

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (O&S) COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1100 hours on Friday 17th July 2020, Online Meeting

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Kerry Jenkins (Acting Chair)

Councillors: Mohammed Aikhlaq, Charlotte Hodivala, and Alex Yip

Other Voting Representatives: Rabia Shami, Parent Governor Representative and Sarah Smith, Church of England Diocese Representative

Also Present:

Councillor Kate Booth, Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing

Nichola Jones, AD for Inclusion and SEND

Mark Hudson, Interim SEND Transport Manager

Mark Hanson, Manager Operations, Commissioning & Contracts, SEND & Inclusion

Jennifer Lucas, SEND Transport Consultant

Paul Robson, SEND Transport Manager

Rose Kiely, Group Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Acting Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.civico.net/birmingham) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq declared an interest as a member of the Board of Governors of Leigh Multi Academy Trust.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of:

- Councillors: Safia Akhtar and Kath Scott.
- Adam Hardy, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative and Omar Hanif, Parent Governor Representative.

4. ACTION NOTES

Councillor Yip queried whether the outstanding items from the meeting on 11th March, namely the:

- SEND Dashboard.
- The WSoA Action Plan and progress against this.
- More information on the SEND Youth Forum

had been circulated to Members.

RESOLVED

This will be followed up and the outstanding items will be circulated to the members of the committee as soon as possible.

5. SEND HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT UPDATE

Councillor Kate Booth, Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing; Nichola Jones, AD for Inclusion and SEND; Mark Hudson, SEND Transport Manager; Mark Hanson, Manager Operations, Commissioning & Contracts, SEND & Inclusion and Jennifer Lucas, SEND Transport Consultant attended for this item to talk through the presentation.

This was followed by questions from and a discussion with members. The following were among the main points raised during the discussion:

- That the length of time children spend on the transport should be taken into account when planning journeys. Members were reassured that this is being factored into planning and they work with operators to assure maximum 60 minutes travel time wherever possible, so that children are travelling for the minimum amount of time. Another 10% of vehicles (c70 vehicles) may be needed from September to achieve this.
- Reassurance was also provided that efforts are being made to keep guides on vehicles wherever possible and that the maximum vehicle capacity will be utilised.
- It was admitted that previously the DBS process had not been effectively supported by the structure. The new system provides control and 100% visibility. Only drivers who have been DBS checked will be issued with a council ID badge. Parents will receive a letter during August informing them about the new transport arrangements for September and they will also be advised about the driver and ID badge arrangements.
- The high degree of reliance on agency staff for guides was caused by the increase in routes which meant that more guides were needed and there were also issues with long-term sickness which are being dealt with.
- In relation to the projected numbers of students and the travel provision required, it was acknowledged that the reduction in the number of appeals in combination with a reduction in the numbers who will be using public

transport going forward because of COVID related issues, will increase the numbers needing travel provision.

- The application process has been streamlined and simplified and a new budget will be produced taking into account approximately 100 additional applications by September.
- Work is ongoing on a weekly basis with all Special School Headteachers and individual meetings are taking place with schools to address transport requirements and changing needs, to make sure that everything is in place for the start of the new school year.
- Newsletters from the Home to School Transport Team are sent out on a regular basis and communications are being planned from the Cabinet Member to reassure families.
- The issue about what has been contracted for, in terms of journeys, quality of care, qualifications of staff, against what is being provided which has been raised previously has still not been provided to members.
- Reassurance was sought by members and provided about the new route planning system (365 Respond) and also about the costs incurred in providing taxis. The committee may want to look at this in more detail at a future meeting.
- Similarly the committee may wish to see more information about the indicative financial benefits at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the update and the following is to be provided:

- The Assistant Director undertook to provide during August a simple snapshot showing what the council has contracted for against what is being delivered.
- The Action points previously requested in March need to be provided to members. These comprise of the SEND Dashboard, the WSOA Action Plan and progress against this and more information on the SEND Youth Forum.

6. WORK PROGRAMME DISCUSSION

There was a general discussion about the future work programme.

RESOLVED

- Members will revisit Home to School Transport on the committee work programme in 6 months (January 2021).
- In the meantime, members requested that a short report be provided to the scrutiny office to be circulated to members on any re-start issues with Home to School Transport following the return to school in September.

- Members were also advised that the Home to School Transport Inquiry report has now been included provisionally on the City Council agenda for the September 2020 City Council meeting.

RESOLVED

The committee noted the work programme items.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

A list of proposed dates for future meetings on a 6 weekly cycle of 3 hour meetings on Wednesday mornings between 10:00 – 13:00 from September 2020 for the remainder of the municipal year was circulated to members.

This was agreed. The dates are as follows:

16th September 2020; 28th October 2020; 9th December 2020; 20th January 2021; 3rd March 2021 and 14th April 2021

8. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.27 hours.