

# **CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 20 June 2023

## **Present:**

Councillor Kira Gabbert (Chairman)  
Councillor Jonathan Andrews (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Jeremy Adams, Mark Brock, Graeme Casey,  
Sophie Dunbar, Robert Evans, Colin Hitchins,  
Alexa Michael and Rebecca Wiffen

Reverend Roger Bristow, Shamilah Martin, Rosie White  
and Tommy Velvick (Part 1 only)

## **Also Present:**

Councillor Kate Lymer, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families

Item 9a: Provision of Transport Services for all Client Groups only

Councillors Felicity Bainbridge and Diane Smith

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hannah Gray and Ryan Thomson and Councillors Mark Brock and Jeremy Adams attended as their respective substitutes. Apologies for absence were also received from Alice Kirby.

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBER Report CSD23079**

The report asked that Co-opted Member appointments to the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year be confirmed.

### **RESOLVED: That:**

- **The following Co-opted Membership appointments be made to the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee for 2023/24 with voting rights:**
  - **Reverend Roger Bristow, as Church (Church of England) Representative**

- **Ms Shamilah Martin, as Parent Governor (Special Schools) Representative**
- **The following non-voting Co-opted Membership appointments be made to the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee for 2023/24:**
  - **Alice Kirby, as Bromley Youth Council Representative (Part 1 only)**
  - **Tommy Velvick, as Bromley Youth Council Representative (Part 1 only)**
  - **Rosie White, as Early Years Representative**

### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Sophie Dunbar declared that she had a close family member in receipt of transport services and a Special Educational Needs-funded placement out of the Borough.

### **4 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

Two questions for oral reply and five questions for written reply were received at the meeting. A copy of those questions, together with the Portfolio Holder's responses can be viewed as Appendix A to these minutes.

### **5 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2023**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **6 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD23081**

The report set out progress against outstanding actions from previous meetings and the forward work programme of the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That:

- **Progress on matters arising from previous meetings and the forward work programme be noted;**
- **It be formally noted that the following reports will move to annual reporting:**
  - **Corporate Parenting;**
  - **Youth Justice;**

- **Private Fostering;**
  - **Independent Reviewing Officers;**
  - **Local Authority Designated Officer; and,**
  - **Virtual School.**
- 
- **The School Place Planning Working Group be reconstituted for the 2023/24 municipal year and its membership be agreed as:**
    - **Councillor Jonathan Andrews (Chairman)**
    - **Councillor Hannah Gray (Vice-Chairman)**
    - **Councillor Graeme Casey**
    - **Councillor Colin Hitchins**
    - **Councillor Rebecca Wiffen**

## **7 PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families provided an update to the Committee on her activities.

As Lead Member for Children, Education and Families, the Portfolio Holder continued to represent the Local Authority in a range of settings both locally and regionally, including the Bromley Adult Learning Board. Work was ongoing to prepare for several inspections including a Children's Services Inspection (ILACS) for which regular preparation mornings were being held. Other activities included attending the Bromley Schools' Day and Bromley Youth Council Manifesto event. The Portfolio Holder had also attended the Local Authority's *Tackling Loneliness Workshop* and recommended all Members take this excellent virtual training session which could be booked via Eventbrite.

Upcoming events included the annual Fun Day for Looked After Children to be held at the Bromley Campus of London South East Colleges on 30 July 2023 and all Members were encouraged to attend as Corporate Parents.

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

### **A CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO PLAN - 2022/23 Q4 UPDATE AND 2023/24 REFRESHED PLAN Report CEF23025**

The report presented the Children, Educations Portfolio Plan 2022/23 Quarter 4 Update and the draft Portfolio Plan for the 2023/24 financial year.

In considering Priority 3: Life Changes, Resilience and Wellbeing, a Member identified a specific action to monitor NEET performance for care leavers but queried why there was nothing similar for the general school population. The Assistant Director: Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation advised that there was no specific action as Bromley was one of the highest

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performing local authorities in England in this area, but that individual support was provided to any young person aged 16+ identified as not being in education, employment or training. Another Member noted an action on supporting children to catch-up after the COVID-19 pandemic and the Director of Education explained that the Local Authority continued to monitor attendance and attainment of Bromley students in the post-COVID period and that the remit of the Bromley Virtual School had been expanded to monitor the progress of all children with a social worker as well as those who were Looked After. Attendance continued to be a key issue across the whole education sector and a lot of work was being undertaken to improve performance in this area.

With regard to Priority 4: Supporting and Challenging Effective Multi-Agency Working, a Member asked that a direct reference be made within the Portfolio Plan to the role of Bromley's special schools in delivering outstanding education and this was supported by the Committee. In response to a question from another Member, the Director of Education advised that statistics suggested that there was no hesitancy amongst Bromley parents in seeking statutory assessment for their children where there were concerns around additional support needs.

**RESOLVED: That progress on actions associated with the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan be noted.**

## **8 PRE DECISION SCRUTINY OF DECISIONS FOR THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

The Committee considered the following reports where the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Holder was recommended to take a decision:

### **A EARLY INTERVENTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT ANNUAL UPDATE Report CEF23022**

The report provided an annual update on the work of Early Intervention and Support Services.

Early Intervention and Family Support Services encompassed both statutory and non-statutory services and acted as the Local Authority's lead for Bromley's Support Families work. A wide range of services were delivered including Children and Family Centres, Bromley Children Project Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team, the Parenting offer and the Common Assessment Framework Team. Responsibility for Domestic Violence and Abuse work no longer fell within this service after being transferred to the Public Protection and Enforcement Portfolio during the 2022/23 municipal year.

In discussion, Members welcomed many aspects of Early Intervention and Family Support Services including the work of the Independent Volunteer Service and the Social Communications Family Support Coordinator. A Member queried whether Early Intervention and Family Support e-Flip Books 2023 were available in audio or alternative language format. The Head of Service: Early Intervention and Family Support Services advised that whilst there was a wide offering on the Service's YouTube site, this did not include the Early Intervention and Family Support e-Flip Books 2023 as these had their own web address and were also directly accessible via QR codes. The Service's two websites, [www.bromleyparentinghub.info](http://www.bromleyparentinghub.info) and [www.bromleyiass.org.uk](http://www.bromleyiass.org.uk), already had multi-language functionality and work was underway to further improve accessibility of the Service's content, including with audio files. Another Member congratulated the service on its nomination and shortlisting as a finalist of the prestigious national Children and Young People Now Award for Early Intervention.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the annual update.**

## **B EDUCATION PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2023/24 Report CEF23026**

The report set out the Education Planned Maintenance Programme for 2023/24.

The Local Authority received an annual School Conditions Allocation from the Department of Education to undertake capital maintenance works at Local Authority Maintained Schools. The allocation for 2023/24 was made on the basis of five remaining Local Authority Maintained Schools, of which Riverside SEND School operated out of four satellite sites and would be distributed with reference to each school's development plan as well as condition surveys and the Department for Education's Condition Data Collection reports. The Local Authority was also supporting decarbonisation of the maintained school estate for which £39k had been set aside in the Education Planned Maintenance Programme 2023/24 with an additional capital expenditure contribution of £60k secured in principle from Section 106 funds to support solar panels at schools subject to meeting carbon reduction criteria.

In response to a question from a Co-opted Member, the Head of Strategic Place Planning advised that that Local Authority had previously secured a grant from the Salix for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3 scheme to replace the heating system at Southborough Primary School and that further bids would be made to this scheme where applicable to deliver necessary heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency projects across Bromley schools.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

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- **Note the School Condition Allocation of £388,472 from the Department for Education to support the capital maintenance of community and foundation-maintained schools within Bromley during 2023/24;**
- **Delegate authority to the Director of Education to authorise the allocation of the £388,472 School Condition Allocation received for 2023/24;**
- **Note an additional £60,000 capital expenditure funding from Section 106 allocations to support decarbonisation;**
- **Authorise the proposed expenditure of capital funding up to the sum of £865k based on the five remaining Community and Foundation schools as set out in Report CEF23026;**
- **Agree that maintenance works will normally be procured through open procurement. The Local Authority may also on occasion delegate funds to schools or commission its Corporate Property Team to deliver capital works; and,**
- **Note that the Local Authority's Lot 4 consultant has been commissioned to support the Local Authority where required in the planning and project management of education planned maintenance works.**

**C PROCEEDING TO PROCUREMENT (GATEWAY 0/1): FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE  
Report CEF23024**

The report provided details of the existing Family Group Conference service that supported children and young people to remain within their family networks and reduce the number entering the care system. The existing contract for the provision of this service would end on 31 March 2024 and approval was requested to proceed to tender for a new Family Group Conference service for a five-year contract commencing on 1 April 2024, with the option to extend for a further two years.

In response to a question from a Member, the Integrated Strategic Commissioner advised that whilst the Family Group Conference service was not statutory, pressure on statutory services was reduced by supporting families to work on their strengths and identifying family and friends with whom a child or young person could be placed. Providers tendering to deliver this service would be scored on a number of factors including a 20% weighting for social value which was based on the providers commitment to measures including a local supply chain and recruitment, apprenticeship opportunities and prioritising Children Looked After in work placements. The Director of Children, Education and Families observed that the Local Authority

had lower numbers of children in care than the London average and its statistical neighbours and that services such as the Family Group Conference service contributed to this success.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to grant approval in agreement with the Director of Children, Education and Families, Director of Corporate Services and Governance, Assistant Director of Governance and Contracts and the Director of Finance to proceed to tender for a new Family Group Conference service for a five-year contract commencing 1 April 2024, with the option to extend for a further two years, at an estimate annual value of £129.6k (estimated whole life value of £907k).**

#### **D SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING REPORT 2023-27 Report CEF23031**

The report presented the Bromley School Places Plan 2023-27 that set out the Local Authority's plans to meet the forecast need for primary, secondary and specialist school places and sought agreement to the recommendations of the School Place Planning Working Group which met on 26 April 2023.

A Member asked about attending schools beyond borough boundaries and the Head of Strategic Place Planning advised that Bromley was a net importer of children and that for the secondary phase of education, 17% of Bromley children and young people attended a school out of the Borough whilst 21% of Bromley school places were allocated to out-of-borough pupils. This was in part due to the location of schools and pupil preference, but also reflected the high quality of Bromley schools, many of which were rated as 'Outstanding'. The Harris Federation had recently withdrawn its application to open the Harris Kent House Free School due to lack of outside play space and this raised concerns around meeting demand for secondary places in the North West of the Borough. The Chairman queried whether it was planned to increase the number of special school places available at Riverside School's Phoenix Centre campus and the Director of Education advised that the Local Authority continued to work with Riverside School around delivering additional places where feasible. Work was ongoing to establish a new special free school, Redwood Academy, to be delivered by the Department for Education, and that this would enable more Bromley pupils to attend an in-Borough provision. Site surveys for the planned special free school were due to commence shortly.

In response to a question from a Co-opted Member, the Head of Strategic Place Planning explained that the School Place Planning Report 2023/27 focused on education provision to Year 11, but that Bromley and other local authorities had raised issues about capacity at post-16 with the Department for Education which had responsibility for funding additional sixth form places.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

- **Note pupil roll projections and other trend data set out in Report CEF23031 and its appendices;**
- **Note the continued increase in the number of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan above demographic trends;**
- **Agree that a planning margin of 5% above the Greater London Authority School Roll Projections continue to be implemented to provide for local variations in need and to meet parental preferences;**
- **Agree that the Greater London Authority School Roll Projections indicate a potential future reduction in the need for primary places and this position needs to be kept under review;**
- **Agree that whilst there are currently sufficient places available or planned to meet current and projected demand for school places, the Local Authority will work with schools to safeguard the existing supply of school places as required;**
- **Agree that the Local Authority will prioritise the needs of education within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;**
- **Agree there are specific pressures for placements for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans and that the Local Authority will work with local schools, trusts and the Department for Education to bring proposals forward to increase capacity and improve provision where necessary. The High Needs Funding and Estates Review will be a key route for identifying opportunities to bring forward additional capacity;**
- **Agree that discussions be undertaken with schools, multi academy trusts and the Department for Education as outlined in Report CEF23031 to ensure a sufficient supply of mainstream school places in the Borough, including through expansions and opening new schools;**
- **Note a recent notification received from the Department for Education's Regional Director that the Harris Federation has withdrawn its application to open the Harris Kent House free school;**
- **Note that whilst there has been delay in the delivery of the special free school, Redwood Academy, the Local Authority is working proactively with both the Department for Education and operator, Rivermead Inclusive Trust to open the school at the earliest opportunity;**



- **Agree that the Local Authority should actively seek to increase the capacity of in-Borough specialist provision;**
- **Agree where expansion is agreed, this will be implemented through the education capital programme (subject to the availability of funds; and,**
- **Agree that Officers continue dialogue with the Department for Education on amending the primary and secondary planning areas.**

**E PROVISIONAL OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23  
Report CEF23033**

The report presented the provisional outturn position for the Children, Education and Families Portfolio for the 2022/23 financial year.

The provisional outturn for the 'controllable' element of the Children, Education and Families' budget for the 2022/23 financial year showed an overspend of £8,761k in the Revenue Support Grant compared to the last reported figure of an overspend of £8,933k which was based on activity at the end of December 2022. The overspend was due to a number of factors including increasing demand for services, the rising cost of provision in some service areas and additional staffing costs. Senior officers were meeting on a regular basis to scrutinise and challenge the expenditure position and management action was being taken to address identified issues. In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Children, Education and Families Finance clarified that in addition to the overspend in the Revenue Support Grant, there was also an overspend in Dedicated Schools Grant of £5,563k which was a national issue caused by growing pressures within the High Needs Funding Block. The Local Authority had developed a robust Deficit Recovery Management Plan in consultation with the Department for Education to help contain and ultimately recover the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and as an interim measure the Government had put a Financial Disregard in place which meant that such deficits did not have to be counted within the reserves of local authorities. The Member underlined the importance of setting realistic budgets for services within the Children, Education and Families Portfolio moving forward and the Head of Children, Education and Families Finance confirmed that in setting the Portfolio's budget for 2023/24, due consideration had been given to service demand.

Another Member asked about Special Educational Needs Transport and was advised that this service was operating within budget although demand remained high and there continued to be issues around the availability of drivers and transportation. In response to a question from a Member on grant funding, the Head of Children, Education and Families Finance explained that grants with explicit right of repayment had a specific purpose but that other grants with no explicit right of repayment could often be used more flexibly. A

grant of £1,187k from the Department for Education to support Ukrainian children with their education had been carried forward to the 2023/24 financial year and schools would be encouraged to make bids for this funding which formed part of the Local Authority's wider support offer to the Ukrainian community.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- **The latest projected overspend of £8,761,000 on controllable expenditure at the end of the 2022/23 financial year be noted;**
- **It be noted that the Council's Executive would be asked to agree the net carry forward outlined in Appendix 2 to CEF23033 at its meeting on 5 July 2023; and,**
- **The Portfolio Holder be recommended to endorse the provisional outturn position for the Children, Education and Families Portfolio for the 2022/23 financial year.**

**9 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS**

**A PROVISION OF TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR ALL CLIENT GROUPS - ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT  
Report CEF23023**

The report, considered jointly by the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee and Adult Care and Health PDS Committee, presented annual monitoring information for the provision of transport services for all client groups.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health underlined the importance of ensuring that the transport services met the needs of all of its users, including timeliness of pick-up and drop-off. A further report on transport services would be considered jointly by the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee and Adult Care and Health PDS Committee in November 2023.

**RESOLVED: That:**

- **The content of this contract monitoring report on the performance of the contract for Transport Services be noted; and,**
- **Actions detailed at Paragraph 8.3 to Report CEF23023 on the future delivery of transport services be noted and that Officers take forward the process to review the commissioning options for this service as the contract end date of August 2025 approaches.**

**B ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK  
Report CEF23029**

The report presented 'Curiosity and Influence', a refreshed Engagement Framework, to replace the existing User Voice Framework. This report would also be considered by the Adult Care and Health PDS Committee at its meeting on 27 June 2023.

A Member suggested that a reference to Bromley residents being happier with our services on Page 6: The Benefits of Engagement be amended to state 'Our residents will make better use of our services', and this was supported by the Committee.

**RESOLVED: That the refreshed Engagement Framework, 'Curiosity and Influence' be endorsed, subject to the above amendment.**

**C PERFORMANCE REPORTING - CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY  
DATASET PART 1 (PUBLIC) REPORT  
Report CEF23028A**

The report presented a regular update on the performance of services for children across a suite of performance measures.

With regard to Indicator 26: Average Caseloads, the Chairman observed that average caseloads within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams had reduced to 18 but had still not met the caseload promise. The Director of Children, Education and Families confirmed that work was ongoing to reduce average caseloads to 12-15 cases. Twelve social workers had recently been recruited from Zimbabwe and South Africa and five further applicants would be interviewed during June 2023. In response to a question from a Member in relation to Indicator 12: Children that have become the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the Second or Subsequent Time, the Assistant Director: Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation advised that whilst it was important to monitor recurrence, this indicator also provided a level of assurance as it demonstrated that children at risk of significant harm were being identified and that necessary actions were being taken to keep them safe.

In considering Performance Indicator 32/33, the Vice-Chairman observed that the number of Education, Health and Care Plans issued varied from month to month with only a small proportion completed within the statutory 20-week timescale. The Director of Education explained that this was primarily due to delays in receiving professional advice across some specialist areas, and that improving performance in this area remained a top priority with additional provision being commissioned to build capacity in key specialist areas. The Vice-Chairman requested that a breakdown of the number of Education, Health and Care Plans issued on a monthly basis be included in future Part 2 (Exempt) performance reporting and this was agreed by the Committee.

**RESOLVED: That the March 2023 outturn of key performance indicators and associated management commentary be noted.**

**D CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES RISK REGISTER -  
UPDATE QUARTER 4  
Report CEF23027**

The report set out the Children, Education and Families Risk Register update for Quarter 4 of the 2022/23 financial year.

**RESOLVED: That the current Children, Education and Families Risk Register and the existing controls in place to mitigate the risks be noted.**

**E CONTRACT REGISTER PART 1 (PUBLIC)  
Report CEF23028A**

The Committee considered a report setting out the Contract Register for the Children, Education and Families Portfolio.

**RESOLVED: That Members' comments on the Contracts Register as at 31 March 2023 be noted.**

**F DEEP DIVE: MENTAL HEALTH  
Report CEF23030**

The Committee welcomed James Postgate: Associate Director of Integrated Commissioning, NHS South East London (Bromley), Gill Allen, Director and Yvonne Onyeka, Getting Health Team Manager, Bromley Y, and Lauren Crane, Assistant Director: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Dominic Leigh, CAMHS Manager, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust who gave a presentation on the core mental health and wellbeing offer for children and young people.

In considering the presentation, the Chairman raised concerns at the significant waiting times for treatment within CAMHS. The Assistant Director: CAMHS advised that waiting times were a national issue due to the increasing number of referrals which had increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with difficulty recruiting clinical staff. Long waiting times for a particular treatment did not necessarily mean that service users were not receiving other interventions and treatments, and all assessed service users were allocated a support worker. Huge advances had recently been made developing the acute end of the care pathway for those children and young people with the highest level of need. This included the introduction of 24/7 crisis care at the Princess Royal University Hospital in which young people were seen by CAMHS within 30 minutes of referral. Progress had also been made in securing local psychiatric beds for young people who needed them.

In response to a question from the Vice-Chairman, the Associate Director of Integrated Commissioning, NHS South East London (Bromley) confirmed that Bromley's mental health services worked both together and with other partners on a regional and national basis to learn from, share and implement best practice. The Director, Bromley Y gave the example of work undertaken

by the Bromley Y with other voluntary sector organisations in developing a robust social prescribing offer including mentoring and youth ambassadors. A Co-opted Member asked about the integrated single point of access for children and young people to access mental health and wellbeing support which had been identified as one of the key campaign areas of the Bromley Youth Council for 2023/24. This single point of access would be launched in October 2023 and would allow any professional, young person, parent or carer to make a referral for mental health and wellbeing services that would be screened and triaged to ensure children and young people were placed on the correct pathway and that those at the highest level of need were prioritised. Bromley Y also ran a range of webinars and workshops for young people on managing anxiety or tackling low mood which could be signed up to via the Bromley Y website.

The Committee thanked James Postgate, Gill Allen, Yvonne Onyeka, Lauren Crane and Dominic Leigh for their excellent presentation.

**RESOLVED: That the thematic session be noted.**

**10 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000**

**RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the items of business listed below as it was likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.**

**The following summaries  
refer to matters involving exempt information**

**11 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2023**

The Part 2 (Exempt) minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**12 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS PART 2 (EXEMPT)**

**A CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD AND REPORT - Q4 (PART 2)**

The Committee considered a report setting out Part 2 (Exempt) aspects of performance reporting against the Children's Scrutiny dataset.

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**B CONTRACTS REGISTER PART 2 (EXEMPT)**

The Committee considered a report setting out Part 2 (Exempt) aspects of the Contract Register for the Children, Education and Families Portfolio.

The Meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Chairman