



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

**CHILDREN, SPORTS AND LEISURE POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 NOVEMBER 2014
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children, Sports and Leisure Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on Monday 24 November 2014 at Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Brian Connell (Chairman), Iain Bott, Paul Church, Nick Evans, Barbara Grahame and Adnan Mohammed Robert Rigby.

Co-opted Members: Aki Turan, Annie Ee, Louise McCulough, Smita Bora and Darren Guttridge.

Also present: Councillor Steve Summers (Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces).

Apologies for Absence: Brenda Morrison.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillor Adnan Mohammed was substituting for Councillor Richard Beddoe.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Steve Summers (Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces) to the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman welcomed Stephen Bishop (DfE), Rachel Graham (Elective Home Education (EHE) Parent) and Dr Leslie Barson (EHE parent and founder of the Otherwise Club) who were attending the meeting to take part in the Elective Home Education discussion.
- 1.4 The Chairman also welcomed Annie Ee, Parent Governor and Darren Guttridge, Head teacher at Edward Wilson Primary School to their first meeting and looked forward to their support and contribution in the coming year.
- 1.5 The Chairman congratulated James Thomas, Director of Children Services on his appointment of Director of Children Service's at Newham Council and thanked him for all he had done at Westminster City Council.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Councillor Barbara Grahame declared that she was no longer a Management Committee Member of Beachcroft School.
- 2.2 No further declarations of interests in respect of items to be discussed were made, other than those noted in the circulated schedule.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 **Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2014 were approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4. ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKERS

- 4.1 **Resolved:** That the Action and Recommendation Trackers be noted.

5. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR SPORTS, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES

- 5.1 The Committee received an update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions relating to:
 - the mural to be painted in Church Street Library.
 - the performance of the Greenwich Leisure Limited Contract.
 - the Council's Voluntary Strategy and volunteering at events.
 - the services at Mayfair Library and the lift at Pimlico Library.
 - the public availability of the Quintin Kynaston school's sport facilities.

5.2 ACTIONS:

1. That a briefing note on the performance of the Greenwich Leisure Limited Contract be circulated to Members.
2. That a telephone conversation with relevant officers to discuss the procurement of the new Volunteering Brokerage Service be arranged.

6. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

6.1 The Committee received an update from the Cabinet Member which covered current and forthcoming issues in his Portfolio.

7. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

7.1 The Committee received a report on Elective Home Education (EHE) which outlined the emerging issues and developments in the provision of services to support children in families who have elected to home educate.

7.2 The Chairman welcomed Alison Farmer, Tri-borough Assistant Director for Special Educational Needs and Liz Spearman, Tri Borough Head of ACE to give a general introduction to the report. They advised that Westminster City Council had adopted a revised EHE policy on 25 March 2014 whereby a Local Authority Home Education Adviser would, wherever possible, meet with all EHE families to discuss education provision and offer advice if necessary. The Committee noted that Local Authorities had a duty to ensure all children receive an education as well as safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

7.3 The Committee then welcomed Stephen Bishop (DfE) who gave a brief overview of the national context. Stephen advised that the subject of Elective Home Education had risen in priority for national government in the last year due to a number of local authorities approaching the department regarding serious case reviews and safeguarding issues.

7.4 The Committee also welcomed Rachel Graham (EHE parent) and Dr Leslie Barson (EHE parent and founder of the Otherwise Club) to the meeting. Rachel talked about being an EHE parent and the parent network and clubs available to home educated children. She emphasised how unhappy she was with the introduction of the new policy and that she did not want to be forced to meet with the Local Authority. She advised that local authorities had a variety of other systems which picked up children at risk and safeguarding issues.

7.5 Stephen, Rachel and Leslie all took part in the Committee's discussion.

7.6 Issues discussed by the Committee included:

- the flexibility, types of education and clubs available in Elective Home Education.
- the uncertainty around how many children are being home educated.
- the difference between children missing education and those in Elective Home Education.

- the impact that the revised policy and procedures of Westminster City Council have had on Elective Home Education parents.
- the duties of the Local Authority to ensure that all children receive an education.
- the duties of the Local Authority regarding the safeguarding of children.
- the tension between Westminster City Council and Elective Home Education parents regarding the annual visit to ensure that children were receiving an education.
- the council systems in place to identify children at risk and the possibility that some people were using Elective Home Education as an excuse not to send their children to school.
- the importance of on-going engagement with advocates, the Local Authority officers and Elective Home Education parents to improve understanding and communication.
- the Elective Home Education policy of other London boroughs.

7.7 The Chairman thanked everyone who had given up their time to attend the meeting and contribute to the discussion.

7.8 **RESOLVED:**

1. The Committee expressed regret that the change of policy at Westminster City Council (i.e. that the Local Authority will, wherever possible, meet with Elective Home Education families to discuss education provision, and offer advice if necessary) had created tension between the Local Authority and the Elective Home Education parents, but felt that it was now important for everyone to start rebuilding relationships to achieve good communication and understanding in order to move forward and work together in the future.
2. The Committee further noted the comments of the Elective Home Education advocates in attendance at the meeting in relation to the possibility of the Local Authority offering more support to Elective Home Educators in term of offering access to subsidised sports and music classes, teacher training, access to the magazines published for parents in schools, and for forums to meet with officers to perhaps include coffee mornings, and supported these measures in addition to the implementation of the current policy.

3. The Committee were particularly concerned about the possible under reporting of children receiving Elective Home Education, children missing out on education, and the safeguarding and welfare of children (particularly those who the Local Authority are not aware of as being home educated), and were of the view that it would be helpful to Local Authorities if the Regulations could be updated to provide more clarity around how Local Authorities should undertake their duty to ensure that children are being educated in all cases of Elective Home Education.
4. That the Committee be kept informed on any progress which may be made on the updating of the relevant legislation and regulations.

8. PROMOTING AN ACTIVE WESTMINSTER

- 8.1 The Committee received a report on the approach taken in promoting participation in sport and physical activity for children and young people. The Committee noted the quantity and quality of PE and school sport, in addition to developing more community based opportunities to take part in sports and physical activities.
- 8.2 Andrew Durrant, Head of Sports and Wellbeing, introduced the report and showed a short film about the Westminster Mile which was produced by City of Westminster Media students. The film brought to life the positive impact the Westminster Mile has on children, families and adults alike.
- 8.3 The Committee discussed physical activity/inactivity within Westminster and were concerned that some wards had extremely low levels of activity. The Committee further discussed: sport in schools, securing facilities for swimming lessons, competitive sport programmes, the wide range of sporting activities available in Westminster, the way wards showing low participating would be targeted by delivering services in the local area, the importance of Section 106 agreements in delivering sport facilities to residents and Westminster's performance in the London Youth Games.
- 8.4 The Committee noted that Westminster City Council's Sports and Leisure Unit had been awarded an excellent rating by Quest, an independent national benchmarking body, which was the first awarded to a council in London.
- 8.5 The Committee further noted that the new strategy would be progressed through the ActiveWestminster Board which would involve several council departments such as Public Health and Children's Services in addition to a range of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders through the established ActiveWestminster partnership.
- 8.6 The Chairman thanked everyone for contributing to the discussion.

8.7 RESOLVED:

1. That Members welcomed the new strategy and noted that the aims and objectives of ActiveWestminster, Public Health and Children's Services would in the future be incorporated in just one Council Strategy

9. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

9.1 The Committee considered its Work Programme.

9.2 The Committee agreed that at the next meeting on 12 January 2015 they would review the Annual Education Report and that the meeting would be held in All Souls Church of England Primary School.

9.3 The Committee further agreed to hold an additional meeting in April 2015 to look at the provision of Nursery Schools in Westminster.

10. REPORTS OF ANY URGENT SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

10.1 **Resolved:** The Committee noted that there was nothing to report.

11. TERMINATION OF MEETING

11.1 The meeting ended at 21:20.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____