



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Adults and Children's Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Adults and Children's Services Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 15 June 2020**.

Members Present: Councillors Iain Bott (Chairman), Margot Bright, Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, Maggie Carman, Angela Harvey, Eoghain Murphy and Tim Roca

Co-opted Members: Ryan Nicol

Also Present: Councillor Tim Mitchell (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health) and Councillor Tim Barnes (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Freeman and co-opted members Marina Coleman, Sam Green and Miles Ridley.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- 3.1 That the Minutes of the Adults and Children's Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 16 April 2020 be approved.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC HEALTH – UPDATE

4.1 Councillor Tim Mitchell provided a briefing on key issues within his portfolio relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Committee held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Cases within Westminster – The Committee was updated on the number of Covid-19 cases reported in Westminster and the resulting mortality rate.
- Care Homes and Care Providers – It was explained that an incident management plan had been implemented for those people classified as vulnerable or sheltering in order to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic. All care homes had also been engaged with on a daily basis to assess the health of residents and staff and ensure there was adequate provision of care and equipment for both. The Committee noted that staffing levels at care homes remained in excess of 95% and in terms of domiciliary care, families and volunteers had been working to ensure adequate care was provided. It was confirmed that since 6 March 2020 all care homes had been requested to shelter with no non-essential visitors permitted from 9 March 2020. The Council had been working closely with all care homes to look at measures to control and limit the spread of the virus. The domiciliary support sector had also been identified as vulnerable and this area had been carefully liaised with to help provide PPE equipment and other services as necessary. A review process would be initiated following the pandemic and this would analyse areas of success and weakness in the response provided and learn lessons for the future. The Committee requested a note following the meeting providing details on the number of care home deaths in Westminster related to Covid-19 including subsequent hospital deaths.
- Test, Track and Trace – This was a Government introduced initiative where the Council would be responsible for implementing a plan by the end of June 2020 setting out details on preparations for dealing with local outbreaks and supporting those classified as vulnerable. Care home residents and staff had all been provided with testing and regular fortnightly testing would be implemented in conjunction with the North West London CCG.
- Recovery Planning – A thorough review process would be carried out across all areas in order to examine the impact of the virus and the response provided with a particular focus on why the BAME community had been disproportionately affected. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Board mechanism would be used to lead this analysis in conjunction with health partners and the voluntary sector.
- Other Developments – It was confirmed that work had begun on the Beachcroft Care Home and its first residents were expected in September 2020. Also, a

paper had recently been published by NHS London on a proposed organisational restructure of the CCG structure. The Council was currently lobbying for future CCGs to be in line with borough boundaries so that only one CCG would cover the Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea area therefore simplifying the structure.

- 4.2 The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to all those involved in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic for their efforts and hard work in extremely challenging circumstances.

5. CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES – UPDATE

- 5.1 Councillor Tim Barnes provided a briefing on key issues within his portfolio and the Committee held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Covid-19 Response – Council services had been quickly transferred to digital platforms, with most staff working from home and staffing levels of over 90% having been maintained. Councillor Tim Barnes expressed his thanks to all staff involved including Sarah Newman, Executive Director of Children's Services and her team, for all their hard work undertaken in extraordinary circumstances. During the main lockdown period most schools remained open throughout for vulnerable children, children with special educational needs and those children whose parents were key workers. Regular contact was maintained with all schools, teachers and unions throughout to address any issues and ensure they had adequate PPE.
- SEND – Two months ago OFSTED had undertaken an inspection of the SEND provision within Westminster and whilst no particular rating was provided for these inspections the letter from OFSTED was very positive. Councillor Barnes expressed his thanks to all those involved in this significant achievement.
- School Extended Openings – Schools were still not permitted to fully reopen; approximately 1,500 pupils were currently attending school which was about 20-25% of those eligible to attend. This was below the national average but in line with other London borough due to concerns relating to such things as travelling on public transport. It remained the Government's aspiration to ensure all children returned to school by September 2020. This would create some challenges, particularly around enforcing social distancing for the full capacity of pupils at Secondary Schools. Discussions with the schools continued about how to achieve this. Support was already being provided in terms of health and safety assessments, and implementing measures to be 'Covid Secure' – for example staggering start times and supporting teachers who had to use public transport to get to work. Work continued on how to support schools both through physical measures and implementing potential timetable changes.

- Education at Home – Extensive support had been provided to schools to deliver classes virtually. Concern had been raised about the impact the lack of school attendance would have on disadvantaged families. In response the Council supplied 135 laptops to those families who did not own one and this scheme was being further extended in conjunction with the DfE to provide a further 606 devices to support pupils learning from home. There was a variation in the level of support schools were providing to children in terms of style and approach. All schools were contacted regularly to help and support them teaching children at home and the provision provided had been monitored and feedback given, including sharing best practice. In relation to children spending more time in their homes it was expected that there would be an increase in rates of domestic abuse but currently no increase had been observed. A public awareness campaign has been delivered so that families know what support was available and how to access it.
- Free School Meals – Presently there was no plan to extend free school meals into the summer as this offer pre-Covid-19 had only been offered during school term times. However, if significant levels of schooling were to take place during the summer the initiative would be continued into this period. A note would be provided to the Committee following the meeting providing an update on the issue of children going hungry over the summer holiday period.
- Social Care – The Council had continued to provide support to vulnerable children and families, including direct visits where necessary. Referrals to social care were expected to rise as more children returned to school
- Youth Hubs – All five Youth Hubs remained open providing vital services with many services now also being offered online. City Lions had provided activities over the Easter period and this would be extended into the summer allowing young people to engage in cultural activities in Westminster. Youth Clubs had experienced a drop in funding due to the pandemic and talks would be undertaken with any clubs experiencing issues to ensure there was no long term drop in funding.

5.2 The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to the Cabinet Member and all those involved in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic for their efforts and hard work in extremely challenging circumstances.

6 **REVIEW OF PROPORTIONALITY ON THE ADULT'S AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY AND SCRUTINY URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE**

6.1 The Committee reviewed the proportional division of seats on the Sub-Committee and its membership.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the proportional division of seats on the Urgency Sub-Committee as set out in the report be confirmed; and
- 2) That the membership on the Urgency Sub-committee as set out in the report be confirmed.

7 REPORTS OF ANY URGENT SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

7.1 The Chairman advised there was nothing to report.

The Meeting ended at 8:38pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE: _____