



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 7th October, 2021** via Hybrid MS Teams and Rooms 18.01 - 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Karen Scarborough (Chairman), Geoff Barraclough, Christabel Flight, Mark Shearer, Tim Roca, Eoghain Murphy and Aicha Less

Co-Opted Members Present: Alix Ascough and Marina Coleman

Also present: Councillor Timothy Barnes (Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning), Councillor Matthew Green (Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning), Maka Baramidze (Vice Principal, Westminster Academy), Aaron Sumner (Headteacher, Hallfield Primary) Rachel Kelly (Deputy Head, St Augustine's High School), Ian Heggs (Bi-Borough Director of Education), Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment and City Management), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing), Gerald Almeroth (Executive Director of Finance and Resources) Steve Bywater (Supporting Families Strategic Manager), Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Advisor), Hannah Small (Policy and Scrutiny Co-Ordinator) Alan Wharton (Strategic Asset Manager) Weronika Schultz (Health and Safety Adviser) and Moira Mackie (Head of Internal Audit).

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Councillor Lindsey Hall was unable to attend and sent apologies.

1.2 Mark Hewitt (Co-opted Representative) was unable to attend and sent apologies. Wasim Butt (Co-opted Representative) was unable to attend and sent apologies. Maka Baramidze (Vice Principal, Westminster Academy) replaced Wasim Butt.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillor Christabel Flight declared she was trustee of the Sir Simon Milton Foundation.

3. MINUTES

3.1 Lead Scrutiny Advisor informed the Committee that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2021 were being edited and would be re-circulated to Committee members for approval.

4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS, LICENSING AND PLANNING

4.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet member for Business, Licensing and Planning who responded to questions on the following topics:

- Council and Mayoral activity to attract investment into the Westend. It was noted that the Council are working with diplomats through the Chamber of Commerce.
- Concerns over the multifaceted nature of the Cabinet Member's portfolio. Cabinet Member informed the Committee that footfall was still less than 50% as expected in some areas of the Westend so his teams across the board were working hard to boost the local economy.
- The closure of a dog park in Paddington Rec. Members raised concerns on behalf of residents of the closure of the dog park, after a discussion between Members it was noted that the dog parks in Paddington Rec were open.
- The height of planned building developments. It was noted that the new city plan states buildings cannot be taller than prevailing buildings except in Victoria and Westminster development areas.
- The cost and project management of the Stand/Aldwych project. Members asked if nearby businesses and Universities were financially contributing and what the benefits to residents would be. It was noted that this was a highly polluted area and residents would feel the health and economic impacts of the project.
- Members compared the investment costs for Harrow Road compared with the Strand, both of which are highly polluted areas of the City. Members asked if the Cabinet Member could level up all areas of Westminster.
- Whether successful pop-ups in Somerset House could be made permanent.
- The artist residency at Temple station and how the space can be utilised more effectively for community engagement and activity.
- The continuation of the AI-Fresco scheme into the Winter. It was noted that 350 pavement licenses had been granted for this winter and that was expected to rise to 400. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council are encouraging businesses to use electric heaters and blankets to be as eco-friendly as possible.

4.2 **ACTIONS** The Committee requested:

- A written briefing on the targets set for the Westminster Investment Service.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING

5.1 The Committee received a written update from the Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning who responded to questions on the following topics:

- The awareness and communication of the Holidays Activities Fund (HAF). Members asked if the HAF was operating over the upcoming half-term and where information can be found on what activities were on offer.
- The consultation process of the SEND strategy. Officers informed the Committee that the consultation process put children's voice at its heart and was focused on supporting young people transition into adulthood.
- Members discussed the Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC College and the use of the building going forward. Members felt the school had failed predominantly because of the age demographic 14-18 years-old.
- The Afghan resettlement programme and the educational officer to child refugees and asylum seekers. It was noted Hallfield Primary School and others stepped up to support these children. Hallfield welcomed over 50 children to a tester session and that their trauma-informed approach will help children and families transition to life in the UK.
- Members asked about the language skills of refugee children. Staff from the children's services team had conducted detailed assessments and found there was a real mixture in abilities. Both children and families were being taught or assisted to find English language courses.
- Anti-social behaviour amongst young people in the lead up to Halloween and fireworks night. Information was in the process of being shared with schools.
- If the £30 per student catch up funding was adequate. All members and witnesses noted that more funding should be allocated. Teachers present shared that they used the funding to improve their equipment and therefore young people's experiences of learning.
- Witnesses reflected that whilst additional resources had been allocated to tutoring programmes, young people preferred to learn from their teachers and not unknown tutoring organisations.
- The growing mental health needs of children and young people and the waiting times for CAMHS. It was noted that the Council were trying to focus their resources on early intervention and therefore minimise the pressure on crisis services.

5.2 The Committee wanted to thank on the record Aaron Sumner, Headteacher of Hallfield Primary School and other schools across the Borough for working with refugee children arriving from Afghanistan.

5.3 **ACTIONS** The Committee Requested:

- The Council's website be updated to include half-term activities available on the HAF.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY IN SCHOOLS REPORT

6.1 The Committee receive a written report on the Council's internal audit of health and safety in schools across the Borough. Alan Wharton (Strategic Asset Manager), Weronika Schultz (Health and Safety Adviser) and Moira Mackie (Head of Internal Audit) presented on the report's findings. Discussions on the report and questions from Members included:

- Whether the local authority needed strategic oversight across all schools in the Borough of health and safety procedures and policies. It was noted that the Council only have legal responsibility over community schools and not academies or faith schools that set their own policies.
- The Committee were informed that the Council provided health and safety guidance to all schools on the re-opening of the premises after the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- The Council are rolling out the evolve system for all schools to use. This a system whereby schools can upload risk assessments. Officers were in the process of deciding whether to issue revised health and safety advice and templates for all schools to use in order to share best practice.
- The role of Governors in ensuring schools were health and safety compliant was discussed.
- Members raised concerns that the report did not reference violence against girls as a health and safety issues in school.

6.2 The Chairman summarised by noting the report and thanking Officers for bringing it to the Committee's attention. The Chairman welcomed the use of the evolve system as well as the advice and best practice being shared to all schools across the Borough.

7. THE SCHOOL INCLUSION PILOT REPORT

7.1 The Committee received a written report on the Council's School Inclusion Pilot. Steve Bywater introduced the report and presented on it's findings. The Committee also heard from two expert witnesses, Aaron Sumner (Headteacher, Hallfield Primary) and Rachel Kelly (Deputy Head, St Augustine's High School) who gave their view on the pilot within their schools. Discussions on the report and questions from Members included:

- The pilot encourages schools to adopt a trauma-informed approach when setting policies and practices. This encourages schools to think about why children might be behaving badly and how to address the underlying causes of the behaviour.
- The pilot works not just with children, but with the whole family. This approach was welcomed by the expert witnesses who ordinarily found it hard to engage some families.
- The Committee were informed that this pilot will now become permeant and is central to the Westminster's exclusion strategy which is currently being drafted.
- The Cabinet Member reflected that the Council has a strategic priority to intervene earlier, and this pilot is an excellent example of this strategic priority.
- Witnesses reflected the importance of learning about trauma and how this helped to effectively work with children throughout the pandemic. St

Augustine's has since redeveloped its attendance and behaviour policies to be trauma-informed.

- Witnesses also reflected that this pilot should be used as a model for school support elsewhere.
- Members reflected that a young person living in a deprived ward, Church Street, had experienced trauma and had limited life chances and he was still regularly excluded from school.
- Members requested that a scrutiny meeting was held on school exclusions across the Borough as well as scrutinising the school exclusion strategy.

7.2 St Augustine's offered a site visit to Committee Members so they could understand how the School Inclusion Pilot operates in practice.

7.3 **ACTION** The Committee requested that:

- School exclusions was added to the work programme.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

8.1 The Committee discussed its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. It was agreed that the main agenda item for the next Policy and Scrutiny meeting will be an update on the Oxford Regeneration Project.

8.2 Members requested that school exclusions was added to the February Policy and Scrutiny meeting.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

9.1 The meeting ended at 9.05pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____