



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Children & Adults, Public Health & Voluntary Sector Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children & Adults, Public Health & Voluntary Sector Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 12th June, 2023**, Rooms 18.01-03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Lorraine Dean, Iman Less, Ellie Ormsby, Ralu Oteh-Osoka, Angela Piddock (Chair), Selina Short and Max Sullivan.

Co-opted Members: Alix Ascough, Marina Coleman (virtual), Mark Hewitt (virtual), and Professor Ryan Nichol.

Also Present: Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector), Councillor Tim Roca (Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure), David Bello (Acting Bi-Borough Director of Adult Social Care), Maria Burton (Portfolio Advisor for Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis), Nicki Costain (virtual) (Portfolio Advisor for Councillor Tim Roca), Bernie Flaherty (Bi-Borough Executive Director of Adults), Ian Heggs (Bi-Borough Director of Education), Linda Hunting (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Professor Jill Manthorpe CBE (King's College London), Christine Mead (Head of Community Partnerships), Seth Mills (Bi-Borough Director of Social Care), Clare O'Keefe (Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Anna Raleigh (Bi-Borough Director of Public Health), Penny Roberts (virtual) (Director of Education at St. Stephen's Diocese), Rachel Soni (Director of Health Partnerships) and Gareth Wall (Bi-Borough Director of Integrated Commissioning).

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 The Committee noted that there were no changes to Membership.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 The Chair referred Members to the standing document of known interests of Members and noted there were no changes.

2.2 The Committee noted Councillor Dean declared that in respect of items to be discussed, Councillor Dean is a Learning Support Assistant at City of Westminster College.

- 2.3 The Committee noted Councillor Oteh-Osoka declared that in respect of items to be discussed, Councillor Oteh-Osoka is one of the Governors of WAES (Westminster Adult Education Service).

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting held on 18 April 2023.

RESOLVED:

- 3.2 That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR (CLLR NAFSIKA BUTLER-THALASSIS)

- 4.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis, on priorities and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member responded to questions on the following topics:

- The future plans for the Ethical Care Charter and the costs related to plans within the Charter.
- The transfer of mental health patients from the Butterworth Centre.
- Community Grants funding, availability and the compliance checks in place for funding grants that are provided by the Council.
- The social care digital platform that is currently under development by the Council, the intended audience, and how the programme will be rolled out.
- Next steps in the Gordon Hospital pre-consultation and public consultation and the Council's involvement.

4.2 ACTIONS

1. That information of the total cost of one year for Stage 3 of the Ethical Care Charter which provides for conditions of employment to be provided to the Committee, when available.
2. That the response from CNWL NHS (Central North West London NHS) / Gordon Hospital to the letter sent by the Chair following the last meeting will be circulated to Members.

5 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING AND LEISURE (CLLR TIM ROCA)

5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Tim Roca, on priorities for the portfolio and any updates that have arisen. The Cabinet Member responded to questions on the following topics:

- The reopening of the Bayswater Children's Centre.
- Missing children across Westminster, the increase in these figures, what is being done to partner with schools, how children are being actively tracked, especially if they do not own technology, and what interventions are in place to train and support staff to be aware of the early risks to stop children missing from education.
- How the Covid-19 pandemic and lock-down have affected issues such as missing children and youth substance misuse, and what is being done to address these problems.
- The *We Got U, You Got This* mental health campaign and engagement with young people, including the plans of support for young people that don't have access to technology.
- The plans to amalgamate St. Stephen's and St. Mary Magdalene primary schools and the information provided to parents regarding places at the schools for the next academic year.
- The consultation and restructure of libraries and library staff, collaboration across the borough with partners, cost savings, maintaining an effective service for residents, efficiencies within the library teams, staff training at all levels within libraries, and the importance of maintaining excellent library services across the borough.
- Ofsted inspections and the health and wellbeing of teachers and head teachers.
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) funding and the effects on primary schools and the children, due to the reduced levels of this funding.
- Keeping secondary school places as a priority for Westminster residents.
- The plans for the Queen's Park Family Hub site and the work that is being done to consider options for services provided.
- The new Church Street Community Centre and the Little Venice Community Centre.
- The availability of drugs to young people and issues that are present in some wards, including, when these issues are present near schools, and the correlation between these problems and mental health issues that are occurring in young people.
- The digital platform to support young people with areas that have been highlighted by services, and the engagement with the community in developing the platform.
- The disproportionate figures of stop and search being carried out with Afro-Caribbean young people and the training and awareness of MET (Metropolitan Police) officers and Youth Offending Teams about this.
- Absentee fathers in black, Afro-Caribbean families and the factors because of this that may impact on young people being stopped and searched.
- The partnership and funding between The Grosvenor and Westminster Foundation, the longevity of that support, HAF (Holiday Activity Programmes) and extended activities for children that have been included in the Council's budget planning.

5.2 ACTIONS

1. That information and examples of the training offered of MET officers to increase awareness in relation to the stop and search of young Afro-Caribbean people and for examples of the style of training that is being carried out.
2. That information regarding absent black Afro-Caribbean fathers in relation to the effect that may have on disproportionate stop and search incidents and links to serious youth violence of the young people of this group.
3. That information about HAF program including who the Council are reaching to participate to be provided to the Committee after the summer holiday period.
4. That information on the Children and Young People Substance Misuse Strategy be provided to the Committee.
5. That the results of the *We Got U, U Got This* campaign, when appropriate.
6. That information on the different levels and type of training that is provided for library staff be provided to the Committee.
7. That information about how the *We Got U, U Got This* campaign is being made accessible for young people who don't have devices or access to private technology be provided to the Committee.
8. That information on the plans for the Queen's Park Family Hub site and the suggestions for options for the site be provided to the Committee.

6 VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed Christine Mead (Head of Community Partnerships) to introduce the report on the voluntary and community sector investment strategy. The Head of Community Partnerships responded to questions on the following topics:
 - The capability for longer term funding, beyond 12 months, from the Council and others such as foundations and organisations.
 - The social value of the voluntary sector.
 - The Council's investment in a core grants programme to increase longevity of voluntary sector initiatives and the importance of this.
 - Quality control of voluntary sector organisations, close partnership working including with smaller organisations with a turnover of less than £400,000 per year, to ensure they deliver a good level of service.
 - How priorities and capacity building are determined, including a matrix being developed to help the Council determine where they can have the largest impact.

- Targeting certain areas in the City with support.
- Collective resource capacity with the private sector and putting plans in place to inform organisations about where funding is needed and how to exercise their social value commitments.
- Partners taking on responsibility for funding to increase longer term capacity and commitments and how this is both promoted and encouraged by the Council.

7 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

7.1 The Chair welcomed Professor Jill Manthorpe, King's College London, to introduce the independent review of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Professor Manthorpe responded to questions on the following topics:

- How the review of the Council's work during the pandemic was evidenced.
- The vaccination processes across the Council and the uptake of residents.
- The importance of immunisations and what has been learnt from the pandemic.
- The role of local authorities and how that has changed since the pandemic.
- The lessons learned from the strategies implemented around data management, the changes to how data is captured, the challenges this presents in terms of privacy protection, and best practice.
- What can be done in occupational health settings to support the workforce who suffered personally as a direct effect of Covid.
- Staff wellbeing and the effects of long Covid, and what the Council can do for support.
- Relationships with the NHS and partners.
- How Westminster Council performed during the pandemic.
- Homelessness services and the unique challenges in Westminster.
- How the Council can reward and acknowledge the work carried out by the workforce during the pandemic, including erecting a memorial to acknowledge this and the effect of the pandemic on Westminster residents and the mortalities.
- How recommendations made in the report will be best taken forward by the Council, how the Council will engage with partners, the building of relationships, and the Council's priority of preparedness for another future pandemic.
- Cross-working with the voluntary sector and other agencies, including local and internal boundaries and relationship building.
- Addressing inequalities in public health and the life expectancy gaps that exist.
- Public perceptions of adult social care and the improvements that should be addressed going forward.
- The high percentage of Covid-related deaths within the Learning-Disabled community of Westminster and how this group was not highlighted in the report.
- Where the report highlighted that certain health agencies had under-performed during the pandemic and how that is being managed going forward.
- Preparedness for any future pandemics and lessons learned from the management of services in the Council during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- How Westminster performed and supported its communities well during the pandemic, including, taking a lead in supporting people that were not Westminster residents and an active role in leading interventions in London.
- The work of the Council with voluntary sector organisations prior to the pandemic that played a significant role in how the Council responded to the pandemic.
- Communication with residents during the pandemic and what can be done outside of digital communication.
- How the recommendations in the report will be prioritised and taken forward by the Council.

7.2 ACTIONS:

1. Professor Jill Manthorpe offered to consider the MENCAP (The Mentally Handicapped Society) report on mental health in relation to mortalities during the Covid-19 pandemic and provide a breakdown of relevant data of Learning-Disabled residents to the Committee.

8 HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2023-2033

- 8.1 The Chair welcomed Rachel Soni (Director of Health Partnerships) to introduce the report outlining the draft Bi-Borough 10-year health and wellbeing strategy. The Director of Health Partnerships responded to questions on the following topics:

- How the consultation has performed since it opened on 2 May 2023, including the online survey, and how the Council and RBKC (The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) are engaging with communities to reach the views of the people that are most affected by health and wellbeing inequalities across both boroughs and how these will be reflected in the final strategy.
- The implementation of the 10-year strategy, that will be revisited every two years and plans to deliver the strategy will be set between the local authorities, NHS, and voluntary sector.
- What other stakeholders have responsibility and the accountability of the Health and Wellbeing Board for delivering and taking forward the strategy.
- Additional activities that should be added to the strategy such as walking and spending time in healthy, outdoor environments, increasing the promotion and education of cycling for children, and including the term 'sport' in the strategy to encourage children towards exercise.
- Hoarding and untidiness in homes and how this can affect people's mental health.
- Events being run to promote the strategy with residents, including events that are promoted by the voluntary sector.
- How the Council are actively seeking to reduce the life expectancy gaps that exist between wards in Westminster.
- The end date of the consultation, 9 July, and when a summary of the results and final draft will be available, including the approval process at the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- How the strategy will be embedded across other departments of the Council such as employment and education as part of an overarching health and wellbeing focus.
- The importance of mental health and wellbeing in the strategy, including the 18–25-year-old category that bridges support between children and adults, as well as support for these people with employment.
- The need for autism and dementia strategies to be included in the Health and Wellbeing strategy.

9 THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ST. STEPHEN’S AND ST. MARY MAGDALENE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

9.1 The Committee convened to review a call-in brought by three of the Committee’s Members – Councillors Dean, Oteh-Osoka, and Short. The Members stated their reasons for the call-in, identifying two key areas:

1. Further examination of the costs to the local resident taxpayers.
2. The lack of future plans for educational use of the St. Stephen’s school site.

9.2 A report responding to the reasons for the decision was presented by the Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure, Councillor Tim Roca, and Ian Heggs, Bi-borough Director of Education. Both addressed Members’ questions arising from the report.

9.3 Following the reasons for the call-in by Members, officers, and the Cabinet decision-makers responded and explained the reasons for the proposed amalgamation of the two schools.

9.4 Officers advised the decision made for the amalgamation of the schools was about safeguarding public money and to avoid St. Stephen’s incurring large deficits, and that this was the most appropriate decision taken. Officers explained that significant discussion had taken place with the governing bodies and head teachers in reaching the decision, as well as full transparency with ward Councillors.

9.5 Call-in Members raised questions about the deficit that had occurred with St. Stephen’s primary school in 2021, how other schools in Westminster have also incurred large deficits and are still open, and whether the Council should have put deficit plans in place earlier to avoid the possible amalgamation.

9.6 A question arose about the risk of closure of schools in Westminster and plans for other amalgamations, including the detrimental effects on residents and their children.

9.7 The Cabinet Member responded to call-in queries and stated that pupil numbers had declined at St. Stephen’s dramatically, affecting their budget and in light of Council Tax payments for residents, and following consultation a prompt decision to close the school to avoid the deficit for the next academic year increasing that further. It was explained that as St. Stephen’s

is a church school, the decisions about what the site would be used for in the future was to be decided by the diocese.

- 9.8 Discussion arose by call-in Members about falling rolls in schools and the stress and concern of children and families, including the concerns of the Committee that further investigation is required on this topic.
- 9.9 The Cabinet Member responded with an explanation concerning funding of smaller schools and that further investigation and support is required of the DfE (Department for Education) on this matter.
- 9.10 Officers explained that governing bodies have a range of responsibilities and that setting suitable budgets and considering deficits over a three-year period was a significant part of their responsibilities. Therefore, on considering the amalgamation, the two governing bodies had considered both the deficit figure that would occur at the end of three years and other possible options forward before the closure of St. Stephen's was taken.
- 9.11 Officers explained that as the two schools had put plans in place early, it was possible for every child attending St. Stephen's to be offered a place at St. Mary Magdalene school, the school is a 10-minute walk from St. Stephen's, and governors had also been able to consider how to retain the ethos and educational model of St. Stephen's at St. Mary Magdalene.
- 9.12 The Cabinet Member responded that the consultation for the schools had been developed from earlier amalgamation consultations and that significant changes had been made to the process from lessons learned and to ensure a very thorough and rigorous review.
- 9.13 Officers advised that the Council is held accountable by the DfE for schools within the borough that are in deficit and the steps that are being taken to correct this.
- 9.14 The Cabinet Member stated that since the beginning of the year, the concern regarding a possible amalgamation of the two schools and what was being done in the consultation process with parents and headteachers, and how rigorous that process has been has been brought to Committee meetings to ensure that Members were kept fully briefed and able to comment.
- 9.15 A question arose from call-in Members about where the funds were coming from in order to deal with the deficit at St. Stephen's and how that would affect Council Services.
- 9.16 The Cabinet Member responded that funds would be used from the General Fund of the Council and to meet the deficit amount of £400,000.
- 9.17 A question arose from call-in Members about the number and length of outstanding contracts at the school and how that was being managed in line with contractor expectations.

- 9.18 The Cabinet Member responded that there was only responsibility for teaching staff and that on completion of the current process the statutory requirements would commence and that the Headteacher and Chair of Governors had raised concerns about how the call-in was increasing the delay, incurring more cost implications.
- 9.19 Discussion arose about the decision being timely and necessary in order to reduce the continuing cost to the Council and that the information provided had made a very clear case that it was the right decision to therefore intervene and proceed with the amalgamation, before the issue becomes far larger. It was noted that the school is not viable to continue in its present manner.
- 9.20 A question arose from call-in Members about the usage of the St. Stephen's site and Members provided examples of possible options such as a special school provision for children, disability, or WAES (Westminster Adult Education Service).
- 9.21 The Cabinet Member responded that the Council does not have direct responsibility for the St. Stephen's building, though was working with the diocese on future plans of usage for the premises that would still be intended for ongoing educational purposes, such as Westminster Cathedral School. The Cabinet Member and officers explained that various informal options were being considered with suitable providers, currently three, though there were suitability concerns for use of the site given the nature of the buildings and the adaptations that may be required for its use. It was noted the site cannot be publicly marketed for reuse, under The Charities Act 2022 due to its ownership, until a closure notice has been announced by the Council, and the planning restriction on the site is for educational purposes, therefore the responsible local authority will be taking plans for the site forward. The Director of Education at St. Stephen's Diocese explained that should a difficulty arise in securing another educational provider for the site, there would be a discussion with the church and the need for complex planning applications that would be required before permission may be granted. It was also noted that non formal consultation process for the transfer of teaching staff could take place until the formal closure notice had been affected and it was crucial for the process to be timely so that teaching staff were informed as soon as possible.
- 9.22 A point was raised by a call-in Member about the St. Stephen's site being taken over by developers and raised a concern about the importance of the buildings being retained for public use.
- 9.23 The Chair requested officers and the Cabinet Member that as further discussions occur and plans develop for the site, that these are brought back to inform the Committee, when appropriate.
- 9.24 It was requested by officers that the efforts of the headteacher and the governors of St Stephen's school to manage the consultation process and retain confidence with the families, students, and the community, for the outcomes for the children for next academic year should be noted.

9.25 A question arose from call-in Members about how official notice was being given about the amalgamation of the school, such as on the diocese website. The Director of Education at St. Stephen's Diocese explained that the primary concern throughout the consultation process had been for the children and retaining confidence at a local level and this and the discussions about the buildings had been approached separately, due to the nature of ownership by the church. It was confirmed that announcements for amalgamations would be posted in the diocese newsletter and the responsible local authority that maintains the school would make an announcement, as part of the statutory process, that also allows for a possible appeal of the decision by the church.

9.26 Discussion arose about how well the consultation process had been carried out with local families, as there had been no causes for concern raised from residents and no case work related issues raised at the Council. It was noted this was due to the excellent work that had been carried out by the schools and officers.

9.15 **VOTING**

6 (including co-opted Members) – For: to note the report and take no further action. Co-opted Members: Alix Ascough and Professor Ryan Nichol

3 – Against: to proceed with referral back to the decision-maker.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report and no further action to be taken.

10 **WORK PROGRAMME**

10.1 The Chair invited the Policy and Scrutiny Advisor to introduce the Committee to the Work Programme and provide an overview.

10.4 The following points regarding the Work Programme were noted by the Committee.

- The work programme would be reviewed in more detail at the July meeting.
- Members would provide any suggestions to the Policy and Scrutiny Advisor ahead of the July meeting.

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

11.1 The Committee agreed there were no other business items to be discussed.

The Meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____