

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH, 2016 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2,
COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM B1 1BB**

PRESENT: - Councillor Susan Barnett in the Chair;

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

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Chris Atkinson – Assistant Director, Children with Complex Needs
Richard Browne – Intelligence Manager
Colin Diamond – Interim Executive Director for Education
Seamus Gaynor – Link Officer
Councillor Brigid Jones – Cabinet Member
Pip Mayo – Head of Service – People Directorate
Louisa Nisbett – Committee Manager
Amanda Simcox – Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Simon Wellman – Head of Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review
Benita Wishart – Overview and Scrutiny Manager

There were 2 members of the public in attendance

NOTICE OF RECORDING

355 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

356 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mick Brown, Chaudhry Rashid and Valerie Seabright, Samera Ali, Richard Potter and Sarah Smith for their inability to attend the meeting. Also Councillor Matt Bennett for lateness.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

357 Page 7 - Diana Reeves was BSCV Vice-Chair and not Chair.
Page 12, min 353 – Councillor Seabright and not Councillor Rashid.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February, 2016, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO REPORT BACK ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE EARLY YEARS REVIEW CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 1)

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member attended the meeting. Pip Mayo introduced the report giving a summary of the report advising that the 90 day consultation period had closed on 28 February, 2016. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in June 2016.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. There had been 3410 responses to the consultation, 42% from parents in the target group.
2. The consultation was on the Be Heard website. Councillor Susan Barnett declared a pecuniary interest as she was employed part time at a Children's Centre and asked for more details about the percentage of responses received to the consultation, how many were sent out, whether the percentage received was a large percent and who they were received from. Councillor Susan Barnett was disappointed at some of the questions asked.
3. In response to Councillor Susan Barnett's query a Lead organisation would be responsible for the Health and Well-Being component, Health Services and Services to support parents. This would be reviewed as the service expanded. The project team was comprised Health and Education Colleagues.
4. They had engaged people through briefing events, attended by approximately 600 persons and through the Be Heard Portal. Of the 73% responses by citizens the majority were parents and past parents. The other 27% were predominantly working in early years services. The point about the questions was taken on board.
5. In response to questions from Councillor Bowles and comments about the Cohort of children in the City under the age of 5 about 80,000 children were in the age range.
6. A commissioning specification will be developed as progress is made. There should be opportunities for the community and voluntary sector. It

had been ensured that responses were representative at the end of the consultation and visits had been made to get views where there gaps.

7. Conversations would be started in the next few weeks with service providers about the proposals. A small parents group had been established. The statistics will be circulated to all groups and put on the website.
8. In reply to comments from Councillor Dring about the age range and that the 42% could be diluted owing to the wide consultation, the target group had been parents with children 0 – 5 years. They had worked hard to ensure a good number of people were captured in the target group. They had not come to a conclusion about the Health Work.
9. The Cabinet Member was pleased with the 6% of people under 19 who had responded. With regard to Academies BCC had not directly run schools since the 1990's. There were already private nurseries etc delivering early years. A statutory service under Health was offered up to 2 years and this would continue in the new model.
10. In reply to concerns from Councillor Sue Anderson about the inequalities and accessibility of the service, the Cabinet Member said that universal awareness was needed and also they needed to ensure that no one was excluded.
11. They would work with the parent run support services and work with the commissioners to ensure it was run in a sustained way. There was a range of specialist services. These would be complimented by providing mainstream services for children in community locations.
12. Councillor Yip was disappointed by the outcome of the consultation and found some of the questions confusing. He questioned how much money had been spent during the consultation period.
13. The consultation had been supported with a briefings and a lot of support had been provided to Children Centres and partners in the voluntary sector to understand the questions. They had also actively engaged with people not using the Early Year's Service by visiting supermarkets etc.
14. Councillor Debbie Clancy referred to page 18 and the proposals for the self-help services, also the high level of uncertainty. She expressed concerns that help was provided for the groups set up and that the right proposals and support were in place. Pip Mayo said that they had held discussions with parents and some were strongly in support while others were adverse to the plans. Councillor Yip did not agree with this.

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RESOLVED:-

That the outcomes of the consultation and the next steps for the Early Years Review be noted.

SCHOOL ATTAINMENT STATISTICS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 2)

Colin Diamond made a presentation with the use of the following slides:-

(See document no. 3)

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

1. Councillor Clancy referred to Key Stage 4 and expected progress in Maths. The results on the website for a school in her Ward was high. She was concerned that the outcomes were being masked.
2. Colin Diamond replied that none of the data included college performance but included grammar schools. The data for indicated that grammar schools overall were making progress. He felt that maximum progress should be aimed at for all pupils. A lot of schools carried out their own assessments however the overall attainment needed to be reflected.
3. In reply to Councillor Bowles, the comparators for looked after children was not available until the end of March. Councillor Bowles asked that home addresses of pupils be broken down.
4. Councillor Dring commented on the map indicating that performance was low in a lot of areas. She felt that children were eager to learn and wanted to see the same standard across the piece.
5. Colin Diamond acknowledged there was work to do with secondary school performance. BEP was offering support to those schools that needed it. It was difficult to recruit good teachers for English, Maths and the Sciences however it could be done.
6. The Cabinet Member noted that the map of school results correlated with the map of house prices in the City and spoke about the expectation held for children in certain parts of the City by teachers etc. The events that had taken place in some schools during the last few years had also had an affect on performance. BEP had been commissioned for school improvement and she hoped there would be a turnaround.
7. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds felt that the report and map showing the picture of attainment was honest and questioned how the disadvantages could be countered. There was lack of a high esteem for children and an issue with teachers being in the right area to make an improvement. Councillor Martin Straker-Welds spoke about the benefit of BEP. He noted the 28% mobility of children from abroad at one school and asked that the mobility of children to schools be looked at as he believed that this could have an impact on attainment.
8. Colin Diamond referred to a letter from the Regional Director. They were mindful of pupil mobility when accessing data.

9. Councillor Sue Anderson suggested a report on BEP activities stating that the link between BEP and schools was key. Colin Diamond was willing to give an update on the impact of BEP. He said that FE colleges made a contribution in the City.
10. In reply to a query from Councillor Matt Bennett about lack of information about children learning modern languages, Colin Diamond had not information to hand, however bilingual children enhanced Birmingham Diversity. Modern foreign languages did not include Latin.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report and presentation be noted.

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

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 3)

Chris Atkinson and Simon Wellman presented the report and gave an update and summary of the report. During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. The document was part of the consultation. The results were being published today and the framework was expected in April. The priorities for the following year were summarised at the end of the report.
2. In reply to concerns from Councillor Yip about a case in his Ward related to SENAR, Simon Wellman said they worked with families , schools and professionals to seek a resolution before a case was appealed and every family was offered mediation before an appeal.
3. Councillor Matt Bennett was not impressed with the performance. He felt that the 90 out of 206 transfers to the new education, health and care plans was a failure and 409 was still being done. He referred to a question to City Council from Councillor Brew and said that too many children were being statemented and a new process was needed.
4. Chris Atkinson reported that there were issues and challenges however progress had been made in some areas. There were issues with transfers in Birmingham owing to higher levels of SENs. People working in SENAR were committed to the children and families and provided fair access and support. Simon Wellman thanked the SENAR team for their hard work. There had been a change in personnel for the Tribunal role. Training had included workshops and learning on the job. Councillor Matt Bennett clarified that his comments were aimed at the way SENAR was managed and not the team.

5. Councillor Bowles spoke about the amount of appeals lodged and noted that in October none had been won. Simon Wellman did not have the information on the appeals to hand. Councillor Bowles asked whether the transfers to the new system would be completed by 2018.
6. Councillor Dring commented that the funding for people with SEN seemed to be spent on administration and not for the benefit of the individuals. In reply to Councillor Dring, the Committee was informed that there was an issue in finding special school places owing to increasing demands. There was an Autistic Team leading on a National training programme. The purpose of grant funding was to support the Local Authority in the delivery of a plan.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

EDUCATION AWARDS APPEALS (HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT)

The following report was submitted:-

(See document no. 4)

The following presentation was handed out:-

(See document no. 5)

During the discussion the following points were made:-

1. Councillor Matt Bennett was not in favour of the proposals. He felt the name Travel Assist had been poorly thought. He expressed some concern that the independent oversight and challenge to the system was being removed.
2. Councillor Bridget Jones, Cabinet Member responded that staff numbers had been halved and they were required to deliver the service within budget. She said that the proposals would encourage the independence travel of young people and would empower parents and families. Reference was made to the recommendations including the suggestion that a Lawyer was present at the appeals hearing.
3. Best practice cross the country had been looked at and Birmingham had been benchmarked with other Local Authorities.
4. Councillor Bowles agreed with Councillor Matt Bennett. He said that at present a child could spend a long time in school transport on the way to school owing to other children being picked up on the way. He felt that whilst some young people could be trained to travel using public transport the proposals were not feasible in reality and therefore would not achieve savings. Councillor Brigid Jones referred to the timing of journeys and said that provision was moved where it was needed. The savings were

modest at present. The personal budget would be offered to anyone who wanted to be more flexible.

5. In reply to Councillor Debbie Clancy, Simon Wellman said that he was head of both SENAR and Travel Assist who worked together. The amount of multi-assessments would be reduced. A lot of work had been carried out around data regarding SEN places to forecast ahead and ensure there was sustainability for the future. Chris Atkinson added that the work done in School Improvement together with work done by BEP would have an effect on the amount of children that stayed in mainstream education. Schools would share resources and expertise.
6. Councillor Dring commented that action taken to make budget savings in the past had not been successful. Councillor Brigid Jones suggested a separate session with another Local Authority who had already been through the process.
7. Councillor Matt Bennett had no confidence in the proposals and that they would be delivered. He proposed that a private meeting of Members be arranged to look at the proposals in detail. The Chairman undertook to consider the matter.

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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)

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RESOLVED:-

That the Work Programme be noted.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman reminded Members that there was still a Parent Governor vacancy on the Committee. Anyone interested should contact the Chairman.

The Committee wished Councillor Mick Brown a speedy recovery.

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The meeting was adjourned until 1400 hours, Wednesday, 23 March, 2016.

The meeting ended at 1730 hours.

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CHAIRPERSON