

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.00 pm on 13 September 2023

## **Present:**

Councillor Kira Gabbert (Chairman)  
Councillor Jonathan Andrews (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Graeme Casey, Sophie Dunbar, Robert Evans,  
Christine Harris, Alexa Michael, Ryan Thomson,  
Thomas Turrell and Rebecca Wiffen

Reverend Roger Bristow and Shamilah Martin

Alice Kirby and Tommy Velvick (Part 1 only)

## **Also Present:**

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

Councillor Jeremy Adams and Rosie White (observing)

Item 8a: 0-25 Progress Report only

Councillors Jessica Arnold, Felicity Bainbridge and Diane Smith

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin Hitchens and Hannah Gray and Councillor Christine Harris and Thomas Turrell attended as their respective substitutes.

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health and Members of the Adult Care and Health Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee who were attending the meeting in respect of Item 8a: 0-25 Progress Report which was a service that came within the remit of both Portfolios. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Brock and Kim Botting with respect to this item.

## **15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman declared that she was a Private Foster Carer and a member of the Fostering Panel in relation to Item 12a: Private Fostering Annual Report.

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

Two questions for oral 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.

**17 MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2023**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

**18 MATTERS OUTSTANDING AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME Report CSD23117**

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

In considering the forward work programme, the Vice-Chairman proposed that a Deep Dive be undertaken on how young people with special educational needs and disabilities and Looked After Children were supported to transition from education into employment and this was agreed by the Committee.

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

**19 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. Other activities included attending the annual Corporate Parenting Fun Day and the Bromley Stars event which had recognized the incredible work of teams and individuals from across Children, Education and Families services. The Portfolio Holder had attended the grand opening of the new Marjorie McClure School site in Chislehurst, and it was planned to arrange a Member visit to the site in the coming weeks.

A Member requested an update be provided on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Bromley schools. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that RAAC had not been identified in any Bromley schools following a comprehensive programme of visual surveys and that intrusive surveys would be commissioned by the Department for Education on an as-needed basis where there were any remaining concerns. The Local Authority and Regional Schools Director held responsibility for the condition of Local Authority Maintained and Academy Schools respectively and would continue to monitor the situation closely.

The Portfolio Holder then gave an update on the recent move of the Streetwise Youth Centre to Anerley Town Hall as outlined below:

*The move to Anerley town hall has now been completed. In terms of provision at the new venue, we have brought lots of existing resources with us*

*and have access to table tennis, laptops, games consoles, sewing machines, indoor footballs, badminton and uni hockey. We are in the process of organising the installation of a projector and screen and negotiating on use of the studio at Anerley town hall for music sessions.*

*Additionally, a survey was published in mid-August seeking young people's comments on what they would like to see at Streetwise, and young people from our Holiday Activity Programme also engaged in a special session where they explored what they would like from the club. Information has also been requested from Youth Ink, which is a lived experience charity that works with our young people within our Youth Justice Service, and Bromley Youth Council.*

*Starting this month, we are collating the results of the surveys and workshops, and we now move on to meeting those aims, plus onto the publicity campaign. The Council's Communications Team is leading on the implementation of the marketing campaign which commenced last week. This will include:*

- Direct contact with previous members.*
- Direct contact with schools, including attending assemblies and open evenings; working with community partners; working with doctors and health centres; as well as an online campaign.*

*We will have further information on this as we move forward, which we will be happy to share.*

*Regarding communication with the Youth Support staff – they have been sighted on the changes and forward plan for the development of the new Hub. Regarding signage and signposting, we will be moving forward with this this month, with a planned review at 3 and 6 months.*

*And regarding attendance - prior to moving premises our attendance numbers were varying on different sessions between 5 to 15 young people, so averaging around 8-10 young people per session. This has dropped to around 3 to 5 per session over the summer, but most of the work with our young people over the summer has been undertaken in the community (doing outreach work) rather than in the centre, such as the Holiday Activity and Food programme.*

*Moving forward, we aim to have at least 15 to 20 young people at any one time. As we saw in September last year, when we did a promotion campaign of the Spitfire Youth Club in Biggin Hill, that once started, numbers can increase very rapidly.*

In response to a question from a Member, the Portfolio Holder advised that exciting plans were being developed for the refreshed Streetwise provision in line with the consultation responses and the Member requested further details be provided to him following the meeting. An official launch event would be held for the refreshed provision and the Member offered to assist with the

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marketing campaign, including promoting the new provision with community groups and partners. A Co-opted Member queried whether there were plans to widen the opening hours of the Streetwise Youth Centre and the Assistant Director: Specialist Service confirmed that the operational specification of the refreshed provision would be designed in line with the needs of children and young people. One of the major benefits of Anerley Town Hall was its greater accessibility and this would enable Bromley's youth services to be more inclusive moving forward.

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

**A CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO PLAN -  
2023/24 Q1 UPDATE  
Report CEF23037**

The report presented the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan Quarter 1 update for the 2023/24 financial year.

In response to Members' questions, the Director of Education explained that the increase in the number of children who were home educated had now stabilised to pre-COVID levels and that further information regarding Bromley's home educated cohort would be provided to the Committee following the meeting. A Member underlined the need to include more information about the Borough's mainstream education offer in the Portfolio Plan and the Assistant Director Strategy, Performance and Corporate Transformation confirmed that the refreshed version of the Portfolio Plan would be updated to reflect and celebrate the achievements of mainstream education in the Borough. Another Member asked about the proportion of eligible children aged 2-years taking up funded Early Years places and was advised that work was ongoing to raise awareness of this free entitlement including outreach work with eligible families.

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

**20 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF DECISIONS FOR THE CHILDREN,  
EDUCATION & FAMILIES PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

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

**A BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24  
Report CEF23040**

The report presented the budget monitoring position for the 2023/24 financial year which showed a projected overspend of £2,142,000 forecast on the controllable budget, based on activity to 30 June 2023.

The Vice-Chairman was pleased to note a slight easing in the number of SEN referrals in the short-term and queried whether this might represent a wider reversal of the increases experienced in recent years. The Director of Education advised that whilst there had been a recent stabilisation or reduction in caseloads for all statutory services, the number of high needs placements remained high. In response to another question from a Member, the Head of Children, Education and Families Finance clarified that the current projected in-year overspend in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £4,209k was in addition to the £12,706k deficit carried forward from the 2022/23 financial year, although this had been offset slightly by an increase in the 2022/23 Early Years DSG of £600k giving an estimated DSG deficit at the end of the year of £16,315k. 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 which was a national issue affecting many local authorities. 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.

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

- 1) Note the latest projected overspend of £2,142,000 forecast on the controllable budget, based on information as at June 2023;**
- 2) Agree the release of amounts carried forward from the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Section 5 of Report CEF23040; and,**
- 3) Recommend the Council's Executive agree the release of funds from the Central Contingency as set out in Section 6 of Report CEF23040.**

**B CONSTITUTION OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM  
Report CEF23049**

The report outlined details of representation on the Schools' Forum.

**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to agree the Constitution of the Schools' Forum as set out in Report CEF23049.**

**C CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2023/24 Q1  
Report FSD23052**

The report presented the capital programme monitoring position for Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 financial year and the revised capital programme for the four-year period 2023/24 to 2027/28. It was requested to re-phase £10,000k and £8,000k of Basic Need Programme funding to the 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively to reflect revised estimates of when this expenditure was likely to be incurred.

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**RESOLVED: That the Portfolio Holder be recommended to note the current position in respect of capital expenditure and receipts following Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 financial year and the proposed revised capital programme for the four-year period 2023/24 to 2027/28 to be reported to the Council's Executive on 20 September 2023.**

## **21 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER ITEMS**

### **A 0-25 PROGRESS REPORT Report CEF23045**

The report provided an update on the progress of the 0-25 Service to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities moving into adult services which had been launched on 1 September 2022.

The Head of Service explained that a key focus of the team was to ensure young people and their families had access to information on services and opportunities and this would be further supported by a dedicated website due to be launched in the coming months. In response to a question from a Member, the Head of Service advised that the aim of the service was to avoid a cliff-edge in care and that every effort was made to ensure young people were settled before responsibility for their care transferred to the Adult Social Care team. Another Member asked for tangible examples of how young people benefitted from the service, and the Head of Service spoke of how more young people were benefitting from access to overnight short break provision and day opportunities. Funding had recently been agreed for an additional post in the Preparing for Adulthood Team and this would enable transition planning to start at an earlier stage.

**RESOLVED: That the update on the new 0-25 Service be noted.**

### **B SPENDING BY PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL MAINTAINED SCHOOLS IN 2022/23 Report CEF23035**

The report presented information on all revenue and capital balances held by Primary, Secondary and Special Maintained Schools as at 31 March 2023, and also provided a comparison to the balances held at the same time in the previous year.

**RESOLVED: That the financial position of Primary, Secondary and Special Maintained Schools at the end of the 2022/23 financial year be noted.**

### **C CORPORATE PARENTING ANNUAL REPORT Report CEF23048**

The report presented a mid-year update on the progress of children in care and care leavers in Bromley, identifying progress made against the outcomes identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

In response to a question about the proportion of Children Looked After identified as having a substance misuse issue, the Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers clarified that this referred to illegal substances. Having said that, Children Looked After were also subject to medical review when entering care with a subsequent annual health check and this provided a means by which to address other substance concerns including disordered eating and vaping. A Member asked about the increase in the Children Looked After cohort in the past year and was advised that this primarily related to the Borough's re-entry into the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied minors which was now a mandatory requirement. Another Member queried Children Looked After involved in episodes of being missing and the Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers outlined the wide-ranging work undertaken by the Local Authority and its partners to address this critical issue. This included close monitoring via the MEGA (Missing, Exploitation, and Gang Affiliation) Panel and the 'Your Choice' support and intervention programme which provided intensive visiting and Cognitive Behaviour Therapeutic support for individual young people. The Vice-Chairman was pleased to note the success of Bromley Children Looked After in education outcomes which was particularly impressive as 41% of the cohort had an Education, Health and Care Plan which was significantly above the national average of 27%. The Head of Service Children Looked After and Care Leavers confirmed that a personal education plan was put in place for all children entering care and reviewed on a termly basis. Children Looked After also benefitted from an individualised participation offer with a range of support available to help them thrive, including confidence building activities and mentoring.

The Chairman led the Committee in thanking the Children Looked After and Care Leavers team for their excellent work.

**RESOLVED: That progress made towards the actions identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy be noted.**

**D PERFORMANCE REPORTING – CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY  
DATASET PART 1 (PUBLIC) REPORT  
Report CEF23038A**

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

A new Performance Indicator had been introduced to show a combined figure for those Children Looked After who had achieved permanence and the Chairman requested a note be added in future reporting to break this down into the numbers of children granted Adoption and those with Special Guardianship Orders. A Member asked about Indicator 12: Children that have

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become the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the Second or Subsequent Time and the Head of Service Strategy & Performance (Children & Education) confirmed that this indicator provided a level of assurance by demonstrating that children at risk of significant harm were being identified and that necessary action was being taken to keep them safe. Another Member asked about a recent increase in average caseloads for Children's Social Workers and was advised that a spike in referrals was expected prior to the Summer, Winter and Easter breaks and that increased capacity was built into services to meet demand at these peak times.

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

**E CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES RISK REGISTER –  
UPDATE: QUARTER 1 – 2023/2024  
Report CEF23039**

The report set out the Children, Education and Families Risk Register update for Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 financial year.

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

**F DEEP DIVE: EDUCATION HEALTH CARE (EHC)  
Report CEF23046**

The Committee welcomed Jared Nehra, Director of Education, Fiona Nnanyere, Education Transformation Lead, Amanda Quincey, Group Manager: SEN Statutory Assessment Team and Victoria Soper, Director of Children and Young People Services at Bromley Healthcare who shared their expertise on education, health and care (EHC).

A Member was concerned to note the number of EHC Plans that were completed outside of statutory timescales. The Director of Education explained this was primarily caused by delays in receipt of professional advice which had been exacerbated by ongoing recruitment and retention issues across a number of specialist areas. There had been a marked improvement in turnaround times for assessment in the short-term, and going forward it was anticipated that an increasing proportion of EHC Plans would be completed within statutory timescales as the backlog was cleared, particularly as more children and young people accessed services via the graduated offer. The Group Manager: SEN Statutory Assessment Team outlined the Local Authority's robust process for securing professional advice and advised how timescales were further improved through the inclusion of health partners on decision-making panels. The Director of Children and Young People Services at Bromley Healthcare advised Members of work being undertaken by health partners to improve timeliness of professional advice. This included building specialist resources in areas of shortage as well as transforming the way that Speech and Language Therapy was delivered in Bromley schools.



A Member underlined the importance of quality and asked whether the advice of health professionals was recorded in full on EHC Plans. The Group Manager: SEN Statutory Assessment Team confirmed that professional advice was recorded as given except where there was conflicting advice in which case clarification was sought before the Plan could be agreed. Additionally, it was a statutory requirement to share the draft plan with parents or carers and this helped ensure that EHC Plans did not deviate from professional advice without the agreement of the child's parents or carers. The Director of Education further outlined how quality assurance underpinned the EHC Plan process including the robust monitoring processes in place for external plan writing and professional advice commissioned from external providers.

A Member observed that the five main priority areas under the SEND Strategic Vision and Priorities for 2022-23 did not include a reference to quality and the Director of Education agreed to feed this back to the SEND Governance Board which set the priorities. Another Member was interested in the proportion of children with EHC Plans attending Local Authority Maintained, Academy and Independent Schools. The Director of Education emphasised that whilst there was variability between individual schools, the type of setting was not a factor as EHC Plans specified the support to be provided. In response to a question from a Member regarding a specific case in which the parents were unhappy with the way the School was meeting their child's needs, the Group Manager: SEN Statutory Assessment Team explained that the Local Authority adhered to the national funding formula to meet needs specified in EHC Plans and that schools had the right to seek a review if there were any concerns around funding for a specific child.

The Committee was advised that a Celebrating Bromley SEND Stars event would be held on 1 November 2023 to celebrate Bromley families and the professionals who supported them, and all Members were invited to attend.

The Chairman led the Committee in thanking Jared Nehra, Fiona Nnanyere, Amanda Quincey and Victoria Soper for sharing their expertise.

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

## **22 CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES INFORMATION ITEMS**

The items comprised:

- Unauthorised absence from Schools

**RESOLVED: That Information Items be noted.**

## **23 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**

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**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**

**24 EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2023**

The Part 2 (Exempt) minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

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

**A PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee considered an annual update on Private Fostering arrangements for children in Bromley which provided an overview of activities for the 2022/23 financial year.

**B ANNUAL ADOPTION REPORT**

The Committee considered an annual update on adoption activity for children in Bromley which provided an overview of activities for the 2022/23 financial year.

**C PERFORMANCE REPORTING – CHILDREN’S SCRUTINY DATASET PART 2 (EXEMPT) REPORT**

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

The Meeting ended at 9.46 pm

Chairman