

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (O&S)

COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

10:00 hours on Wednesday 14th November 2018, Committee Rooms 3 & 4 – Actions

Present:

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

Councillors: Diane Donaldson, Shabrana Hussain, Kerry Jenkins and Alex Yip.

Also Present:

Councillor Kate Booth, Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing

Councillor Mary Locke, Learning, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee

Councillor Kath Scott, Learning, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee

Rabia Shami, Learning, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee

Anne Ainsworth, Acting Corporate Director for Children and Young People

Rose Kiely, Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Jennifer Langan, Travel Assist Lead

Sharon Scott, Acting AD for SEND

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING

The 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. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair brought the item forward on the agenda and welcomed Councillor Kerry Jenkins in place of Councillor Safia Akhtar as a Member on the Committee.

RESOLVED:

Councillor Kerry Jenkins noted as a Member on the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Alex Yip declared he is a school governor at Wilson Stuart School.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Charlotte Hodivala.

5. ACTION NOTES

(See document 1)

RESOLVED:

The action notes of the meeting held on the 17th October 2018 were confirmed.

6. TRAVEL ASSIST

(See document 2)

The Chair informed the Committee that members of the Learning, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee had been invited to attend, as Travel Assist was also within their remit. The Chair welcomed Councillor Mary Locke, Councillor Kath Scott and Rabia Shami to the meeting.

Councillor Kate Booth, Cabinet Member for Children's Wellbeing, Anne Ainsworth, Acting Corporate Director for Children and Young People, Sharon Scott, Acting AD for SEND and Jennifer Langan, Travel Assist Lead, presented the item and answered Members' questions.

The discussion included the following commitments and information requested. It was acknowledged that some of the information could not be provided until the new IT was in place:

- The Cabinet Member recognises this is an important issue, as it is about getting the right outcomes for our young people and scrutiny's role with this. Therefore, she is more than willing to come back to a further committee meeting and / or have a monitoring team or support group etc.

Guides

- There are no legal requirements regarding guides, instead this is covered by good practice.
- This is an ageing workforce and a difficult job for quite low pay.
- They rely on agency staff.
- Council staff are paid a grade two, however, pay varies for each agency contract.
- They work with a lot of schools regarding the guides.
- They have rolling recruitment and hope there will be an improvement in recruiting.
- The decision is made by the Panel as to whether a child needs a guide.
- From now on communication with parents/carers will state whether their child needs a guide.
- They are currently working on the guides having a separate telephone line so they can get through to the service.
- Cllr Yip queried the safety and whether risk assessments and legal advice were undertaken when guides were removed in September with a three day notice period. Also queried was whether the decision was taken because these were the shortest routes. The Cabinet Member stated that the guide that was on the route previously was not there for their child, however, acknowledged that the

notice period was unacceptable and measures have been put in place so this does not happen again. Also, the Panel decision was not made because of these being the shortest routes.

EHCP

- Members requested if school travel recommendations could be included in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). However, the Acting AD stated that Local Authorities must adhere to the statutory guidelines and travel could not be written into EHCP's.

Personal Transport Budgets

- The Travel Assist Lead would encourage Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs).

Risk Assessments

- There is a generic risk assessment for every route and there is an annual risk assessment for children.

Budget

- The Travel Assist budget is £18.4m and has a budget pressure of £3.5m.
- Post 16 travel costs are subsidised by the Council.
- There are increases in: demand for the service, fuel and commissioning costs.
- This sits within the wider SEND agenda and they are working through the Ofsted report and undertaking a review of the sufficiency of suitable school places.
- Also, a number of mitigations are being explored: back office costs, whether the budget can be passed to the schools and undertaking realistic modelling. Due to the financial pressures schools may already be under Members expressed concern regarding the ability of schools to provide the service if this was a cost cutting exercise and the budget wasn't ringfenced.

New IT System

- There is a spending freeze, however, they may be able to borrow from reserves for the cost for the new IT system as this should save money. For instance they currently have some stand alone systems they have to pay for. Also, contractor compliance and KPIs is not as robust as it could be and the new IT will assist with this. The new App would also assist parents and carers to track progress of the minibus so they will know when their child arrives at school.

Complaints

- The complaints database will be rolled out by the end of the month.

Vehicles

- They have brought in a vehicle compliance officer due to concerns raised previously on the state of the vehicles.
- Issues with the Clean Air Zone (CAZ).

Cabinet Report

- Members queried whether the decisions within the 26th June 2018 Cabinet report, including the contract tendering process, are on track and therefore a further Cabinet report will be presented in the autumn seeking approval for the new 0-25 policy and proposed procurement strategy. It was confirmed that they were on track and a lot of resources are being put into this. The Cabinet Member confirmed they are more than willing to report back to scrutiny.

Post 19-travel

- Cllr Yip asked why the Council has been without a post 19 travel policy for five years and this needs to be urgently resolved. The Cabinet Member thanked Cllr Yip for bringing this to her attention.

Head Teachers of Special Schools

- Cllr Yip raised the issue of the letter of no confidence that had been signed by 15 Head Teachers. The Acting AD stated that they had addressed the concerns in writing and this has been sent to all the Head Teachers of the 27 special schools. There was also a discussion at the Special Heads Forum and the matter has been resolved and closed.

Requested Information

- Members requested the following information, however, it was acknowledged that not all the requested information can be provided until the new IT system is in place:
 - A further breakdown on the average travel figures.
 - Figures on out of city.
 - Details of the routes that have two guides or more.
 - First aid training specification.
 - Figures on all appeals to include how many applied, reasons and outcomes.
 - Details of the core cities benchmarking.
 - Breakdown on the data and cost of taxis.

RESOLVED:

Update noted and further information to be provided.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document 3).

RESOLVED:

The work programme was noted and the following was agreed:

- The Cabinet Member to be requested to attend the 12th December 2018 committee meeting to provide an update on her portfolio and budget.
- Today's discussion was welcomed and following the commitments given by the Cabinet Member and Officers regarding Travel Assist it was agreed that a Travel Assist Inquiry was not needed at this time. Rather, this can be discussed after the report has gone to Cabinet and the political leads on the Committee can meet bi-monthly.
- A further update on the Children Missing from Home and Care Inquiry was requested.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

Noted the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 12th December 2018 at 1000 hours in Committee Rooms 3 & 4.

9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS

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 12.42 hours.