



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

**CHILDREN, SPORTS AND LEISURE POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 JUNE 2014
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children, Sports and Leisure Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on Wednesday 18 June 2014 at Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Brian Connell (Chairman), Iain Bott, Paul Church, Peter Cuthbertson, Nick Evans, Barbara Grahame, Papyra Qureshi and Karen Scarborough.

Co-opted Members: Aki Turan, Louise McCulough, and Jane Sowerby.

Also present: Councillor Steve Summers (Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces) and Councillor Danny Chalkley (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People).

Apologies for Absence: Smita Bora and Brenda Morrison.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 It was noted that Councillors Peter Cuthbertson and Karen Scarborough were substituting for Councillors Robert Rigby and Richard Beddoe respectively.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Steve Summers (Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces) and Councillor Danny Chalkley (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) to the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman welcomed Annalisa Saba, Chair of Westminster Parent Participation Group and Helen Norris, Head of Specialist Support & Disability Service at Bromley Council, who were going to take part in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy item, to the meeting.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Councillor Paul Church declared that he was a school Governor at the King Solomon Academy.
- 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 AND ACTION TRACKER

3.1 Minutes

3.1.1 **Resolved:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 31 March 2014 and 4 June 2014 were approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

3.2 Action Tracker

3.2.1 **Resolved:** That the Action Tracker be noted.

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

4.1 The Committee received an update from the Cabinet Member who responded to questions relating to:

- the need for additional secondary school pupil places.
- the eligibility criteria for nursery places.
- young people with learning difficulties accessing specialist education, training and employment opportunities.
- the target of 75% of Westminster's pupils achieving 5 grades A*- C at GCSE (including English and Maths) and changes to examinations.
- the implementation of the Education, Health and Care Plan for children with Special Educational Needs from September 2014.

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 volunteering, the customer lift at Pimlico Library, the works being carried out at Church Street Library and indoor sports facilities.

6. SEN PASSENGER TRANSPORT UPDATE

6.1 The Committee received an update on the first four weeks of operation of the new Tri-Borough passenger transport arrangements for home to school transport for children with special educational needs. The Committee heard that there had been a number of operational challenges experienced during the first two weeks due to changes in the type of transport, drivers not being familiar with the

geographical area, carers not being familiar with the children and incomplete transport details of vulnerable adults and children.

- 6.2 The Committee noted that the operation had now improved with late running of journeys being reduced to less than 5% being reported and detailed performance management of contractors being put in place.
- 6.3 The Committee requested that an updated report on SEN Passenger Transport be sent to them in the next week so that Members could consider whether to establish a Task Group to look at the delivery and operation of the contract.

7. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) STRATEGY

- 7.1 The Committee received a report outlining the Council's five year strategy for children with high needs and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabilities which would be implemented in the context of the Children and Families Act which was one of the most significant changes in legislation in this area for the past 30 years and would take effect from September 2014.
- 7.2 The Committee welcomed Ian Heggs, Tri-borough Director of Schools Commissioning and Alison Farmer, Tri-borough Assistant Director for Special Educational Needs to the meeting. They advised that the strategy would enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties and support children in achieving positive educational and life outcomes, and that following the new legislation this would be done through the provision of an effective and efficient 'Local Offer' built on strong relationships between parents, schools, education, health and care services and third sector organisations.
- 7.3 The Committee welcomed Helen Norris, Head of Specialist Support and Disability Service and lead for the Bexley/Bromley pathfinder, who spoke about implementing the proposals of the Children and Family Act due to come into effect in September 2014 and Annalisa Saba, Chair of the Parent Participation Group, who gave a short presentation on how the Parent Participation Group had supported the consultation with parents on the Local Offer. Both Helen and Annalisa took part in the Committee's discussion.
- 7.4 The Committee considered the national legislative context for SEN in regard to the Children and Families Act, the outcomes and recommendations arising from the recent consultation held with parents and carers on the Local Offer of services for SEN children and young people and the current key issues and strategic goals for the Westminster SEN Service over the next five years.

7.5 The following key themes emerged from the Committee's discussion:

- the increasing number of children diagnosed with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and that SEN remained a key responsibility for Local Authorities.
- the importance that there was an aspiration for SEN children and young people aged 0-25 to make excellent progress in school and employment.
- the benefits of the new Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan which would drive for a more joined up assessment and planning process for young people with SEN and disabilities.
- the benefits that Tri-Borough brought regarding the sharing of knowledge and specialist facilities for young people with SEN and disabilities.
- the value of encouraging parents of children with Special Educational Needs to meet and work together on key issues.
- the need for the Council and Key Workers to focus on important and common key points of transition for children and young people with Special Educational Needs.
- the need for the template format for the Local Offer to be standardised and in 'plain English' so that parents could easily see what services were available within each school.
- the need for the City Council to be positive about personal budgets and clearly communicate, maybe in a small booklet, to parents what services were available to purchase with their personal budgets.
- that the Tri-Borough had made very good process in preparing for the new legislation and were much further ahead than other local authorities.

7.6 The Chairman thanked everyone for contributing to the discussion.

7.7 **RESOLVED:** The Committee made the following recommendations, which have been formally reported to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People for his consideration:

As an increasing number of children are diagnosed with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Special Education Needs remains a key responsibility for Local Authorities.

1. That the City Council should do more to encourage and help parents of children with Special Educational Needs meet and work together and should promote the co-production model which had shown constructive results.

2. That there should be a particular focus on important and common key points of transition for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and that these should be recognised by Key Workers and the Council.
3. That all schools should be encouraged to adopt the same standard 'plain English' template format for their Local Offer so that parents could easily engage with and understand what services were available within all Westminster Schools. The Committee further suggested that Councillors that were governors should encourage, where possible, all schools to use this standard template.
4. That the Council should make a commitment to clear communication and good training and ensure that all types of Key Workers should be joined up in supporting these families, especially when other services may face difficulties.
5. That the City Council should be more positive about personal budgets ensuring that it presents the opportunity for personalisation to parents as a 'core offer'. If the offer was not clearly set out in communications, parents might not be as positive about the changes and opportunities that personal budgets could offer families.

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WESTMINSTER VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY 2014-2019

- 8.1 The Committee received a report outlining the implementation of the Westminster Volunteering Strategy and considered the actions that had been taken in response to the Committee's recommendations made to the Cabinet Member in June 2013 after scrutinising an earlier draft of the Strategy.
- 8.2 The Committee discussed the report and made the following points:
 - the importance of engaging with secondary schools and encouraging young people to do valuable volunteering work.
 - the importance of having reward schemes and time credit schemes.
 - the need to ensure that volunteering is meaningful and positive for the volunteer and the community.
 - the invaluable knowledge that ward members possess through working in their local area which should be used to explore the local infrastructure of each ward.
 - the need to widely promote and publicise the programme across Westminster.

8.3 The Committee noted the work being carried out and considered that the Volunteering Strategy would play an important role in achieving the Council's Better City, Better Lives ambition to make Westminster a safer, healthier and more enterprising place.

9. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

9.1 It was agreed that a report would be circulated to Members of the Committee asking their views on the Work Programme for 2014/2015

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 21:33pm

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____