

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

<p>EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 9 DECEMBER, 2015</p>
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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER, 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3 AND 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

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

Samera Ali – Parent Governor
Sarah Smith – Church Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Tim Boyes, Chief Executive Officer, BEP
Colin Diamond, Interim Executive Director for Education
Seamus Gaynor – Link Officer
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member
Steve Howell - COBS
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Fiona Wallace - COBS
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Andrew Wright – Head Teacher, Virtual School for Looked after Children

NOTICE OF RECORDING

320 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (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

321 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Uzma Ahmed, Valerie Seabright and Richard Potter for their inability to attend the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

322 The Chairman thanked the Committee and officers for their contributions whilst she had been away sick.

- Delete Councillor Penny Holbrook from attendance
- Add apologies Councillor Matt Bennett
- Page 234 Seabright not Seabrook
- 313 – Peter Hay and not Alastair Gibbons presented the report.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November, 2015, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

323 Councillor Barry Bowles declared an interest as the Vice Chair of COBs.

PERMANENT SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

The following report and presentation was submitted:-

(See document no. 1)

Andrew Wright presented the report and presentation. During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. Andy Wright informed that following the last scrutiny report a number of queries had been made about exclusions.
2. In reply to comments from Councillor Matt Bennett, the DFE project had been evaluated at national level. They were looking at data for exclusions in order to target schools. There would be an evaluation at the end and a reduction was expected although the level had not been agreed. Councillor Debbie Clancy noted that it was difficult to measure if there were no figures to compare with.
3. The Whoosh Training was personalised to meet needs. An inclusive approach for all staff was taken whether they were teaching or non-teaching.
4. Support was given to Head Teachers in vulnerable schools.
5. In reply to Councillor Martin Straker-Welds permanent exclusions were supported by the Exclusions Tem and referred to COBS. With regard to special needs 8.4% of statemented pupils were excluded.
6. Samera Ali commented about the amount of information and lack of a method to measure the benefits. It was felt that there were difficulties gaining a place in a new school once excluded and lack of support in mainstream schools for special needs. The Committee was informed that the issue of autism had been raised in a number of schools. The issue

was on the agenda and some training was being looked at to raise awareness and ensure there was appropriate support provided.

7. Sarah Smith sought clarification for the figures on page 6. She felt it was important to acknowledge the reasons for the exclusions. Andy Wright explained that the model had been made as simple as possible. A fair access protocol was also included. It was noted there were individual schools where there were concerns.
8. Councillor Dring had concerns about autistic children some of which were on permanent exclusions owing to the failure to recognise the condition. Colin Diamond was confident in the initiatives and partnership as a way to resolve the problems.
9. Councillor Sue Anderson asked about the capacity to carry out the initiatives. It was reported that schools had a team of staff and were recruiting for the first time in a number of years. The CAMS team were recruiting to ensure the job was done properly.
10. Councillor Yip declared an interest as a Governor and Chair of Exclusions at Kingsbury College. He said a more forceful approach was needed to reverse the trend and have an impact on the levels of challenges in schools. Andrew Wright's role was to guide and facilitate the partnerships and bring people together.
11. Councillor Barry Bowles requested some information about partnerships in the area.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM COBS

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 2)

Fiona Wallace and Steve Howell attended for this item. During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. COBS was on 10 sites in the City. A rise in exclusions put pressure on COBS. Exclusions were rising with Primary Exclusions being the highest. Further information was set out in the report. Re-integration figures were on page 50 of 88. Reference was made to budget constraints and increasing demands.
2. In reply to a query from Councillor Susan Barnett about the barriers to pupils attending school, a place could have been offered to a family however they could decide to wait for the exclusion appeal, also some parents wait for taxi transport to be arranged or decide to keep a pupil at home. Support was offered to families.

3. Councillor Bowles referred to the available resources. He felt that the issue of available transport was important. The Committee was informed that transport would be considered as part of the refiguration of buildings.
4. Councillor Matt Bennett spoke about individual support for children with special educational needs. He referred to page 42 of 88 appendix related to additional places. Councillor Matt Bennett felt that the policy of inclusion had failed.
5. The Committee was informed that the best use of the budget was made. There was a limit to the amount of challenging youngsters that could be in a building at one time. COBS provided an outreach service. The children with autism at the school did not have full blown autism. Colin Diamond added that 1/3rd or 1% of children was involved in COBS.
6. Councillor Dring noted that no targets were included to compare figures against. Fiona Wallace advised that the national target was no longer used. In Birmingham it was less than 2 per thousand. Page 7 showed comparisons to different parts of the Country. The information regarding the numbers of autistic children was available through the pupil census.
7. In answer to Councillor Debbie Clancy's comments about the School Structure on page 37 and school attendance, it was reported that the deadline to appeal against a permanent exclusion was 15 days. Attendance figures were up from the previous year. Councillor Debbie Clancy felt that the appeals system was failing children also that a lot of families did not appeal as they were frightened of the system. There was work to be done to ensure families were given a fair chance.
8. The range for the Sports premium would be widened to enrich the P E curriculum.
9. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds asked whether there was a particular group/cohort of children who tended to return and was informed that those who hit other children or staff and those with less controlled behaviour tended to return.

325

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

SCHOOL ATTAINMENT HEADLINE STATISTICS

The following report and copies of the presentation were submitted:-

(See document no. 3)

During the discussion the following comments were made:-

1. A lot of data compared with national and core Cities. Birmingham was on par with national Cities and was outperforming its neighbours.
2. The contract was for maintained schools however BEP was engaging with all the schools in the city. Rebuilding relationships was key to exclusions and raising standards.
3. The information on Grammar Schools would be useful. Samera Ali felt that the prospects for pupils and schools should be higher than average.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

BIRMINGHAM EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (BEP) AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Tim Boyes, BEP presented the report.

(See document no. 4)

During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. The highest number of exclusions were not necessarily in areas of deprivation. There were a handful of schools not engaged with BEP.
2. In reply to a number of questions from Councillor Sue Anderson, the contract involved BEP developing a District Model and the outcomes could be measured. The District Strategy Group was encouraging people to take District ownership and build a sense of local ownership. Some schools had not engaged in the activity. Councillor Sue Anderson spoke of the importance of the link with District Councillors and the District Plan.
3. Support was given for the BEP Model however it was felt that insufficient information had been given on the important piece of work. Tim Boyes was happy to provide a copy of the summary of the contract that had been done for the Board.
4. Colin Diamond advised that no targets had been put in at this point and the DFE had moved the goalposts. It was felt that an appropriate timescale for an update was at the end of the academic year at the September Committee meeting.
5. An intranet was currently being developed to share information.
6. Ofsted Inspections were being carried out.
7. Councillor Yip felt that the Committee should report back after a 6 month period rather than a year.
8. BEP was concerned about schools that were not engaging, weak academy chains and stand-alone academies. There were also concerns

about a number of isolated LA Schools. There was a plan to support the vulnerable and underperforming schools.

9. Samera Ali expressed concerns about the moving goalposts as soon as a school became stable. In response to her suggestion examples of real life case studies showing how schools had been supported to improve could be shared in September.
10. Councillor Debbie Clancy stated that 5-10% of pupils were not on the right courses and there had been a number of complaints from parents of careers advice. She asked that the matter be looked at by BEP.
11. Alistair Foulkes, Director of the Partnership had allocated one person to lead on and establish links with employers, skills and careers guidance etc.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN O & S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The following work programme was received and noted:-

(See document No. 5)

328

RESOLVED:-

That the Work Programme be noted.

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

329

It was noted that future meetings were agreed for the following Wednesdays at 1400 hours in the Council House :-

20 January **2016**
10 February
23 March
20 April

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

330

None were received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

331

The Chairman wished those present a happy Christmas and new year.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

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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 1658 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON