

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE  
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
23 MARCH, 2016**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE  
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY, 23 MARCH, 2016 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOMS  
3 AND 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB**

**PRESENT:** - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

Councillors Sue Anderson, Matt Bennett, Barry Bowles, Debbie Clancy, Barbara Dring, Valerie Seabright, Martin Straker-Welds, and Alex Yip.

Samera Ali – Parent Governor  
Sarah Smith – Church Representative

**IN ATTENDANCE:-**

Lisa Carter – Head of Participation and Engagement  
Seamus Gaynor – Link Officer  
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member  
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager  
Andy Pepper – Children in Care Provider Services  
Lorna Scarlett - PSS  
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer  
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

**Executive Members**

Councillor John Alden - Edgbaston  
Councillor Mahmood Hussain and Neil De-Costa - Perry Barr  
Councillor Ziaul Islam and Leslie Poulton – Ladywood  
Councillor Tony Kennedy – Hall Green

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**NOTICE OF RECORDING**

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It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.birminghamnewsroom.com](http://www.birminghamnewsroom.com)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**APOLOGIES**

- 363 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Uzma Ahmed, Mick Brown, and Chaudhry Rashid also Richard Potter for their inability to attend the meeting.
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**DISTRICT CHAIRS**

- 364 The following District Chairmen were in attendance:-

Councillor John Alden - Edgbaston  
Councillor Mahmood Hussain and Neil De-Costa - Perry Barr  
Councillor Ziaul Islam and Leslie Poulton – Ladywood  
Councillor Tony Kennedy – Hall Green

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ansar Ali Khan and Josh Jones.

Following a request from Councillor Matt Bennett copies the questions sent to the District Chairmen were circulated.

**Councillor Ziaul Islam and Leslie Poulton – Ladywood**

During the presentation and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. The Corporate Parent Champion was Councillor Sharon Thompson. There had been a presentation to the District Committee regarding Corporate Parenting. Local People including the Youth Service had been invited to the District Convention. The Youth Service had carried out presentations at District Committee meetings. Representatives from the Children's Centre had also attended. They had also discussed issues such as environmental issues.
2. Committee activities had been directed at children. Play activities had been organised for young people along with partners. Ladywood Health and Community Centre had provided signposting.
3. A few of the Councillors were Governors at Schools. Councillor Islam was a Governor at 3 schools in Aston. Councillor Kauser and himself attended schools assemblies at some schools including Sacred Heart. There were also activities such as Training and guidance, homework clubs, Be Active.
4. He was aware that many Muslim children attended lessons outside of mainstream school where some teachers were qualified from abroad and not aware of the British Education system.
5. Regulation 33 visits had been carried out by a colleague and the Chairman. Regulation 44 Visits were new.
6. With regard to developing a relationship between BEP and schools, Leslie Poulton advised they had not met the Co-ordinator for BEP and Councillors

were concerned. They would welcome advice about how to get involved with schools. The role of the District Committee was seen as giving support and addressing things like poverty etc.

7. The Chairman could find out what training had been given to the Corporate Parent Champion.
8. Councillor Dring noted that the training for Corporate Parent Champion had not yet taken place. Councillor Valerie Seabright was the Chairman of the Corporate Parent Board and said that the Board had not met owing to her recent illness.

**Councillor Tony Kennedy – Hall Green**

During the presentation and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. There was a lack of resources in the District. The deadline for the development of a District Community Plan had been delayed until June 2016 for this reason. Issues related to Children will be included. They had two Corporate Parent Champions for the District, Councillors Barry Bowles and Martin Straker-Welds.
2. The District had received a report from BEP. The BEP Co-ordinator had been asked to arrange meetings for the new year.
3. They were working with the Road Safety Team as an ongoing process. They were the first District to have a 20mph roll out. Road Safety was the main theme for the District Convention.
4. He had attended a meeting in London about the democratic ownership of public spaces working with young people.
5. Healthy Villages – He was meeting with the Leader about this.
6. It takes a whole City to raise a Child – They were considering a wraparound experience with the Health Sector, Faith, families etc.
7. The Corporate Parent Champion was Councillor Bowles. Councillor Burden had carried out Regulation 44 and 33 visits. He had attended PVE and CSE training and cascaded to other Members.
8. Not much progress had been made with BEP.
9. The Well Being Centre at Calthorpe had carried out an exercise for young people. Details were available of the briefing. There was a programme regarding how spaces were used by communities.
10. He had previously been a School Governor for 35 years. Governor vacancies were an issue. A discussion was needed about Governors on Academies and Free Schools. A toolkit and scheduling programme was suggested.

11. They were in discussions South and City College to develop activities for a Citizenship Programme aimed at children and families. They had a District Jobs and Skills Panel and were working with the DWP. There was a Jobs and Skills morning on 19 April, 2016.
12. Safeguarding issues would be incorporated in arrangements for the future.
13. Hall Green only had 3 establishments for young people in the District.
14. In response to a query about the extended deadline for the Community Plan, the deadline had been changed corporately. The Chairman undertook to follow up the issue of the deadlines being changed.
15. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds was Corporate Champion for Hall Green. His main job was to sustain a relationship with BEP. There had been no progress since a presentation in September. His Headteacher welcomed visits to the school. He would welcome a timescale and timetable Districts could embark on. The Chairman undertook to follow this up.
16. Councillor Seabright stressed the need for Councillors to receive training before engaging with young people. She felt that it was crucial to build a relationship with every school in the District prior to them being required to convert into an Academy. Councillor Sue Anderson agreed that there were difficulties in building relationships with schools and Councillor Clancy added that better communication was needed.
17. Councillors were encouraged to contact schools and email them etc to praise them when they had made an achievement.

**Councillor Mahmood Hussain and Neil De-Costa – Perry Barr District**

During the presentation and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. Councillor Barbara Dring was the Corporate Parent Champion. She was concerned that she had not received support and training for her role. The Committee had received an update from Andy Pepper on Corporate Parenting.
2. The District had engaged with the Youth Service in the area. They had 610 Centre, Lozells Recreation Group and Oaklands Centre facilities for young people. They were aware that they needed to have a better linkage with schools and support groups and youth engagement was part of the Community District Plan. They worked with colleges and partners to identify and address issues and had a parks and open spaces programme.
3. Councillors had relationships with schools in the District and some were School Governors including himself. There were 45 Schools in the District. They had had meetings with schools and organisations to discuss issues. Schools also attended the District convention and took part in Youth Forum meetings. The appropriate Officer had made contact with the Corporate Parent Champion.

4. It would be useful to have more clarity about BEP and how it was linked to the District in the future.
5. The Neighbourhood Challenge was Jobs and Skills. There was limited resources in the District therefore a strategic approach would be useful. With regard to reducing crime rates and owing to budget cuts they now worked with partners to engage young people. Councillor Dring added that in Oscott Ward a project had taken place with all schools to discuss issues such as parking and the safety of pupils.
6. Details of youth clubs etc and the activities arranged were requested.
7. Training was essential in order for the Corporate Parent Champion to carry out their role efficiently. There were already Councillors carrying out Regulation 33 and Regulation 44 visits. It was noted that Regulation 44 visits could be now be carried out to private children's homes.
8. It requested that the list and details of children's homes be sent to Councillors.

**Councillor John Alden – Edgbaston District**

During the presentation and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. Councillor Caroline Bradley was Corporate Parent Champion however she would not be standing for the next election.
2. The District had a successful Youth Club, the Stonehouse Gang set up in 1938. Some of their schools were involved with the community eg pupils working in the coffee shop etc at Hagley Road Retirement Village.
3. Councillor Matt Bennett said that there would not be the role in schools for Governors and questioned how academies would be held to account. Councillor Matt Bennett questioned how much value would be added by a Councillor visiting a school. He continued that a Tool Kit was needed to give a clear steer.
4. Councillor Alden reported that some schools allowed the facilities at the school eg. playing fields to be used by scouts etc. There was a degree of businesses coordinating with schools. Some of the District Councillors were school Governors. Councillor John Alden had previously been a Governor for 27 years.
5. Someone would be appointed as the Corporate Parent Champion following the elections.
6. With regard to Councillors visits and added value in Hodge Hill Ward Parent workshops were organised, parents spoke to Councillors and PTA's linked with other PTA's in the District.
7. The role and purpose of BEP was outlined. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds said that even though schools had been self-governed since 1997

Birmingham City Council was responsible for the welfare of children. The Council added value through road safety, family, family support, libraries and after school clubs etc.

8. Sarah Smith referred to ways of building relationships with schools eg through websites and events. BEP were appointed for the school improvement contract therefore they were accountable.
9. The Chairman and Councillor Bowles had found that they had always been welcomed in schools and it was suggested that the reason why some schools were responsive and others not be looked into.
10. Councillor John Alden informed the Committee of the background of the youth facility in his ward which had been supported by a grant from a business and fundraising.

The Chairman thanked the invitees for attending the meeting to give an update and welcomed the work experience pupils who had produced some statistics to support the Scrutiny office.

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The following reports were taken together.

**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) & CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE  
(INCLUDING THE ROLE OF DISTRICTS)**

(See document no. 1)

**ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE WITHIN THE  
SCRUTINY PROCESS**

(See document no. 2)

Councillor Seabright asked that it be placed on record the hard work carried out by Andy Pepper, Lisa Carter and their team.

1. They were happy to provide more training if required. The Regulation 44 training had been attended by 18 Councillors during 4 sessions. Invites had been sent out for the Corporate Parent Champion meeting on 19 April, 2016. They planned to provide training to all Councillors in the future.
2. The list of Children's Homes would be resent. It was updated on a 6 week basis.
3. A summary of the report and progress made was given.
4. Councillor Bowles noted that only 18 out of 120 Councillors had turned up to the training which he felt was not satisfactory.
5. In reply to Councillor Yip, Andy Pepper informed that the training for CSE had been harrowing, however there had been positive feedback.

6. Closer working relationships with the police were being worked on to ensure everything was co-ordinated to ensure young people were protected. An email was sent each week to update on children missing.
7. Lisa Carter had spoken to a number of judges. There was ongoing dialogue with the judiciary regarding the issues.
8. Lisa Carter would pick up the issue of training for mentors and invited to Scrutiny meetings.
9. Councillor Dring said that there needed to be links between different Committees with regard to CSE. There had been a debate and conference on CSE at Licensing Committee. Councillor Dring welcomed the new appointment to the team. Andy Pepper undertook to follow up the link with Licensing related to the Corporate Parenting Board and CSE. Following the 19 April 2016 meeting of the board some more dates would be identified. It was suggested that training sessions be organised to take place before the Council meeting or District meeting.
10. In reply to Councillor Debbie Clancy a Pathway Plan should be put together for each child in care at 15 1/2 years old. At present this was being done when they were 17.
11. The net amount of foster carers had been reduced despite some being recruited owing to some not continuing. A new recruitment campaign was in place. Mentors were working close with virtual schools to raise achievements. The laptops had all been allocated to young people.
12. In reply to the Chairman they took the opportunity to meet young people through various events. The details of the meeting would be resent to Councillor Dring.
13. Lisa Carter was happy to meet Councillors after the meeting with regard to the Voice of Children. The Chairman felt that the 100 questions exercise had been useful. Councillor Dring suggested a session on CSE be held in the scrutiny meeting. The Chairman would consider fitting the item in the work program.
14. Elected Members were welcome to visit the Children in Care Council however the maximum should be 2 Councillors at a time who should make it clear why they were there and ensure it was a good experience for the young people.
15. Lorna Scarlett gave an update on the changes to the team. A third report had been prepared and it was requested that this be sent to Councillors so that they could email questions if they so wished.

(See document no. 3)

16. The Children in Care team had been reorganised on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016 combining the previous specialist work of the area Court teams and Children in Care. In reply to Councillor Debbie Clancy the workload for a

Social Worker had reduced to 18 and it was hoped that it would further reduce to 15.

17. Andy Pepper informed that there were 1827 children in care. He undertook to check the amount of children in foster care as he did not have the information to hand.

365 **RESOLVED:-**

That the reports be noted.

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**DATES AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

366 It was noted that the next meeting was on Wednesday 20 April at 1400 hours in Committee Rooms 3 and 4 in the Council House.

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

367 None were received.

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**OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

368 The Chairman reminded the Committee that there was still a Parent Governor vacancy on the Committee.

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**AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**

369 **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.

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The meeting ended at 1732 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON