



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Young People, Learning and Employment Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Young People, Learning and Employment Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 5th December, 2023**, .

Members Present: Councillors Angela Piddock (Chair), Lorraine Dean, Sara Hassan, Elizabeth Hitchcock, Iman Less, Ellie Ormsby and Ralu Oteh-Osoka

Also Present: Councillor Tim Roca (Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Employment), Sarah Newman (Bi Borough Executive Director of Children's Services), Helen Mann (CEO Young Westminster Foundation), Madhu Chauhan (Head of Early Help Family Services WC), Iraklis Kolokotronis (Bi-Borough Principal Early Years Service), Johnathan Turner (Service Manager - Westminster Looked After Children and Leaving Care Service) (online) and Linda Hunting (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 The Committee noted apologies from Co-opted Members Alix Ascough, Marina Coleman, and Professor Ryan Nichol.

2 MINUTES

- 2.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting held on 18 September 2023.

RESOLVED:

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

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 The Committee noted Councillor Hitchcock declared that in respect of the item the Early Help Strategy 2022 -2025, she is a trustee of the St Andrew's Club.
- 3.2 The Committee noted that Councillor Piddock declared in respect of the item the Early Help Strategy 2022-2025, she is as a Board Member for the Queen's Park Family Hub, by extension as a member of the Board of Governors of Queens Park Primary school.

3.3 The Committee noted that there were no other declarations of interest.

4 WORK PROGRAMME

4.1 The Committee noted that the Work Programme meeting held in October was to agree the items for this meeting and 5 March 2024.

4.2 The Committee noted that another Work Programme meeting would be scheduled in due course to plan the next municipal year programme.

4.3 The Committee noted updates to the Work Programme and received an overview of the forthcoming plans.

4.4 The Committee queried the substantive item focussing on the provision for migrant families for the 5 March Committee meeting. It was noted this is a fast-changing landscape, migrant families are an extremely vulnerable group, and there is a multi-agency board that oversees this provision. The Committee agreed this item should broadly cover migrant families and the changing situation, asylum-seeking families in contingency hotels, and those not in receipt of public funds.

5 EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2022-2025

5.1 The Committee welcomed Sarah Newman (Bi Borough Executive Director of Children's Services), to introduce the report on the Early Help Strategy. The Bi Borough Executive Director of Children's Services and Madhu Chauhan (Head of Early Help Family Services WC) responded to questions on the following topics:

- The importance the Family Hubs as they bring all the services and support for families together in one accessible place.
- How the Council should be prepared and carry out any necessary risk assessments to ensure that in the event of another pandemic the Council's universal provision, targeted provision, and specialist services are met by the existing budgets and would not cause any disruption to young people and families.
- The importance of the Early Help services being agile and reactive.
- The national recruitment crisis with social workers.
- The pressures on the system with only three Family Hubs in Westminster and the other types of services that could be delivered through Community Hubs and Libraries.
- Gaps that exist in the services for young people and looking into additional opportunities, funding streams, and voluntary sector groups to assist.
- Creating seamless services for families with a joined-up approach with health, housing, employment services, youth clubs, and schools, and how the family navigator role is to link up these services to support families for 0-18 years.
- Social Workers based in schools to offer support at an early age and steer young people away from potential statutory referrals at a later stage.

- The importance of the services that are available for 0-5 years and how that assists in steering young people and families away from social services.
- Building resilience and independence with individuals and families, awareness of those families where this may not be possible, and the role of community champions and the family hubs.
- The system approach that is set out in the strategy, what works and what does not work in terms of approaches with families, and how that is communicated throughout partners.
- The community sector groups and the training that is offered, in particular, which schools use the trauma informed way of working and how this can be extended to others across the system.
- How well the Portman building site works at offering a Family Hub, the significant need for a Queens Park Family Hub, the delays in opening a Family Hub with the services needed in this area of deprivation, and the funding that is needed to ensure the project is completed.
- Early Help services and any potential plans to cut funding for the Family Hubs, including any planned refurbishment projects.
- Ways to capture the data on every child in Westminster, how this is reliant on the voluntary nature of parents to engage, and whether it is possible to predict which young people might need interventions or assistance in the lead up to attending education and at the early stages of their development.
- How the Council promotes the services that are available to families, where issues such as poor parenting and deprivation have a marked effect on a child starting education at a level not commensurate with other children of a comparative age, and whether there will be additional funding available in order to focus on the Early Years offer from 0-5 years.
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, first-time entrants of children to the criminal justice service, and how the Early Help Strategy aims to prevent young people from going on this path.
- Cyber bullying and online safety and how the Council promotes the importance of this with parents and with young people.
- The Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit and whether there is investigation into the demographics of the young people this includes, in particular, families with absent fathers and what contact the service has with these fathers to gain the views on their child.
- How the Council gains an understanding of the young population in Westminster is in terms of ethnicity, school population, the youth justice system, referrals to social care, and exclusions in order to gain more knowledge about disproportionality, highlight the key areas of concern, and help to inform what services are required.
- How the priorities in the report, overlap with other issues and departments such as secure housing, and what collaborative work is being carried out in the Council across departments.
- Youth engagement in the transition from Primary School to Secondary School, the role of the Young Westminster Foundation and what things should be a focus for the next year, including, what the young people have identified as gaps in the provision.
- How the Council engages with young people and are helping to prepare young people for life after school.
- The health and wellbeing of young people.

- Workshops with service users and how this would inform the review of the strategy in the future, capturing the voice of parents from the voluntary sector partners that sit on the Early Help Partnership Board, the Local Integrated Partnership, and the Quality Assurance Framework.
- International migration in Westminster and how these statistics feed into how services that are developed and delivered to include different cultural expectations and the willingness of different cultures to interact with services.
- The performance framework for the Early Help Service and the Quarterly Performance data set which evaluates and monitors the impact of the service and provides an oversight of what is being achieved across Children's Services, including, how the strategy may be modified.
- How the Council are promoting services in different languages and to different communities, including refugee and asylum-seeking parents.
- Genetics of mothers, origins of birth, and the differences between birth weights between cultures, and how post birth weight is supported with parents in the 0-5 years in the family hubs, including perinatal health.
- Embedding a new universal assessment tool for families to avoid them needing to repeat their information and stories between services, as well as cost saving benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Council extends its outreach work for 0-5 years across Westminster Council to assist in reducing the number of children that may be directed to Children's Services under a statutory obligation in the future.
2. That the Council continues to promote a trauma informed way of working with young people across all Primary and Secondary Schools and the system and promotes the training with all partners.
3. That the Council continues to work on a universal assessment tool that goes across all Early Help Services and develops further data sharing protocols to speed up the delivery of support for families.
4. That the Council continues to work on ways in which to effectively reach out and communicate with families about the support services that are available in Westminster, with a particular focus on the 0–5-year age group.

6 CARE LEAVERS TASK GROUP REPORT

- 6.1 The Chair welcomed Councillor Iman Less, Chair of the Care Leavers Task Group, to introduce the report on the scope for the Task Group. The following points were noted by the Committee:
 - That Councillor Ralu Oteh-Osoka would like to join the Task Group.
 - The importance of the site visits to Tuesday Group and for Members to speak with relevant officers beforehand.
 - How the work of this Task Group will report back to the Committee and will provide recommendations to officers and the Cabinet Member for the preparation of the forthcoming Ofsted inspection.

- That the role of the Task Group will be to independently test the offer for Care Leavers in Westminster by speaking with the young people, reading the policy, and speaking with the relevant staff.
- The importance of scrutiny carrying out this review outside of the Ofsted inspection.
- That the Council are updating the Care Leavers offer and the recommendations of the Task Group will help to inform the review process and ensure the Council's offer is robust.
- A session to provide a high-level overview of the service to Members, to include both clinicians and officers, and people working in the CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) team that support the Westminster Guardians Board and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- The possibility of Members shadowing officers on Practice Month to observe the service and support levels.

RESOLVED

- 6.2 That the Committee approved the establishment and scope of the Task Group.

7 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Committee welcomed Iraklis Kolokotronis (Bi-Borough Principal Early Years Service) to take any questions arising from the report on Childcare Sufficiency to be noted by the Committee. The Committee raised the following points:
- The need to create more places in local schools for under 5 years and specifically under 3 years in the North West of Westminster to support families to stay in the local areas.
 - The available funding in the system for lower income families returning to work and the available hours for childcare.
 - How demographics, present changes in the population, and the economy are affecting the uptake of places for children in Westminster.
 - Changes to Universal Credit and getting a greater understanding of the gaps and local demands, including, how families may respond to the new policies.
 - Family Hubs in Westminster, the upgrades that are needed, and how the available data will help to inform this.
 - Areas of deprivation in the North West of Westminster, nursery places in the Queen's Park area, and the forthcoming move of the Queen's Park family hub to another location.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 The Committee received a verbal update from Councillor Tim Roca (Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Employment) about an intended consultation due to start prior to Christmas until the middle of January 2024 about the future of the Churchill Gardens Primary School due to low pupil numbers. The Committee was advised that as the school is part of an academy chain, different rules apply for the consultation and that the relevant

Ward Councillors have received a briefing from Ian Heggs (Bi-borough Director of Education).

- 8.2 The Committee noted that the potential amalgamation plans would be of Churchill Gardens and Millbank Primary Schools and any changes to the SEN (Special Educational Needs) provision at Churchill Gardens school would have an effect on the local community.
- 8.3 The Committee was advised by Councillor Roca that there would be a formal announcement forthcoming to advise that he will be stepping down from his role as Cabinet Member for the Young People, Learning and Employment portfolio.

The Meeting ended at 8.17 pm.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____