

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2022

MEMBERS: Councillors Elif Erbil (Chair), Gunes Akbulut (Vice-Chair), Adrian Grumi, Nelly Gyosheva, Suna Hurman, Ruby Sampson and Andrew Thorpe

Absent: Councillor Ahmet Oykenner

Officers:

Peter Nathan (Director of Education), Jo Fear (Service Manager, Admissions), Neil Best (Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships – Education), Barbara Thurogood (Head of SEN), Stacey Gilmour (Governance Officer)

Also Attending: Press Officer

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for lateness were received from Peter Nathan, Director, Education.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2022.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received:

Cllr Adrian Grumi declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 4 and 5 of the agenda as his wife has recently been working in an Enfield primary school.

4. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Jo Fear, Head of Admissions and Attendance highlighted the key points from the report which included information on Enfield's Education Welfare Service, impact of the pandemic on attendance and Enfield's response, attendance data pre and post pandemic as well as the White Paper and new non-statutory guidance on improving attendance.

Members extended their thanks for the clear layout of the report and then commented as follows:

1. In response to Members questions regarding the Enfield Education Welfare Service, officers advised that Enfield has an established team

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of Education Welfare Officers who work in partnership with schools, agencies and families across the Borough offering a holistic approach to improving school attendance. In addition to carrying out the Local Authority's (LA's) statutory duties, the Service also offer a traded element to Enfield's academies and free schools.

2. Cllr Erbil requested an explanation regarding the use of penalty notices (PN) by schools and how these were applied. Officers provided a detailed response and advised that term time leave of absence for holidays is problematic and this year schools have been encouraged to issue PNs where holidays are likely to be the reason for non-attendance.
3. Cllr Thorpe said he was heartened to see attendance improving following the pandemic. However, he noted that the data was disproportionate amongst certain ethnic groups and asked what was being done to address this. Officers provided information on the initiatives in place to address this issue which included coordinating an Attendance Forum, school drop-in sessions as well as engagement work with community groups to encourage attendance.
4. Cllr Sampson felt that during the pandemic Covid was being used as an excuse for absence and often these absences were not recorded by schools. Officers acknowledged that the drive on attendance wasn't as tight during the pandemic as schools had been faced with a very difficult and challenging time. Even if there were 'suspicions' with regards to absence it was not always possible to follow these up due to varying factors including lack of staffing. However, educational welfare was still taking place during this time to positively support parents and help them engage with the Public Health Team to discuss any concerns and worries they may have had about sending their children to school during the pandemic.
5. Cllr Grumi asked if there was any correlation between a request for authorised absence being refused, but it being taken anyway. Officers advised that they had been unable to collect this data but agreed that it would be useful to match up and 'tease out' some of these issues.

The Chair thanked Officers for their informative update.

5. SEND PLACES

RECEIVED the report of Neil Best, Head of Strategic Resourcing & Partnerships and Barbara Thurogood, Head of Special Educational Needs. Neil highlighted the following key points:

1. The report provided an update on special education need placements, current pressures, and activities to increase the number of places within Enfield and to reduce out of borough expenditure.
2. Details were also provided of current and projected demand for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places, current provision both in-borough and out-of-borough and the related costs to the Council.

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3. There had been a significant increase in SEND provision during recent years with Enfield Council putting in extra resources and commissioning designated units within mainstream schools. But because of limited capacity to extend existing schools, the council had decided to establish new facilities
4. The Council had almost “maxed out” in terms of large SEND schools in the borough and there was a huge demand on the ‘high needs’ element of the dedicated schools grant – provided by the government to support schools- and it was currently £13 m in deficit.
5. The number of pupils with an education health and care plan (EHCP) – which provide extra support for SEND pupils- is expected to grow by 10% over three years.
6. Currently 468 young people with SEND are being educated in other boroughs, costing the council around £14,000 extra per pupil compared with in-borough schooling. This can lead to young people being separated from their communities and experiencing longer journey times, along with added costs for travel assistance.
7. Two priority sites in Enfield have been identified to provide 136 extra school places for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Portcullis Lodge Car Park in Enfield Town and Addison House in Southgate have been classed as ‘priority sites’ to help meet the growing demand for SEND provision.
8. The Council has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) Free School Wave 2022 to have the two priority sites included, which would see the government provide funding if the projects are delivered in partnership with free school providers. The Council will find out next April if it has been successful.
9. Alongside this the SEN Service has been developing small scale additional SEND provision within mainstream schools where specialist assistance is provided to pupils within their setting.

In response members commented as follows:

1. Cllr Thorpe said that the acceleration of the Council’s SEND Development Programme would lead to a “step change” in the number of available places and he was incredibly disappointed by the decision to pull the paper from a Cabinet meeting held last month. The withdrawn report sought Cabinet approval to establish new SEND provision at Portcullis Lodge and Addison House, with £1.6m needed to progress development work.
2. Officers acknowledged the decision would delay the opening of a new school but assured Members that, having established the programme, this would not be “kicked into the long grass”. However, the other thing in terms of delay that was important right now was the cost of delivery as construction costs have gone up and up and were not likely to reduce.
3. In response to Members’ concerns regarding the predicted growth locally in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), Officers advised that the number of children with EHCPs has been increasing nationally since the commencement of the 2014 reforms. This is partially due to

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the extension of the age group from 18 to 25. The SEN service has reviewed its operational delivery including its SEN Panel where decisions for Education, Health & Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and decisions to issue an EHCP are made. The new changes have resulted in 23% fewer needs assessments undertaken and 10% less ECHPs have been issued.

4. Officers added that a lot of guidance has also been issued to schools to assist in identifying the needs of children and young people earlier and the development of Early intervention models, such as Enfield Community Advisory Support (ECAS) has meant that there is an offer to support children and young people with communication needs to prevent the need for an EHCP.
5. SEN are holding a Speech and Language Summit with health to make certain that there is a credible offer to meet the speech and language needs of the community and to ensure that children do not need an EHCP to access speech and language provision from health.

The Chair thanked Officers for their updates and the reports which were well focused and easy to follow.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

NOTED the work programme for 2022/23.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

NOTED the dates of future meetings as follows:

Tuesday 10 January 2023
Thursday 23 March 2023

All meetings commence at 7pm and will be held in the Conference Room at the Civic Centre.

The meeting ended at 8:40pm