

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2018**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Derek Levy (Chair) , Huseyin Akpinar, Susan Erbil, Rick Jewell, Hass Yusuf, Lee David-Sanders and Edward Smith

ABSENT Tolga Aramaz and Gina Needs

STATUTORY CO-OPTees: *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Mr Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations representative), Mr Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

OFFICERS: Tony Theodoulou (Executive Director, People), Nicky Fielder (Commercial Director), Susan O'Connell (Governance & Scrutiny Officer), Stacey Gilmour (Governance & Scrutiny Secretary)

Also Attending: Councillor Achilleas Georgiou (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Councillor Ahmet Oykener (Cabinet Member for Property and Assets)

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WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair, Councillor Levy welcomed all attendees to the meeting. The following substitutes were noted:

Councillor Rick Jewell for Councillor Gina Needs
Councillor Hass Yusuf for Councillor Tolga Aramaz

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, COUNCILLOR
ACHILLEAS GEORGIU**

The Chair introduced this item and welcomed Councillor Georgiou as Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Tony Theodoulou, Executive Director, People. He asked Councillor Georgiou to give a brief overview of what he considers to be the key objectives and priorities in respect of the portfolio.

Councillor Georgiou thanked Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He spoke of the difficult decisions that would have to be made over

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the forthcoming years because of government financial savings. (£18m savings for LB Enfield by 2019/20).

He highlighted the following:

- The key priority was around how we continue to safeguard our children and providing services that children and their parents need.
- Continuing to meet the different situations of schools in the borough as well as managing the conflicting demands between primary and secondary schools.
- The challenge is how to achieve all of this whilst continually trying to provide a better service in an environment where there is a departmental deficit as well as a council deficit.
- There is a lack of opportunity for further significant savings from children's services due to rising demand and cost pressures.
- Relatively modest savings are planned in future years either from deleting posts that had been vacant for a while or substituting base budget expenditure with grant funding as the only realistic options for reducing expenditure in children's services **without** compromising the Council's ability to meet its legal duties to children, young people and families in the borough.
- At the O&SC Budget meeting in December 2016 £10m of savings from children's services was proposed by conducting a zero-based budget exercise which ceased all discretionary expenditure on children's services. These savings have now been delivered, as far as possible, so any significant further reductions are likely to impact on the department's ability to meet its statutory requirements.
- Children's Services regularly talk to schools and their Governors and it is becoming increasingly clear that several schools are trying to set a budget that won't balance. The Local Authority does its very best to support schools with this, but the challenges faced are increasing.
- The LA prides itself on its good relationship with schools in the borough and everyone is pulling together to address the issues and challenges faced. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult, but schools continue to look to the Local Authority to assist them going forward.
- Crucially there is a growing demand on SEN (Special Educational Needs) in the borough. 700 children with SEN in the borough use transport of which 400 of these are transported out of borough.
- There is currently a £1.9m overspend in the transport budget. This overspend has slightly reduced by implementing various measures such as fewer transport routes and more children and young people on each bus. However, this overspend will not significantly reduce whilst SEN demand continues to grow in the borough.
- To address this issue, the strategy going forward is to cater for our pupils in borough as sending them out of borough has a significant impact on transport costs.
- Plans are in place to provide more SEN provision in borough either in existing or new schools. Some secondary schools currently have

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space, and this is being utilised by a few of the SEN schools setting up units within these schools.

- Within the next 18-24 months new SEN provision will be implemented in the borough. The Minchenden site will provide 70 additional SEN places and is due to open in September 2019. Edmonton County School has also won the tender to provide provision for approximately 70 SEN children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs. The borough is actively building provision, but it does take time for this to come into play.

The following issues/ questions were raised:

- SEN units within secondary school will be run and managed by the Special Schools themselves and all staff will be SN staff, so the children and young people who attend these units will benefit from mainstream integration but with specialised SEN support.
- Enfield Council has a school place planning service, the predictions of which have been fairly accurate to date. The current projection is that in two years' time there will be pressure on secondary school places. However, plans are in place to open a new school on the Chase Farm Hospital site and conversations are taking place regarding what provision is needed.
- Clarification was sought on the number of families arriving in the borough from overseas that haven't been planned for and the impact of this on pupil place numbers. Members were advised that the LA are currently looking after 60 unaccompanied asylum seekers as well as approximately 50 young people over the age of 18 who have care leavers' rights. There have been a large number of families looking for places for their children which the LA had not planned for.
- How can we improve the ability to predict these inflows and can we find school places for them?
- This is certainly a challenge. Due to the churn across London families who were living in other parts of London have now been moved into London. Not every Enfield resident chooses to be educated in the borough though with many preferring for their children to attend schools in Haringey/Hertfordshire therefore the numbers often balance out.
- A certain number of casual admissions are anticipated each year. This is a challenge but one that has been faced and dealt with for the past ten years.
- Over the past few years substantial savings have been made in children's services. A good example where savings have been made whilst protecting services is the Youth Services. The use of youth centres has been maximised by hiring them out during the day and volunteers are also used to operate the centres.
- Another example highlighted as good practice was Children's Centres. 60/70% of the budget has been taken out of this service and there is now only one hub in operation. However due to streamlining and focusing the services provided by the centre it is still reaching and targeting the people who most need it.

Councillor Levy thanked Councillor Georgiou and Tony Theodoulou for attending the meeting and for giving an overview of the Children's Services portfolio area.

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COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

The Chair, Councillor Levy introduced the Commercial Strategy October 2018. The Strategy will be presented to Cabinet on Wednesday 17 October 2018. As a subject of pre-decision scrutiny, the views of Overview & Scrutiny were requested.

The Chair reminded Members that tonight's meeting was for the Committee to play the role of critical friend and to make comments, observations and constructive criticism. The primary intention however is to assist and guide Officers and the Cabinet Member on how best to present this report to Cabinet next week.

The Strategy sets out how the local authority will take a holistic approach to stimulate the innovation and enterprise from within and working with its partners that will play a key role in securing future service delivery.

The following was highlighted:

- Enfield like many councils is facing the difficult challenge of managing funding reductions, coupled with increasing demand for essential services.
- The Strategy sets out how the local authority will take a holistic approach to stimulate the innovation and enterprise from within and working with its partners that will play a key role in securing future service delivery.
- It is vital that this culture is nurtured within the council to ensure the robustness of the local authority, forming a fundamental part of how it plans and does business in the coming years.
- The new strategy document sets the vision for Enfield to be a resilient, innovative and enterprising Council delivering sustainable services that meet resident needs. It will be a vital guiding asset for the local authority as it seeks to achieve these goals.

The following issues were raised:

- Members supported the principles of the strategy and agreed that everyone wanted to see a more innovative and holistic approach to service delivery. However, concerns were raised regarding the lack of detail in the report, for example, there were no 'Key Risks' identified. For a document to have none identified was of considerable concern to Members.
- The document talks about a new innovative approach; however, it is still written in a very public-sector way. It was felt that the document

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needed to be shorter and more 'pithy' as it was far too 'corporate' and 'woolly in places'.

- Questions were raised around the impact of generating income. Clarification was sought as to whether this was a short or long-term outcome, and it was felt that more information around this was needed in the document. It was also felt that the report lacked financial context, and this is key to measuring outcomes.
- Have other councils implemented such changes and if so what were the outcomes. Do we as a council have the skills and knowledge to implement this new, innovative way of working.
- The intention is to visit other authorities with Officers to look at how they are doing and how they have implemented the changes.
- The core focus of the strategy is to bring about a new way of thinking and working that will help create and capture the opportunities and expand the ways the council can secure income, explore new ideas, and implement alternative ways to acquire and use available resources to be more effective in meeting needs in the borough.
- This strategy impacts on all departments and services across the council, but it is recognised that no one approach can be applied to all and consequently different actions and areas of improvement can be expected. Cultural changes do not happen overnight, it is very much about changing the mindset of those involved in delivering the strategy.
- Further clarification was sought in relation to the Commercial Board. The document does not explain whether we intend to utilise the experience we already have or alternatively look to seek experts from the wider business. It would be helpful to include more detail on this in the document.
- It was suggested that it might be helpful to include some good test cases in the document to show how the strategy's principles would work in practice as this may be easier for people to understand.
- Page 22-Measuring Success. This section very much lacks detail and further detail/information was needed. It was suggested rewording this to 'Value for Money' so information on Key Performance Indicators could then be included.
- With regards to Impact on Council Priorities- Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods (Item: 7.1 page 5 of report) no information is included as to how this will be achieved. Some examples would be useful.
- In relation to the Public Health Implications (Item 9 page 6 of the report) it is not ideal to continuously use the word 'should' in a document that is intended to be so transformational. If you believe it 'will' then say how and why.
- It was felt that the report was focused too much on income generation and this needed to be addressed. Councillor David-Sanders suggested re-wording the Executive Summary part of the report so that it is less income focused.

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- Nicky Fiedler Commercial Director responded that income generation is only one strand of the strategy and it is about more creative use of the resource that we have and how to focus on future need. The core focus of the strategy is commissioning, procurement, contract management, assets and investments, income generating services, traded services and trading companies.
- Another big piece of the strategy is working with our partners, influencing our partners and improving outcomes for our residents. It is not just about producing a paper but very much about putting things into a document that are doable and can deliver an outcome. This strategy is vital for Enfield Council going forward.
- Are there any costs involved in setting up a separate Commercial Board to oversee this process?
It was stated that the whole point of this is to have a large internal resource. It will be part of Officers' jobs and will be a very different approach of that previously seen where consultants are brought in.

It was noted that:

- All comments made were purely observational rather than critical, to potentially inform and enhance how the report might be better articulated at Cabinet.
- The report is a starting point and given the feedback there are some points for the Cabinet Member and Officers to consider in taking this strategy forward.
- If it was felt that there is a need for a supplementary bullet point or two in response to what has been discussed tonight, then it would be a good idea to attach this to the original document.

AGREED:

1. The Committee agreed to the recommendations of the report with consideration being given to the inclusion of the suggestions/comments made at this meeting.
2. Updates to be provided to future meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

NOTED the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/19.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NOTED future meetings as follows:

Provisional Call-Ins

Thursday 8 November, 2018

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Thursday 6 December, 2018
Thursday 20 December, 2018
Thursday 7 February 2019
Tuesday 12 March 2019
Tuesday 26 March, 2019
Thursday 11 April, 2019

Please note, the business meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be held on:

Wednesday 7 November, 2018
Tuesday 12 February, 2019
Wednesday 3 April, 2019

It was also noted that there may be a need to change the date of the Overview & Scrutiny Budget Meeting which was originally scheduled to be held on Tuesday 15 January 2019. Members will be advised accordingly of any change to this date.

Councillor Levy thanked everyone for attending the meeting.