

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

<p>EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 21 OCTOBER, 2015</p>
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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER, 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE
ROOMS 3 AND 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

Councillors Sue Anderson, Barry Bowles, Matt Bennett, Barbara Dring, Mike Sharpe and Martin Straker-Welds.

Richard Potter – Parent Governor
Sarah Smith – Church Representative

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Joan Adams – Head of Service
Chris Atkinson – Assistant Director, Children with Complex Need
Kathryn Cook – Interim Head
Colin Diamond – Interim Executive Director for Education, People Directorate
Julie Harrison – Work Experience Team, H R
Councillor Penny Holbrook – Cabinet Member
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Tony Stanley – Link Officer
Councillor Anita Ward – Former Chair of O&S Cttee
Simon Wellman – Head of Special Needs
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 298 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

- 299 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Clancy, Valerie Seabright, Alex Yip and Samera Ali for their inability to attend the meeting.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Councillor Rashid stated that he had sent his apologies for the July meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September, 2015, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

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- The Chairman informed that it was National Adoption and Fostering week. The Chairman and Councillor Barry Bowles had carried out a number of visits to Children's Homes. The Committee were reminded of their Corporate Parenting role. The Chairman referred to the good work carried out by the Adoption and Fostering Service with Looked After Children. Members were invited to provide an unwrapped present for a child aged 5 – 16 years or make a donation at the Market Place outside the Council Chamber in December.
 - No nominations had been put forward for the vacant Parent Governor role on the Committee. Schools will be contacted again. The Chairman should be informed of any interested persons for the role. It was clarified that the role was for a Governor of a maintained school. In reply to Councillor Bennett's concerns that no one had come forward the Committee was informed that the procedures were being followed and the timescales could not be changed.
 - It was noted that an impressive number of Local Authorities were looking at the subject of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
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CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN SERVICES TO UPDATE THE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET POSITION FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PORTFOLIO

The following report of the Cabinet Member was submitted:-

(See document no. 1)

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member was in attendance for this item and presented the report and highlighted the main issues. During the discussion that ensued and in response to questions the following points were made:-

1. An overview of progress on improvements in children's social care and safeguarding and a budget summary was given.
2. In response to questions from Councillor Matt Bennett the following points were made:-
 - Older Teens in Care - The mode age of children coming into care at the moment was (17 years old). Some shared characteristics with homeless young people, some experienced family breakdown issues etc. The issue was complex and had been picked up at the last meeting by the Corporate Parenting

Board. They were looking at services for young people and working with St Basils.

- Edge of Care - There was previously a Corporate target to reduce numbers not backed up by a good plan. There was now a strategy behind it.
 - Care First Data – There was currently a tender for a new provider for the services. They wanted to integrate so that information could be picked out.
 - Stress Test of DCS/Lead Member arrangements – Peter Hay was the DCS. The arrangements were being looked at with the Chief Executive.
 - Future Council – The reasons for the demand for services were being reviewed and what actions could be taken to address those. The Early Help and Safeguarding Partnership would become the Families Board. The Chair was Dawn Roberts. Two meetings had been held so far.
 - Current progress – It had taken longer than expected to make progress however the current position was where they wanted to be.
3. Councillor Sue Anderson shared Councillor Matt Bennett's concerns about the replacement for Care First. She asked that it be tested and trialled. She asked for reassurance that the specific areas and pockets of deprivation in some Districts be looked at to ensure the area was not left out.
 4. In reply to Councillor Sue Anderson the Committee was informed that new boundaries would not be created but they would be looked at. Public Health was involved and the consultation would start during the coming weeks. Deprivation was a key issue and would be picked up.
 5. The Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) was run by Head Teachers for the good of the children in the City.
 6. It was early days in terms of Partnership work for the Districts. Reference was made to Ladywood Pathfinder that had been running for a few months.
 7. Staff wanted to be fully involved in the re-commissioning of the new system to replace Care First.
 8. On behalf of Councillor Mike Sharpe, The Cabinet Member undertook to look into whether there were children from parents who were in the armed forces suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). The children could be carers of parents or living in the household. An enquiry will be made with the Carer's Hub and Social Workers.
 9. In response to questions from the Chairman and with reference to the funding to establish services and the impact, it would be ensured that

there was range of services to help families. Some of the families from Troubled Families would qualify depending on the family and their needs.

10. With regard to the timescale for the Early Years review. There was a 90 day consultation from November. The new Service would be implemented from September 2017. The Chairman noted that the period was through the school holidays and queried whether that would be detrimental on the consultation and have an adverse effect on the budget. The Cabinet Member assumed the holidays had been taken account of. The budget date was later than expected.
11. An itemised budget had been produced based on some research work done and a budget was set on that need.
12. With regard to Essex, 150 day's work had been paid for which has so far been positive.
13. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting.

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RESOLVED:-

That the progress report be noted.

TRACKING:WORK EXPERIENCE FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN – THE ROLE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

The following progress report was submitted:-

(See document no. 2)

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Penny Holbrook and Councillor Anita Ward were in attendance for this item. During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Anita Ward, former Chairman of the Committee who gave a background into the Tracking of Work Experience stating that the reasons for the review was that it had been difficult for school children to get work experience places. There had been no joined up approach to Birmingham City Council offering Work Experience places nor had there been any recording of data in that regard or engagement with schools.
2. Councillor Bowles referred to the agreement the previous year to take on 1,000 young people and the criteria. He queried the current position.
3. Councillor Holbrook confirmed that the commitment was for 900 young people and people over 25 in partnership with the DWP, recognising that people who were unemployed found work experience valuable in returning to work – Called Project 20,000. They were mindful that a system needed to be built around support staff providing the service. They were on target to achieve 900 people.

4. Julie Harrison, Human Resources informed there had been 208 work placements from schools for the year. Mainly in the summer. There was also the DWP contract. With regard to the pledges from Managers, a group had been set up. Another meeting would be held in November. A Manager's Toolkit would be put on People's Solutions as a guide. They also hoped Councillors would provide places as well.
5. Recommendation 1 – In progress – Councillor Holbrook said that the plan had been adopted by Cabinet and there had been systems put in place. It had been widened to look at homeless and mental health. It was requested that an update be provided in December. The recommendation was agreed.
6. Recommendation 2 – In progress – Reference was made to loss of staff and support systems. Councillor Matt Bennett asked how it could be ensured that quality experience was provided. Julie Harrison said this had been taken account of in the Toolkit and feedback was provided from both the student and Manager and this was followed up as appropriate. The recommendation was agreed. Update in December.
7. Recommendation 3 – In progress –The recommendation was agreed.
8. Councillor Dring was concerned that there was a criteria for who would be accepted into Work Experience and stressed the importance of all young people being given the opportunity. Councillor Penny Holbrook agreed that every child deserved the opportunity. The decision had been taken to support the people who had the biggest challenges. They also had partnerships with other people and one of the models being looked at was the one used by John Willmott School. The Council's ambition was to expand Work Experience.
9. Kathryn Cook added that the issue was having better ways of working and understanding what worked and what the benefits were. They were making progress. Julie Harrison referred to the legacy of family and friends securing work experience places.
10. Councillor Bowles said that although places could not be given to everyone BCC should be setting an example for other employers. He felt that the figures were not exactly successful. It was confirmed that Acivico, who had carried out some good placements, was not part of the City Council, however BCC did have links with them.
11. Councillor Holbrook added that a coordinated approach was now being used and that Managers were encouraged to sign up to the pledge.
12. Richard Potter queried the number of placements completed. Julie Harrison said that information would be provided on a quarterly basis to the Cabinet Member.

13. Councillor Rashid asked for an ethnic breakdown of young people who had been on work experience. He was also in favour of engaging young people rather than spending resources on producing charts.
14. Councillor Holbrook stated that the ethnic breakdown of young people was not directly tracked at the moment, however they would look at how it could be done and whether it was important to capture that information.
15. The Chairman welcomed the charts and welcomed offers for work experience placements. The proposed website – the B1 App was now live. The Digital Front door talent matched pupils in schools with opportunities.
16. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds referred to the possibility of Councillors contacting companies. He stated that a model was needed in order to ensure consistency. He referred to 'Trident' in London specialising in work experience with participants being awarded a certificate on completion.
17. The Member's tool kit included evaluations etc and they could look at Trident. Councillor Holbrook said that a letter could be put on the portal to be sent out from Members to schools/businesses in their area. It would be helpful to think how to capture what Members do and feed it back into the system.
18. Councillor Anita Ward applauded the Scrutiny Team for their work around work experience.
19. It was agreed that further progress be reported back in January or February.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) AND EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS (EHC) PLANS

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 3)

Joan Adams, Colin Diamond, Councillor Brigid Jones and Simon Wellman was in attendance for this item. A presentation was made to the Committee. During the discussion that ensued the following points were made:-

1. Councillor Bowles referred to Section 4, Birmingham being recognised by the DFE for its good work. With regard to the Ombudsman cases he asked for figures where cases had been presented but not reviewed.
2. With regard to questions from Councillor Martin Straker-Welds about communications with parents and children, assessment and use of the

funding and pupil premium for disadvantaged children and the crossover. Communication with parents was part of the reforms. Joan Adams informed that schools were funded through the notional SEN budget but it was not ring-fenced. There was correlation with the amount of pupil premium and the amount of SEN budget received. One of the monitoring questions to schools was whether the budget was being spent appropriately. Councillor Martin Straker asked if it was possible to see the allocation to individual schools for SEN and was informed that the Notional SEN budget was public information and was available.

3. Colin Diamond referred to the rise in exclusions. The Notional budget was about 20% of the overall budget. He felt it was timely that this was looked at with head teachers and built into governor training. The notional SEN budget and the pupil premium should be used to meet the needs of pupils.
4. The Chairman asked that the information be provided.
5. Councillor Matt Bennett declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was contracted to provide reports to parents of SEN children. During a lengthy discussion he referred to the legislation with regard to the funding, also the lack of planning on how the funding should be spent and the number of EHCPs not finished on time. He spoke about the impact of the 30% of pupils without school places. Councillor Matt Bennett referred to the history of meeting targets and made reference throughout the document including page 43, increasing exclusions and page 62 new assessments completed. He said there was a continuation of that failure and felt the sample of 45 people was inadequate.
6. Colin Diamond stated that since September 2014 there had been a change to legislation. There was a three and a half year programme. Performance data indicated that significant improvements were being made. There was work to be done and there was a recovery plan in place. Some of the feedback from parents was positive. With regard to the percentage of Children, 2.8% nationally had a statement compared to 3.9% in Birmingham. There had been significant changes to the structure and support system.
7. Councillor Matt Bennett did not feel that most of his questions had been answered. In particular the one about processes. Simon Wellman referred to the table on the back of the document and undertook to forward some data.
8. Colin Diamond said that they had now re-engaged with schools. They needed to continue dialogue with Head Teachers and Governors and reaffirm the benefits of inclusion. They were improving on IT and Staffing. Feedback from parents when a plan was completed was taken on board and they were not getting back on track.
9. Councillor Bennett did not feel that the Council had learned from History. He added that he had not received any feedback the 30% figure and requested of the Cabinet Member that an additional figure be added to identify how many Care Plans had not been completed. The Cabinet Member replied by informing the measures that had been taken in response to the high level of demand on the funding each year.

10. Sarah Smith commented on the current position and said that until the preventative work was correct there would be the issue of exclusions. It was difficult for mainstream teachers to meet the needs of children with complex needs in school without the resources to meet those needs. She welcomed the conversations with Head Teachers. There was a real issue around supporting Heads Teachers to keep children in schools.
11. The Cabinet Member agreed that it would not be easy. There was a conversation to be had about practical support to Head Teachers. Colin Diamond said that Birmingham Schools were funded well compare to nationally. The overall budget was used creatively. Some schools offered a wrap-around education service to families.
12. The Chairman referred to page 51, new staff and the need for 24 staff but permission for 8 and the relevance. The additional capacity was for the transfer work related to children with an existing statement and needed to be transferred to a EHCP. The timescale was 20 weeks. There was a list of children finalised by type. There was a significant need for autistic and challenging behaviour. There was limited impact in terms of the actual provision.
13. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds proposed that additional information on issues could be provided in between meetings as more discussion was needed.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member, officers and Members for their input.

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

The following work programme was received and noted:-

(See document No. 4)

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RESOLVED:-

That the Work Programme be noted.

DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

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

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)

305 None were received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

306 No other urgent business was raised.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

307 **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 1638 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON