeting she and the Leader of the Labour Group had met with the Interim Executive Director of ECHS to discuss when the information concerning the disapplication request had been relayed to Head Teachers. At that meeting the Members present had been informed that the proposal had initially been rejected by the Schools' Forum on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018. For the purposes of clarification the Interim Executive Director explained that in November the Schools' Forum had not rejected the proposals as this was not in the Forum's gift. The proposals had been discussed and concerns raised however it was agreed that the proposals should go out for consultation. The formal rejection of the proposals by the Schools' Forum came at the meeting which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019. A Member stressed that the key issue was that Members of the Education Children and Families Select Committee should have been notified of the proposals and the concerns raised by the Schools' Forum following the November meeting.

In relation to the Committee's scrutiny of the Portfolio Holder concerning the Dedicated Schools Grant at the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019, a Member highlighted that a strong point had been made about the need for the Local Authority and the Portfolio Holder to work with the Schools' Forum and give due consideration to recommendations arising out of Schools' Forum meetings. The Portfolio Holder refuted the suggestion that recommendations from the Schools' Forum were dismissed.

Moving on to the 2019/20 Work Programme, the Committee noted that it was for the new Committee which would be constituted at Annual Council to develop and agree its work programme.

**RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

**52 ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2018/19**

The Annual Scrutiny Report was noted.

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

One oral question had been received from Cllr Angela Wilkins:

**1. How many LB Bromley children are on the London Gangs Matrix and what is LBB doing to support them?**

**Given the recent report published by the Children's Commissioner which estimates that "only a fraction of the 27,000 children who are involved in gangs are known to children's services what is LBB doing to work with schools, GPs, youth clubs, health professionals, families and others to identify these 'missed' children?**

**Reply:**

We work with the Police Gang Lead to provide the numbers of children involved in gangs.

We have 12 young people we are working with that we know are gang linked , 2 of which reside in other LA's but have links to Bromley .

The Missing Exploitation Gang Affiliation (MEGA) panel meets every week to track new information, intelligence and progress of those young people we are working with. The panel is attended chaired by the Head of Service for MASH, Referral & Assessment EDT and Atlas team and attended by colleagues from Education, Youth Offending Services, Probation, Housing, Health and the Police.

New children and young people are added to the panel and names taken off the panel list dependent upon evidence of information shared.

We also work with agencies such as Safer London, Red Thread re Gang exit strategies

**Supplementary Question:**

**This is a complex area that crosses a number of departments and portfolios. Which Officer and Portfolio Holder take the lead on co-ordinating the Local Authorities response?**

**Reply:**

This would sit within Community Safety with the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Enforcement taking a strategic lead. From the Officer side, the Head of Trading Standards and Community Safety takes the strategic lead and is currently working to develop a multi-disciplinary panel to coordinate work across the Local Authority. It is still early days but the plan is to undertake a mapping exercise to ensure a proportionate and relevant response across the Borough.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful to for both the Education, Children and Families Select Committee and the Public Protection and Enforcement PDS Committee to be provided with a written statement outlining the work that was currently underway.

**2. How many children referred to Children's Services have county lines connections? Are these children being treated as victims or perpetrators?**

**Reply:**

There are currently 15 Young People known to have county lines links.

On a case by case analysis, some are treated as perpetrators and victims due to the information known about them. Others are treated as victims.

**3. What is LBB doing to work with housing associations to re-locate families at risk of gangs/youth violence?**

**Reply:**

Bromley does not hold housing stock and is a member of the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal agreement which relates to the relocation of social tenants to other boroughs. There is a great amount of work between the Local Authority and Housing Associations to identify and target people in terms of early intervention.

**Supplementary Question from Cllr Bance:**

**How did the situation occur whereby LB Lewisham were going to locate some of their troubled teenagers above Streetwise which provided support to some of Bromley's troubled teenagers?**

**Reply:**

Once LB Bromley became aware of Lewisham's plans there was a great deal of work undertaken to reject and rebuff the plans and the move did not take place.

**54 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families, Cllr Peter Fortune, attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Committee. The Portfolio Holder gave a brief introduction highlighting the following issues:-

- The outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Adult Education had been fantastic and reflected the fundamental changes to services delivery that had taken place.

- The last meeting of the Children's Service improvement Governance Board had taken place on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Thanks needed to be extended to the Independent Chairman of the Governance Board, Isobel Cattermole, for her invaluable contribution to supporting the improvement journey.
- School places had now been allocated. 73% of applicants had received their first choice. 96% of applicants had received one of their first 3 choices. These statistics were testament to the extensive work that had been done around school place planning.
- The Buller's Wood planning application for temporary buildings at the St Hugh's site had been submitted and was likely to be heard over the next month or so.

Cllr Fortune then responded to questions making the following comments:-

- The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that Members of the Committee could have been notified earlier of the decision to submit the disapplication request. It was suggested that all Members of the Select Committee should receive minutes from meetings of the Schools' Forum when they were published.
- Following the rejection of the disapplication request by the Secretary of State, a contribution of £2m to high needs funding had been made by the Council. On 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 a delegation including representatives from the Local Authority and Schools was due to meet the Minister in order to raise issues around school funding.
- In relation to the planning application for Buller's Wood; the submission of the application was done by the School and the ESFA. The Local Authority had no influence over how the application was submitted and was not involved in the decision to submit a separate application for the temporary accommodation.
- The Executive Assistant for the Children, Education and Families Portfolio noted that there was a significant amount of misinformation about School Place Planning. An event was being held on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019, which sought to dispel some of the myths about School Place Planning that existed.
- Bromley was a net importer of pupils. Details of the number of pupils offered places out-of-borough were not available at the meeting. The Chairman suggested that this type of question should be submitted to a Full Council meeting to enable a full response to be provided.
- In relation to the Aeronautical College at Biggin Hill, the Portfolio Holder was due to meet with the Principal of London South East College to discuss the next steps.
- The Portfolio Holder confirmed that his support for the Select Committee process vacillated. He could see that there were significant benefits and the detailed scrutiny of specific issues delivered some beneficial outcomes. However, there remained challenges around identifying reports that were required to be presented to the Committee. It was also noted that traditionally there was not a requirement for the Portfolio Holder to attend meetings of the Sub-

Committee however under the Select Committee arrangements there was an expectation that the Portfolio Holder attended both the main meeting and the Sub-Committee meeting.

The Chairman and Committee thanked the Portfolio Holder for his update.

## **55 SCRUTINY OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

It was agreed that this item would be deferred until the Committee's meeting in July 2019.

## **56 EDUCATION INFORMATION ITEMS**

The minutes of the Education, Children and Families Budget and Performance Sub-Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019, were noted.

## **57 ST OLAVES UPDATE** **Report ECHS19031**

The Committee received a report providing an update on the actions taken to address the recommendations made in the independent Report of Investigation into St Olave's Grammar School which was issued in July 2018. Independent monitoring had been undertaken by an experienced School Improvement Partner (SIP) jointly appointed by the School and Local Authority. A six-month review was undertaken in January 2019, with participation by the School, Local Authority, Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and the Foundation Trust. The School Improvement Partner reported that progress has been made against all of the 49 recommendations, with 30 recommendations completed and 19 recommendations underway.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Venerable Dr Paul Wright, Chairman of the Governing Body of St Olaves, and Mr Andrew Rees, Head Teacher. The Committee extended its congratulations on the positive outcome of the Ofsted inspection.

The Venerable Dr Paul Wright reported that a great deal had happened since the last update to Committee. The outcome of the Ofsted inspection had been encouraging and the findings of the inspectors had validated the partnership work between the School, Local Authority, Rochester Diocesan Board of Education, and School Improvement Partner that had taken place prior to the inspection. When the Ofsted inspection took place the School had been able to demonstrate that the recommendations arising from the Independent Investigation had been acted upon.

Dr Wright reported that a strong Governing Body was now in place and this had instilled confidence in the leadership and management of the School. There were some ongoing actions however plans were in place to address these.

Mr Rees highlighted that the report from Ofsted had recognised the improvements made across the school. It was particularly noted that that

parents were positive and that St Olave's had transformed from where it was 18 months ago.

The Director of Education emphasised Ofsted's recognition that strong leadership had driven improvements. The School had worked well with the Local Authority and other partners and there was confidence that when the 12 month update was provided all 49 recommendations would have been completed.

A Member noted the positive relationships that St Olave's was developing with primary schools in the more deprived parts of the Borough. It was emphasised that these positive relationships would encourage diversity at St Olave's.

In response to a question from the Vice-Chairman concerning actions that were not yet implemented, the Head Teacher confirmed that the School was moving toward acting on all recommendations. However, the management at the school were keen to ensure that all policies were discussed appropriately and that changes were properly embedded before signing any actions off.

In response to a question the Head Teacher confirmed that there was ongoing support for the pupils and families that had been affected the most under the old leadership regime. Avenues of ongoing support would also be available through the Local Authority.

In relation to pupils progressing into the Sixth Form, the Head Teacher confirmed that as a Grammar School there were certain criteria that had to be met in order for pupils to progress. There was a need to ensure that all pupils achieved the most appropriate outcomes and the school was trying to make the best and most appropriate decisions for individual pupils. Where it was felt that other, more suitable options were available discussions between the school, pupil and family took place. Parents had understood the rationale for pupils not progressing and there had been no appeals.

In response to a question concerning whether St Olave's would extend its technical education offer, the Head Teacher confirmed that staff would continue to focus their energies and resources into university applications as this was the chosen route for the majority of pupils. It was acknowledged that moving forward more work needed to be done around the offer of apprenticeships.

In response to a question concerning what the Local Authority was doing to ensure that a similar situation did not arise with a school in the future, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families stressed that as soon as it became aware of issues the Local Authority reacted quickly. An independent investigation was instigated with support from the School. In terms of wider issues, it had to be recognised that the education landscape was evolving and schools were now much more autonomous. As such it was essential that positive relationships with schools were developed and maintained. There needed to be positive engagement with Governing Bodies

and to this end the Local Authority, through its contractor Octavo, was providing support to Governors. Going forward there was also a responsibility for local ward members to become more involved with their local schools. The Director of Education also emphasised the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner in overseeing schools that had converted to academy status. The Local Authority worked closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner, the DfE, and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and if necessary any concerns would be raised with one or all of these organisations.

In relation to the advice given to the schools for which the Local Authority handled the statutory consultation on admissions, the Director of Education confirmed that the fact that the full proposals must be shared with the parent body was implicit in the information that was sent to schools however this would be stated explicitly in the next guidance that was circulated. The action would then be signed off as fully completed.

The Chairman thanked the Venerable Dr Paul Wright and Mr Andrew Rees for attending the meeting to provide an update to Members. It was agreed that a further update would be provided at the meeting scheduled for October 2019.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- 1. The 6-month independent monitoring report on the implementation of recommendations arising from the St Olave's investigation report be noted; and**
- 2. A further update be provided following the 12-month review of the implementation of recommendations by the School Improvement Partner.**

**58 CORPORATE PARENTS - THE ROLE OF THE ELECTED MEMBER**

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time, in law, the responsibilities placed upon councils to ensure the best outcomes for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. These duties took up the first chapter and first paragraph in the Act and its prominence highlighted the significance of this duty. The Act outlined these duties as a set principles i.e.

- a) to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;*
- b) to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;*
- c) to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;*
- d) to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;*
- e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;*

- f) for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;*
- g) to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.*

As Corporate Parents, every Councillor and officer within the Council had a responsibility to apply the above principles in the day to day decision making particularly when making decisions about services which may impact CLA and Care Leavers. All elected members and officers had a duty to act as a parent would for their own child albeit at a much larger scale. Lead Members, Councillors on corporate parenting boards, and on overview and scrutiny committees had particular responsibilities, however all members would need to ensure that they advocated and considered the impact of services for Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

The Chairman welcomed Aneesa Kaprie, Head of CLA and Care Leavers; Melissa Bob Amara, Active Engagement Officer; and Tia Lovick, Chairman of the Living in Care Council, to the meeting. The Committee expressed thanks for the comprehensive and interesting report that had been provided. Members congratulated Tia who was a recipient of the Mayors Award in 2019.

In presenting to the Committee, Tia Lovick explained that feedback received by the Living in Care Council (LinCC) demonstrated that there had been a huge improvement in respect of engagement and involvement from elected members. LinCC would be inviting Members to its meetings so that Corporate Parents could get to know some of the children for which they had responsibility. The Corporate Parenting Fun Day was also an initiative that had been established to help Members get to know some of the children so that decisions could be well informed. The idea was for members of LinCC and elected Members to jointly plan and arrange the Fun Day for maximum benefit. The two Corporate Parenting Fun Days that had taken place (in 2017 and 2018) had both been a big success. Disappointingly in 2018 only the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families, the Mayor, and the Leader of the Labour Group had attended to help plan the event and it was hoped that more Members could be involved this year. However, in 2017, 13 Members had attended the event and this rose to 15 Members in 2018. This increased participation was pleasing. Going forward it would be helpful if Members were to get involved in the planning event for the July 2019 Fun Day which would take place on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

In terms of the difference that Members could make; Tia suggested that it would be helpful for Members to develop a good understand of the different care journeys experienced by young people. This could be done through increased participation at the LinCC. Another important contribution that Members could make would be giving consideration to any appropriate work experience opportunities that might be available for young people who were in care. Turning to the role of Members as decision makers; Tia urged Members when taking decisions to give consideration to how that decision could impact on children looked after. The example that was cited was that of street lighting; as a result of experiences in care some children may be frightened of

walking down dark streets and any decisions to change the operational time of street lights could have a disproportionate impact on a child living in care. The LinCC was asking that when Corporate Parents were taking decisions they asked the following question: “Are we happy with the impact of this decision on our child?” This would demonstrate to children looked after that members were thinking about these things.

The Members also heard that care leavers received £57.90 a week living allowance. This allowance also had to cover the cost of housing which was expensive in Bromley in addition to other living expenses. The Committee considered the choices that had to be made by care leavers in terms of how to budget and allocate the living allowance.

A Member who was also a member of the Joint Fostering and Adoption Panel reported that the Joint Panel had asked that the LinCC consider questions that they would like the Fostering and Adoption Panel to ask any prospective adopters and foster carers on their behalf.

A Member raised the issue of consideration of a Council Tax exemption for care leavers. In response, the Head of CLA and Care Leavers reported that there was a discretionary fund available to provide support to care leavers who were struggling with Council Tax. The Discretionary Fund was based on need. If issues were identified a holistic approach was taken to giving advice and guidance about how a care leaver managed their budget and this support would be ongoing. The Chairman noted that the issue of a Council Tax exemption had been discussed by Full Council on more than one occasion. The majority view was that children looked after should not be treated any differently to any other 16 or 17 year old struggling with council tax. The Discretionary Fund was available and could be utilised if necessary.

In response to a question concerning whether Members understood the care journey and how Members could get to know the children for whom they had corporate parenting responsibilities Tia suggested that Members might attend LinCC meetings as this would help Members to develop an understanding of positive and negative experiences for living in care. Attendance at LinCC would also help Members to get to know the young people. It was suggested that involvement in planning the Corporate Parenting Fun Day would also present a good opportunity for engagement.

The Head of CLA and Care Leavers suggested that rather than getting to know individual children it may be helpful for Members to consider a set of principles by asking questions such as ‘how would my child feel if they were separated from their family?’ The Committee was reminded that it was the choice of the children looked after whether or not to share their stories. Members needed to ensure that opportunities were made available to the children to share their story if they wished and stories would only be shared when the children were at ease and felt confident.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families suggested that Practice Week also provided an opportunity for Members to get to know some

of their children in care. The Portfolio Holder also highlighted the importance of use of language. The Committee's attention was drawn to a report produced by TACT Fostering and Adoption entitled [Language that Cares](#)<sup>1</sup>. The report aimed to change the way in which professionals talked about children in care. The Head of CLA and Care Leavers reported that as a Service the professionals in Bromley had challenged themselves to ensure that the most appropriate language was used on a day-to-day basis.

A Member noted that the LinCC had put together some fantastic booklets which addressed some of the issues on which Members should be cited. It was suggested that it may be helpful if a directory of the booklets could be put together for Members to have as a point of reference.

The Committee also considered the issue of whether the Services provided by the Council had kept pace with the evolving need for children to have emotional support beyond the age of 18/19 years old. It was noted that 30 or 40 years ago children often left home for university and rarely returned home. Today it wasn't unusual for children to remain living with their parents well into their 20s and 30s. It needed to be recognised that the emotional development of young people had changed in the last 20 years yet this did not appear to have been reviewed either locally or nationally. In response, the Head of CLA and Care Leavers highlighted that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed a duty to provide care up to the age of 25. The Local Authority was actively looking at the services which were provided to young people between the ages of 18 and 25. The Service would always be available to listen to and advise its Care Leavers who needed support in the same way that a parent would support their children.

The Committee noted that whilst Council apprenticeship opportunities were not ring-fence for children looked after they were guaranteed an interview. There were currently two Care Leavers undertaking apprenticeships and it was anticipated that next year there would be more.

In summing up the discussion that had taken place the Chairman noted the following:

- The Constitutional Improvement Working Group should be asked to consider adding a further report heading: "Implications for Children Looked After and Care Leavers".
- The LinCC would provide some suggested questions for the Joint Fostering and Adoption Panel to ask prospective adopters and foster carers on behalf of children looked after.
- Consideration needed to be given to flow of information between the Care Leavers Forum, the Corporate Parenting Board, the Children's Executive and the Select Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.tactcare.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/03/TACT-Language-that-cares-2019\\_online.pdf](http://www.tactcare.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/03/TACT-Language-that-cares-2019_online.pdf)

- It would be helpful for Members of the Select Committee to be provided with a diagram setting out the various Boards that engaged with Children's Services.
- Opportunities for Members to provide practical support such as assistance with university applications, work experience, and job applications should be further investigated. The Head of CLA and Care Leavers reported that there was a worker in the Leaving Care Service who provided support such as this to the young people. A Member had also made an offer of mentoring support.
- It may be helpful to develop a voluntary register of Members skills and the offers of help that had been made in order to coordinate Members' engagement as Corporate Parents.
- It would be helpful to ensure that the dates of LinCC meetings to which members were invited were communicated in good time.
- Consideration should be given to identifying the most appropriate way of Members gaining an understanding of care journeys.
- That the Living in Care Council be invited annually to present to the Select Committee.

Members of the Select Committee noted that the Corporate Fun Day would be held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Committee agreed that as Easter was approaching an invitation should be sent to all Members for a donation of £10 so that vouchers could be purchased for children looked after. Members also noted that the Christmas pantomime ticket initiative which had been instigated by the Mayor in 2017 had also been popular amongst the children.

The Chairman thanked Aneesa Kaprie, Head of CLA and Care Leavers; Melissa Bob Amara, Active Engagement Officer; and Tia Lovick, Chairman of the Living in Care Council for their insightful and valuable contribution to the Committee's discussion.

## **59 WITNESS SESSION: LIFELONG LEARNING IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD OF WORK**

The Committee had been provided with a range of written evidence in advance of the meeting. This included a report providing an overview of Lifelong Learning and some of the opportunities available across the Borough, a submission from the Bromley Branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A), and a submission from Community Links Bromley.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Carol Arnfield, Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education (LBB), Ms Tracey Davis, Vice-Principal, London South East Colleges, and Mr Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley to the meeting.

The Committee began by congratulating the Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education and all the staff involved in the successful outcome of the Ofsted Inspection of Adult Education.

The Committee explored a number of themes and issues with the witnesses and the Chairman suggested that the direction of the Committee's enquiry could be distilled into three main headings:

1. Universal upskilling and provision of employability skills targeting those with more limited exposure to the universal educational system.
2. "Mid-career" training for people in the 40-50s who may have experienced redundancy and need to refocus their skills for a new career.
3. Active retirement.

The Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education began her presentation by emphasising that she welcomed the opportunity to champion lifelong learning due to the immeasurable benefits to both individuals and communities. Over the past few years, as a result of advances in the provision of technology and the impact that this has had on daily life, it had become increasingly important for adults to engage with lifelong learning. Last year Bromley's Adult Education Service had a very successful year, developing a strong range of partnerships and a significant improvement in student achievements and this was reflected in the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection.

The Vice-Principal of London South East Colleges provided the Committee with some details around the vocational offer available at London South East Colleges. There were currently 12,000 learners on a range of vocational programmes which offered 'employability skills' described as "real skills for the real world". Looking to identify skills gaps, the College worked alongside a variety of employers to ensure that industry needs were being met.

The Chief Executive of Community Links Bromley explained that his organisation was a Council for Voluntary Service and provided support work to the charity and voluntary sector. The importance of volunteering could not be underestimated. The Committee noted that the report provided by Community Links Bromley had provided examples of some of the targeted interventions in Bromley.

The Chairman noted that the University of the Third Age (U3A) had provided a very interesting submission to support the Committee's review. The Committee expressed disappointment that the Workers Educational Association (WEA) had not been able to provide any information.

Noting the advances that had been made in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the emerging suggestions that AI would start to have an effect on professions such as Law and Human Resources, the Chairman queried whether any reports analysing the impact of AI had been published. The Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education reported that as AI was still in its infancy it was too early for research reports and information was somewhat limited. The Chief Executive of Community Links Bromley explained that a report had been published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations

entitled *The Road Ahead*. There was a good focus on AI and implications for the future. It was agreed that the report would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Turing to the issue of Adult Learning in Bromley, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families noted that the additional funding that had been secured for Curriculum Leaders had played a pivotal part in the successful Ofsted outcome.

A Member expressed surprise that only 30% of learners from Bromley Adult Education College gained or sustained employment. In response, the Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education explained that generally Bromley Adult Education College catered for low level learning. As a result of this for most learners the next immediate step would be another course. The figure of 30% was typical for low level learners and a significant change to this figure was not expected. It was however recognised improvements were needed in the capturing of data.

The Committee noted that in the 2018 Autumn Term the work club at the Kentwood site had been rebranded as the Digital Drop In (DDI) Centre. Members noted that as the DDI was relatively new it was largely being advertised in the Adult Education Centres themselves. Issues such as online safety and security, and good digital housekeeping were taught as part of the student induction programme.

Noting that the report provided to the Committee suggested that partnerships with local employers were underdeveloped, the Chairman asked whether any progress had been made and received confirmation that it had not. The Chairman suggested that more should be done to develop relationships and tap into the resources of some of the larger companies across the Borough such as Tesco, Stagecoach, and Ikea who were due to open a new store in Bromley. The Committee noted that discussions had taken place with Stagecoach but there could often be challenges around patterns of shift work. In response to a question from the Chairman, the Vice-Principal of London South East Colleges reported that larger employers often provided their own bespoke training. In saying that, the College did work with a few companies to develop bespoke training packages.

A Member noted that there were a number of entrepreneurs across the Borough and Bromley had one of the highest rates of company start-ups. Members questioned the support that was available to entrepreneurs. The Vice-Principal of London South East Colleges reported that the College provided a variety of courses that would support entrepreneurs seeking to establish their own business. The Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education also confirmed that the Adult Education College was aware of people that were now running businesses as a result of courses that they had attended.

The Committee noted that there were no barriers of entrance to the Step Up to Social Work Programme in terms of age; indeed the programme was

seeking to attract increased numbers of mature applicants. In addition to the Step Up to Social Work programme, members noted that the Now Teach programme was designed to attract mature entrants into teaching and these programmes were signposted through careers services.

Turning to the issue of the devolution of funding for post-16 learning and skills to the Office for the Mayor of London, the Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education confirmed that there would be no change in funding arrangements for the first year. Although it was expected that the funding threshold for full fee remission would be attached to the London Living Wage rather than the National Living Wage. There had also been guarantees that any changes in subsequent years would be introduced through a stepped process. In response to a question concerning the ability of the Local Authority to plan to mitigate any potentially detrimental effects of devolved funding arrangements, the Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education confirmed that in theory the Local Authority should be able to plan because of the notice period of the change in funding. The Local Authority was working closely with other providers and there would be opportunities to bid for additional funding.

Looking at the future challenges, the Chairman suggested that there may be opportunities for AI to support the provision of courses for English as a Second Language due to the reducing cost of the software that was available. The Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education acknowledged that there were opportunities that were worth exploring however it was worth noting that there were numerous benefits to learners of being in a classroom environment and interacting with other learners.

In response to a question surrounding the proportion of the budget that was spent on the upkeep of buildings, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families suggested that such expenditure would come from capital budgets. As the information was not available at the meeting it was agreed that it would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The Committee noted that due to funding restrictions any update to the IT system needed to be introduced on a phased basis. Information about the age of the equipment was held and the plan was to replace the older equipment first. A Member queried whether it would be possible to seek sponsorship from nationally recognised companies for any of the work. It was suggested that this was a question for the Council's Commissioning Team as strict procurement rules were in place.

In respect of the London Local Partnership, the Chairman suggested that a request should be made for LB Bromley to transfer into the South London group. Members also suggested that further information should be sought about the cost of membership of the London Local Partnership and who it was who took the decision not to be a full member. The Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education confirmed that there was no evidence that the level of funding received by LB Bromley was affected by the fact that the Local Authority was not a Member. Neither was participation in

discussions and being able to bid affected by the Council's non-member status, although this was something that would require monitoring in the future.

The Committee noted that Lifelong Learning was interconnected with a range of other services across the Council such as staff development, and the delivery of support to young people not in education, employment or training; it was not just the Adult Education service involved in lifelong learning, there was evidence of the use of learning as an alternative therapy right across the public sector. There was a national prescribing scheme which was niche and targeted. Local discussions were underway but nothing had been commissioned by Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as yet. Bromley CCG were looking to introduce a pilot scheme in Penge and Anerley which worked with five GP Surgeries. Discussion papers had been considered but as yet there was no formal commissioning.

Noting there was no dedicated website for the opportunities for cultural enrichment across the Capital the Committee suggested that it would be helpful for such a website to be created in order to signpost people to the variety of opportunities that were available.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman thanked Mrs Carol Arnfield, Head of Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education (LBB), Ms Tracey Davis, Vice-Principal, London South East Colleges, and Mr Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley for their contribution to the Committee's review. Following the meeting a report would be prepared for consideration by Full Council.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Noting that this was the last meeting over which the Chairman would preside, Members of the Committee thanked Councillor Bennett for his professional and courteous chairmanship of the Committee. Membership extended good wishes to Councillor Bennett for his year as Mayor of Bromley.

In response, Councillor Bennett expressed thanks to the Committee and to the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Reddin. Councillor Bennett commented that he could not have asked for a better Vice-Chairman. Finally, Councillor Bennett thanked both the Interim Executive Director, and the Clerk to the Committee for their support

The Meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Chairman