



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET (IMPROVING EDUCATION IN WESTMINSTER)

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the **Committee of the Cabinet (Improving Education in Westminster)** on 6 July 2010 at 12.00 noon.

Present: Councillor Colin Barrow, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor Nickie Aiken, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People

Others present: Councillor Barbara Grahame, Michael O'Connor, Strategic Director for Children & Young People; Angela Drizi, Operational Director for Schools & Learning; Chris Undrell, Assistant Director of Finance for Children's Services; Daria Wignall, Head of Schools and Learning; Anita Gibbons, Head of Children's Policy; Helen Cutts, Principal Solicitor.

Apologies: Councillor Lindsey Hall.

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Lindsey Hall.
- 1.2 The Leader welcomed Andrew Christie, Director of Children's Services, and Ian Heggs, Assistant Director Schools & Learning, who were attending the meeting from LB Hammersmith & Fulham. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Helen Binmore, Cabinet Member for Children's Services at LB Hammersmith & Fulham.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Leader declared that he had a child with SEN and was the Chairman of the National Autistic Society. The Leader also declared that he was a Governor of College Park School. Councillor Aiken declared an interest as a parent of school children in Westminster and as a Member of the Management Board for the Beachcroft Pupil Referral Unit.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2010 were approved for signature as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

4. PROGRESS ON MERGER OF SERVICES (report of the Strategic Director for Children & Young People – agenda item 4)

- 4.1 Michael O'Connor, Strategic Director for Children & Young People and Andrew Christie, Director of Children's Services LB Hammersmith & Fulham, introduced a report which updated the Cabinet Committee on progress on the proposed merger of Children's Services between Westminster and Hammersmith & Fulham. The report also set out options for cross borough working and included a timetable for initial implementation and financial scoping. The proposed merger provided an opportunity to continue to supply high quality services in both boroughs while reducing unnecessary expenditure, and to establish an organisation that could trade and sell services.
- 4.2 The report set out three options to illustrate the potential for further partnership working and sharing services. These were:
- Option 1: Sharing of services for the key components of education only between Westminster and LB Hammersmith & Fulham to be implemented by April 2011. This had two sub-components: 1A (with projected savings of £1 million over three years) and 1B (with projected savings of £1.6 million over three years), depending on the range of cuts made;
 - Option 2: Combine the majority of children's services with Hammersmith & Fulham (or the NHS as appropriate) by April 2013. Services that were currently outsourced and/or that moved to an outsourcing arrangement by then would be jointly commissioned;
 - Option 3: Extend the sharing of services with Hammersmith & Fulham to include other suitable local authorities as part of an alliance by April 2013. Services that were currently outsourced and/or that moved to an outsourcing arrangement by then would be jointly commissioned by that alliance.
- 4.3 The report recommended that the merging and sharing of education services between the two boroughs be taken forward and that more detailed work be undertaken to merge other children's services. The financial implications of the merger also needed to be verified, and consideration given to opportunities for including other boroughs in what could become the new model for local authority children's services.
- 4.4 Michael O'Connor informed the Committee that he had recently attended a Cabinet Briefing at Hammersmith & Fulham, at which the proposed merger had been positively received. A similar report to that now presented was to be submitted to Members at Hammersmith & Fulham, with similar recommendations.
- 4.5 Andrew Christie endorsed the comments made by the Strategic Director and confirmed that the proposals set out in the report had been supported by Members at Hammersmith & Fulham, who would be looking at achieving savings while sustaining effective capacity to intervene in failing schools and pursue the establishment of Free Schools and Academies.
- 4.6 Councillor Colin Barrow, Leader of Westminster City Council, commented on the importance of ensuring that delivered services were not weakened by the

merger and that outcomes were more effective. Councillor Barrow also emphasised the need for the model for joint working to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing priorities and political needs.

- 4.7 The Cabinet Committee discussed the governance and accountability of the merged services and acknowledged that Westminster had already established Locality Teams with their own Boards that considered local needs. Andrew Christie highlighted the need for assurance that joint governance was effective, and it was noted that the two boroughs would continue to be held to account separately by Ofsted.
- 4.8 Members discussed the relationship between savings and external sales, and noted that 15% of the 20% projected savings had been based on non-sales. Chris Undrell, Assistant Director of Finance for Children's Services, agreed that savings would need to be actual and deliverable. The Cabinet Committee also discussed the deregulation that would make local authorities commissioners of services rather than providers, and acknowledged the need to establish commissioning officers for each authority.
- 4.9 The Cabinet Committee acknowledged that the merger would result in changes to staffing, and noted that the two boroughs would be jointly covered by one Director of Education. Members highlighted the need for clarity in any potential changes to staffing.
- 4.10 The Committee also discussed sharing services with other suitable local authorities, and emphasised the importance of an effective communications strategy throughout merger.
- 4.11 The Cabinet Committee agreed that the process to merge education services across Westminster and Hammersmith & Fulham should begin and that discussions relating to the potential merger of other Children's Services should continue. A further meeting would be held in October to consider progress and look at detailed plans and proposals for the merger of education services, including management, commissioning arrangements, political control and accountability, with a view to the merger being implemented in April 2011.
- 4.12 **RESOLVED**
- (1) That Officers collaborate with Hammersmith & Fulham Council to develop detailed plans to implement sharing of services for Education in accordance with option 1B set out in the Cabinet Committee report and to do everything necessary to progress the proposal including consultation with staff.
 - (2) That Options 2 & 3, set out in the Cabinet Committee report, are fully explored by Officers between the two authorities (and others) in relation to the remaining children's services and that a further report be submitted in October.
 - (3) That the Strategic Director of Finance & Performance be requested to release £90k from the Transformation Fund to resource the above recommendations.

5. CLOSE OF MEETING

5.1 The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

Chairman

Date