

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
16 SEPTEMBER, 2015**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER, 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3 AND 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

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

Samera Ali – Parent Governor
Sarah Smith – Church Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Razia Butt – Resilience Officer
Colin Diamond – Interim Executive Director for Education, People Directorate
Lucy Dimbleton – School Organisation Officer, Education and Skills
Infrastructure
Peter Hay – Strategic Director
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member
Emma Leamon – Assistant Director, Education and Infrastructure
Julie Newbold – Head of School Admissions and Pupil Placeent
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

5 observers were in attendance.

NOTICE OF RECORDING

285 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

286 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Susan Anderson and Uzma
Ahmed for their inability to attend the meeting. An apology was later received
from Richard Potter.

The Chairman welcomed 3 Councillors from Buckingham County Council and 2 students from the graduate programme who were in attendance.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- 287 Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting. If a pecuniary interest was declared a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. No Declarations were made.
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MINUTES

- 288 Page 209 – should refer to Handsworth.
Page 212 – delete Andrew Ryan add Andrew Wright
Page 212 – Councillor Martin Straker-Wells clarified that he had raised the issue of mobility of pupils across the City and Schools.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Bowles for Chairing the last meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July, 2015, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

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- Data regarding Children in Care was now available on a District basis.
 - The names of all the District Champions had still not been received.
 - Andy Pepper was organising attendance for an update on Corporate Parenting at all Districts.
 - Councillor Martin Straker-Wells clarified that he had suggested that several Task Groups could be needed.
 - With regard to clarification from the Cabinet Member regarding the Grant, this should have been covered by officers due to attend the meeting however they were unable to attend owing to unforeseen circumstances.
 - The Terms of reference for the enquiry would be discussed later on.
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EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE: SUFFICIENCY OF SCHOOL PLACES AND SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

The following report of the Lead Link Officer was submitted:-

(See document no. 1)

Emma Leaman, together with Lucy Dimbleton and Julie Newbold were in attendance for this item. A presentation was made to the Committee using the document. During the discussion that ensued and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. The officers gave a summary of the report setting out the wider framework of the Development Plan. It may be possible that any local issues raised could be shared during any additional workshops etc.
2. Increased demand for school places was discussed followed by an explanation of actions undertaken to ensure needs were met. The biggest risk was an over-supply of places in Secondary Schools owing to the significant input of free schools.
3. The Chairman thanked the officers for their presentation and offer to visit Districts to set out the plans.
4. Councillor Seabright stated that the impact of family members not being able to attend school together owing to lack of places in the local area should be considered. She hoped that looked after children were not placed in failing schools and that this was being monitored.
5. Emma Leaman referred to parent preference, standards in schools and how vacancies were dealt with. It had been recognised that there would be surplus school places at different schools. The picture in Secondary Schools was different as pupils were prepared to travel. She could provide the figures on standards in schools for looked after children.
6. In response to concerns raised by Samera Ali about Cohort growth and how the curriculum and education for children affected were measured, Emma Leaman replied that they worked hard to maintain the quality of education offer. Issues at individual schools were looked at and they made the best use of resources to deliver the curriculum.
7. The Committee was informed that Free Schools and Academies had their own admissions process. They were aware there would be enough growth to expand.
8. Councillor Yip expressed concerns about policies surrounding underperforming schools and children dropping out of the school system. There was a small team dealing with children missing from Education. Referrals were made to the police and MASH who had access to a central pupil database. Schools received regular updates and there was a process in place for reasonable enquiries to be made. Statistics could be confirmed at a later date. The website was secure and only accessed by specific officers in the Local Authority.
9. Councillor Bowles asked about the new rules related to admission of siblings to schools. He was of the view that some of the school places in Hall Green were secured fraudulently. Emma Leaman answered that siblings were already prioritised under the current system. There were a lot of families in Birmingham that were newly arrived and this could have an impact on the policy. Julie Newbold explained the

process carried out to check proof of address for pupils including carrying out a home visit if necessary. No prosecutions for fraud had been made to date, however in September 2015, 6 places had been withdrawn and there had been 48 investigations.

10. In reply to questions from Councillor Clancy about Cohort growth and the issue of faith schools, feeder schools and Primary school waiting lists, School admission numbers were capped and a system of parent preference was operated. Work was undertaken in conjunction with partnerships, communities and Districts to share ownership on issues.
11. Schools must notify the Local Authority of every application for a school place received and whether an offer was made.
12. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds thanked the officers for their presentation. In reply to his queries the Committee was informed there were a number of schools that were from Reception to 6th Form. There could be opportunities in the future to expand empty classrooms.
13. Councillor Dring spoke about the chances of children securing first preference school choices. She referred to the lack of mention of Looked After Children and questioned where children with special needs, in particular those with autism fitted in. Emma Leaman said that at the beginning of the presentation it had been stated that children with special needs attended all types of schools. She could report on this separately if required.
14. Sarah Smith noted that there was sufficient school places but not in the right part of the City. She questioned how plans for 2019 onward and how they would be managed. Emma Leaman answered that they would work closely with schools and look at gaps in provision in areas where there were new Housing Developments etc and look at commissioning new schools where they were needed.
15. In reply to a question from Councillor Mike Sharpe about qualifications of staff at Free Schools and Academies, Colin Diamond answered that Academies were not obliged to recruit trained teachers. However there was a requirement for the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator to be qualified. The schools were monitored through Ofsted Inspections. Any concerns could be raised with the Regional School Commissioners Office.
16. In reply to the Chairman Colin Diamond informed that the Regional Schools Commissioner worked with the Education Funding Agency. The area for a new school was identified however the site was not identified until later on therefore some proposed free schools may not always open.
17. There was no requirement for planning permission for a free school. Academies received funding direct however free Schools were cost neutral to the City Council.

18. The Chairman advised that nominations were welcomed for the vacancy of Parent Governor on the Committee. Nomination forms had been sent out.

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RESOLVED:-

That the progress report on the Education Development Plan be noted.

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN SERVICES TO DISCUSS
CURRICULUM ENTITLEMENT AND EQUALITY**

The following Curriculum Statement was submitted:-

(See document no. 2)

The Cabinet Member was in attendance for this item. During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. The Curriculum Statement had been issued the previous week and set out what children in Birmingham were entitled to and could expect. It was expected that schools would discuss and adopt the statement.
2. The Cabinet Member together with Colin Diamond were in the process of putting together a package of recommended resources for schools.
3. Reference was made to the 'No Outsiders' programme published in February, based on characteristics in the Equalities Act. The programme was age appropriate and could be used across the curriculum.
4. Councillor Seabright welcomed the initiative even though there had been some issues. She was concerned that there should be monitoring to check that schools were taking the recommendations on board. Colin Diamond informed they had engaged with Birmingham Education Partnership and the resources were designed to have equality of approach. There had been a lot of training events for the development of staff and to work on this agenda.
5. Samera Ali commented that the statement was well written. She asked whether consideration had been given to the different schools across Birmingham in terms of the children's cultural heritage and how teachers were trained to deal with Cohort training. The Cabinet Member responded that some people may have been trained in other cities and were not familiar with Birmingham's multi-cultural background. A teacher talent team had been launched the previous week involving 3 year training in a range of schools. Schools will teach that whatever a person's beliefs, discriminating against them was wrong.
6. Razia Butt engaged with schools through PREVENT and volunteers and contributed towards student training.

7. Councillor Bennett referred to tension about religious beliefs in the City. He asked how much of the work had been co-created with communities. The Cabinet Member stressed that schools had been asked to consult parents before introducing the programme to the curriculum. The vast majority of people had no objections.
8. Colin Diamond said a variety of approaches were used to culturally and religiously sensitive issues. The latest version would be introduced next year. The programme had been locally produced and head Teachers had endorsed the approach. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds added that Birmingham was an inclusive society and he was impressed with the training programme. Colin Diamond confirmed that Governors were included in the training. The statement had been sent to all schools and he was meeting the Chair of Birmingham Governing Body Network.
9. Sarah Smith welcomed the statement which was helpful to Head Teachers. In response to her questions the Committee was informed that Church Heads attended the groups and there was an open invitation. Head Teachers and Governors were provided with support and no head Teacher or school was ever left isolated.
10. Councillor Bowles said that some things were different in this country contrary to certain cultural beliefs. He stressed that bullying was unacceptable despite any cultural or religious beliefs.
11. Razia Butt reported that visits to religious buildings had been established in Primary Schools. Schools that were predominantly one faith could request not to participate through SACRE however there was still the opportunity to address the issue through the curriculum.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member, Colin Diamond and Razia Butt for attending the meeting. He urged Members to take up the offer.

It was noted that there had been 250 views of the Committee meeting this afternoon.

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RESOLVED:-

That the Birmingham Curriculum Statement be noted.

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

The following work programme was received and noted:-

(See document No. 3)

The timetable had been amended as necessary. An Inquiry was proposed for Missing Children and a Terms of Reference would be produced. The report would be submitted to City Council in January 2016 with the evidence gathering taking place in November and December.

The Chairman undertook to speak to Councillor Martin Straker-Welds about his request for scrutiny of pupil and families.

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RESOLVED:-

That the Work Programme be noted.

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

It was:-

293

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That meetings be held on the following Wednesdays at 1400 hours in the Council House :-

21 October **2015**
25 November
09 December
20 January **2016**
10 February
23 March
20 April

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

294

None were received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

295

No other urgent business was raised.

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 Chair thanked everyone for attending and their contributions at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 1649 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON