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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 2 June 2015 at 7.30 pm
Conference Room, Civic Centre, Silver
Street, Enfield, EN1 3XA

Contact: Jane Juby
Scrutiny Officer
Direct: 020-8379-1223
Tel: 020-8379-1000
Ext: 1223

Textphone: 020-8379-4419
E-mail: jane.juby@enfield.gov.uk
Council website: www.enfield.gov.uk

Councillors : Derek Levy (Chair), Abdul Abdullahi, Katherine Chibah,
Krystle Fonyonga, Joanne Laban and Edward Smith

Education Statutory Co-optees: 1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), Simon Goulden (other faiths/denominations representative), Tony Murphy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor Representative).

Support Officers – Claire Johnson (Scrutiny Manager)
Jane Juby (Scrutiny Officer)

AGENDA – PART 1

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

To elect the Vice Chair of the Committee.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council are invited to identify any disclosable pecuniary, other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests relevant to items on the agenda.

4. PARKS LOCKING (Pages 1 - 12)

To receive an update report on Parks Locking from Nicky Fiedler, Assistant Director, Public Realm, further to the Call-In of this matter considered at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 October 2014.

5. WORK PROGRAMME AND WORKSTREAMS FOR 2015/16

The Deputy Leader, Cllr Georgiou, to outline the Cabinet's priorities for 2015/16.

The Committee to discuss Work Programme items and select the new workstreams for 2015/16.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING 1 AND 8 APRIL 2015 (Pages 13 - 22)

To receive the Minutes of the Meetings held on 1 and 8 April 2015.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the dates of future meetings as follows:

Provisional Call-Ins

Tuesday 16 June
Thursday 16 July
Thursday 30 July
Thursday 13 August
Tuesday 25 August

Please note, the next business meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be held on Wednesday 2 September 2015.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider, if necessary, passing a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 excluding the press and public from the meeting for the item of business listed in Part 2 of the agenda on the grounds that it will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006), as are listed on the agenda (Please note there is a Part 2 agenda).

PART 2 AGENDA

PARKS LOCKING UPDATE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**2 JUNE 2015**

Contact officer and telephone number: Nicky Fiedler, Ex2016

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A decision was taken on the 3rd October 2014 by the Cabinet Member to cease locking parks. The decision on the report ENV 14 52 was called in and heard at OSC on the 29th October 2014. At the meeting the Cabinet Member was asked to reconsider the decision and agreed that the decision be deferred to April 2015, to enable consultation with the Friends of the Parks and Police. It was also agreed that Friends of Parks not previously contacted be written to, to invite their views.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is agreed to proceed with unlocking the partially locked parks only as set out in appendix 3 and in accordance with report ENV 14 52 as set out in 3.6 of this report

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 There are 124 parks and open spaces within the borough. Of these 22 are currently locked (14) or partially locked (8) at night either by locking pedestrian entrances and/or vehicle barriers.

3.2 The locking of park gates is conducted each night by parks staff operating on an overtime basis. Annually this creates a budget pressure.

3.3 Consultation

3.4 Further to the OSC meeting on the 29th October 2014 where it was agreed that the decision be deferred to April 2015, to enable consultation with the Friends of the Parks and Police. It was also agreed that Friends of Parks not previously contacted be written to, to invite their views

3.5 To this end the following consultation has taken place:

3.5.1 Meetings have been offered to all of the Chairs and Secretaries of the FOP's affected by the decision (16 FOP's). These took place between November 2014 and March 2015. The outcome of each meeting has been recorded in a letter which the FOP's have each agreed is a record of their views and is appended to this report (Appendix 1).

3.5.2 In summary 10 of the FOP's groups affected would still like to see them locked at night (refer to appendix 3). The main reasons for this were to protect; parks assets, wildlife, resident's properties, prevent ASB (litter, drugs, dog baiting, youths, travellers, rough sleepers, crime).

3.5.3 In contrast 6 of the FOP's groups affected were prepared to support the leaving these parks unlocked at night (refer to appendix 3) as they accepted that the parks were not secure and could be accessed day and night. Generally the FOP's of partially locked parks were supportive of the trial to leave these parks unlocked at night. Some of the FOP's saw this as a positive move as they acknowledged that people wanted to use the parks after dark to walk dogs and for access through the parks.

3.5.4 The remaining 10 FOP's who are not affected by the proposal were also consulted and asked to provide views by the 13th March. To this end 5 out of the 10 responded and 4 of these objected to the proposal. The main reasons for this were ASB and litter. The other 7 FOP's did not express a view on this matter and so could be seen as accepting of the proposed trial.

3.5.5 Therefore of the total 26 FOP's, 12 supported or did not hold a view on the proposed trial and 14 objected.

3.5.6 Consultation with the Police which is summarized in Appendix 2

3.5.7 Other data has also been collected to help inform the review of the decision which includes the crime data in the affected parks both day and night as set out in Appendix 3.

3.5.8 In recording residents' concerns, it is clear that fear of certain crime types does not match the actual reports of crimes (in parks which are already left open). This is especially relevant in relation to fear of burglary. This is not shown to be a higher risk in areas which abut those parks that are already accessible during the night. It is also clear that the perimeter security of most parks doesn't exceed what might be in place at a private residence. (e.g. 5 foot fencing). The average density of crime occurring in Enfield parks per sq. km is also significantly below the average crime density for the borough as a whole.

3.5.9 A review of other London Boroughs positions on whether they lock all or some parks and how they undertake this function has been undertaken. In summary 29 of the London Boroughs responded. The key findings were:

- 6 boroughs lock all of their parks
- 22 boroughs lock selected parks
- 1 borough does not lock any parks (Bexley)
- The main reason for locking the parks was due to ASB
- Costs for locking parks were not available in most cases but the average annual cost was around £3k per park
- 8 of the parks were locked by the parks staff, 7 by security companies and 2 by the grounds contractor. 12 did not state who locked the parks.

3.5.10 All other views submitted on the decision from residents and other interested parties have been recorded and are listed in Appendix 4.

3.5.11 The perimeter fence heights have also been reviewed for all of the affected parks. In summary it shows the average height of the perimeter fence is 5ft with the exception of Minchenden Oak Garden (10ft) and Raynham Green (6ft).

3.6 Way forward

3.6.1 Further to the consultation it is acknowledged that generally the FOP's and local residents surrounding the locked parks are concerned about the fear or increased ASB and associated problems.

3.6.2 The FOP's representing the partially locked parks was generally accepting of the access to the park already at night and so willing to accept the trial, and in some cases positively support the proposed trial.

3.6.3 Therefore it is proposed that the parks that are only partially locked will continue to close at the specified closing time, but the physical locking of the gates in these parks will cease , but with the following caveat:

- Vehicle barriers and toilets will continue to be locked at night to prevent access to unauthorised vehicles. Toilet closing and opening times will be advertised on at the site and carried out by the contractor or the café.

3.6.4 It is proposed that this approach would be implemented and monitored regularly.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 Continue to lock the 22 parks currently locked, although the budgetary pressure of £26,000 would remain.

4.2 To unlock all 22 parks, however given the concerns of the FOP's this approach was not supported.

4.3 Look to the voluntary sector such as the Friends of Parks Groups to lock parks. This approach works at North Enfield Rec, where two individuals unlock and lock the park daily. Whilst this approach works at North Enfield Rec due to the dedication of those involved, this approach was offered to the FOP's however there were concerns regarding safety.

4.4 Changing the working pattern of parks staff so that the park's gardeners could lock parks upon completion of their shift which would result in less hours of horticulture work.

4.5 Contract with a security company to carry out the locking as in some other London Boroughs, however this would be significantly more than the current budget.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Further to the consultation with the FOP's there was a clear correlation between the views of the Friends of the 'locked parks' and the FOP's wanting them to remain locked, and the views of the FOP's of the 'partially locked' parks where they accepted there was already access to the park at night and so were accepting and in some cases positively supportive of the trial.

5.2 In addition to the consultation with the FOP's, the evidence available from crime reports, continuing actions such as the fact that vehicle

gates will be locked, and toilets and other buildings secured separately, support the proposed approach with partially locked parks.

6. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES, AND OTHER DEPARTMENTS

6.1 Financial Implications

6.1.1 Ceasing to locking 8 of the 22 parks would result in an annual saving of approximately £9,450 which would be saved from the Parks Service's overtime costs.

6.1.2 The £9,450 saving is the maximum achievable, given the need to continue locking vehicle barriers, and would fluctuate under the scope of the monitoring process should there be any need for a revision.

6.2 Legal Implications

6.2.1 The recommendation set out within this report is within the Council's powers and duties.

6.2.2 As demonstrated within the body of this report, the Council has consulted extensively with Friends of the Parks groups and the police as well as analysing crime data in the affected parks. The outcome of this consultation and research has been considered within the decision-making process, to help secure a reasonable and proportionate decision.

6.2.3 The main reason for objections to leaving the parks unlocked at night is the perceived risk of increased antisocial behaviour. Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to consider crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour in the discharge of all of its functions. The report notes that the locking of partially locked park gates will cease and the situation monitored.

6.2.4 The relevant byelaw covering the Council's parks and open spaces was confirmed on 25th August 2011 and this provides for criminal sanctions to deal with offenders should this be required. Section 3(1) prohibits people from entering parks except during opening hours, which are indicated by a notice placed at the entrance to the parks. Anyone who enters these sites outside of opening hours may be removed by a Council officer or a constable (s41) and may be liable on prosecution to a fine of up to £500 (s42). The Council is not obliged to lock its parks and open spaces in order to enforce these provisions.

6.2.5 The Council has a duty of care under the Occupiers Liability Act 1984 and must take reasonable care to minimise danger to prevent risk of injury to those entering its parks including trespassers. The Council

should undertake a risk assessment to identify any additional risks presented by leaving the parks unlocked at night and whether it needs to take any steps to mitigate against such risks.

6.3 Property Implications

- 6.3.1. The parks buildings could be at greater risk in the selected parks of criminal damage, which is currently one of the crimes committed relatively infrequently, but as outlined above the parks fences and boundaries pose little protection against a determined individual.
- 6.3.2 Monitoring incidents of vandalism to buildings during the trial period will establish whether leaving the selected parks unlocked at night has any significant impact in this respect.
- 6.3.3 As mentioned in 6.2.1, because the actual opening hours of the parks will not be changing, those existing leases to tenants within parks which have reference to access during parks' opening hours will not be affected.

7. KEY RISKS

- 7.1 Crime and anti-social behaviour could increase within the selected parks as they would be more accessible.
- 7.2 There could be resistance from the local community not picked up via the FOP's consultation, who would prefer that their local park remains locked at night. This could result in a reputational risk to the Council.

8. IMPACT ON COUNCIL PRIORITIES

8.1 Fairness for All

This proposed trial reflects the general views of the FOP's.

8.2 Growth and Sustainability

Reducing the number of parks locked on overtime is more sustainable for the budget going forward.

8.3 Strong Communities

The proposals outlined within this report generally support the view of the FOP's following the consultation.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Corporate advice has been sought in regard to equalities and an agreement has been reached that an equalities impact assessment/analysis is neither relevant nor proportionate for the approval of this report.

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

It is believed that there would be no impact on performance as a consequence of the proposals outlined within this report.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The parks will officially remain closed, but not locked. People will not be encouraged to enter the park after dark and put themselves at risk.

12. PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Parks and open spaces are a community resource and the general presumption should be that they should be accessible to the public for as long as possible.

Background Papers

None.

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Appendix 2

A summary of the consultation and discussion with the police.

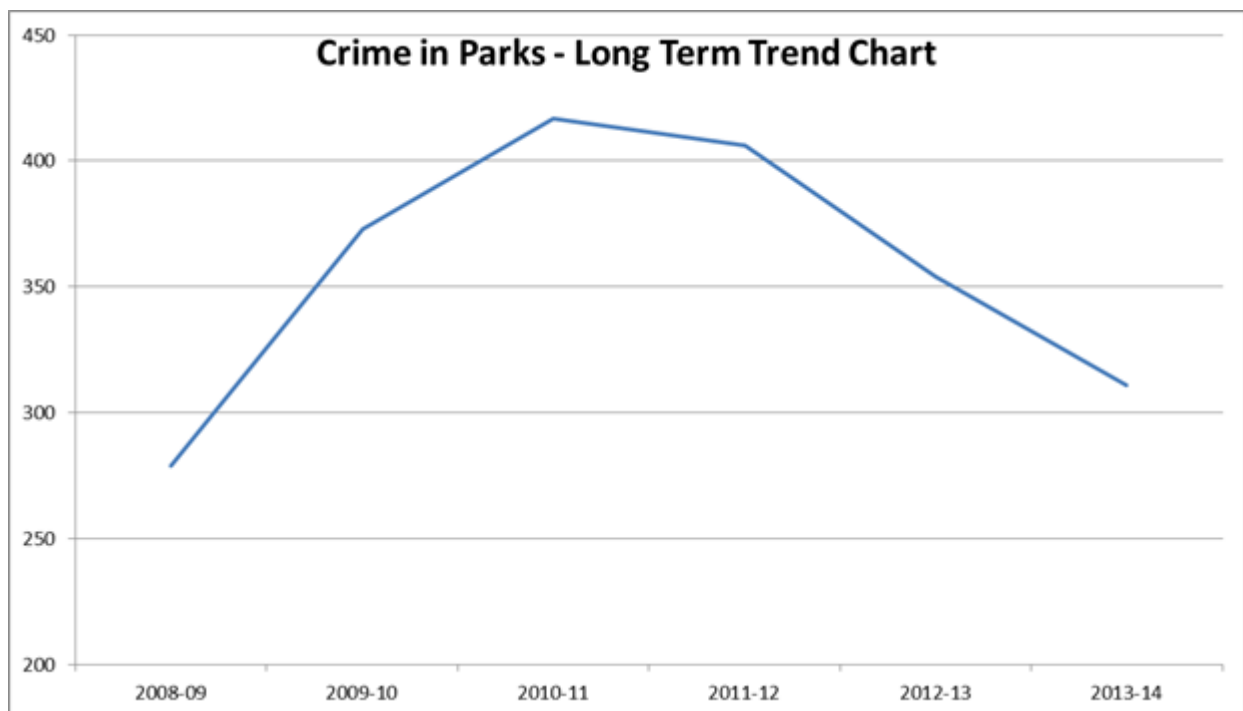
A conversation with the local police Senior Officers team began in August/September 2014 in respect of the then draft proposal to cease locking pedestrian gates in a small percentage of parks where this was still the practice.

The police view was then and has remained that this is a Council business decision. The view point was reiterated by the Borough Commander at a public meeting in December 2014. It was noted that the Council does fund additional teams of PCSOs, the majority of whom work in local parks.

The police have also noted that the Community Safety Unit has analysed some crime and ASB figures before submitting the proposal to leave pedestrian gates unlocked and that the report notes that crime levels will be reviewed periodically to inform ongoing arrangements.

Additional comments on the crime rates.

The graph below demonstrate that from a peak of reported crime in 2010, crime trends in parks have reversed and now continue to fall (by about a quarter) as at 2013/14. We do not have the full year figures for 2014/15 but believe that the reducing numbers have continued during this year.



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PARK	Fully / Part locked	Friends of Parks Response	ISSUE (Crime stats)	CRIME DAY	CRIME NIGHT	TOTAL CRIMES RECORDED (Apr08-Feb15)
Albany Park	Part locked	Unlock	Robbery/Violence	83%	17%	126
Aldersbrook Recreation	Locked	Lock	Theft/Robbery	100%	0%	2
Arnos Park	Part locked	Unlock	Violence/Robbery	72%	28%	36
Broomfield Park (one entrance unlockable)	Locked (main gate now locked)	Lock	Drugs/Robbery	85%	15%	170
Bury Lodge Gardens	Locked	Lock	Burglary/Violence	80%	20%	15
Bush Hill Park	Locked	Unlock	Robbery/Violence	91%	9%	46
Craig Park	Locked	Lock	Violence/Robbery	84%	16%	38
Enfield Playing Fields	Part locked	Part Lock	Theft/Violence	86%	14%	66
Forest Road	Locked	No FOP	Violence/Drugs	100%	0%	4
Forty Hall	Part locked	Unlock	Theft/Criminal Damage	82%	18%	60
Grovelands Park	Locked	Lock	Theft/Robbery	89%	11%	35
Hazelwood SG	Locked	Lock	Theft/Violence	89%	11%	9
Jubilee Park	Locked	Lock	Robbery/Theft	88%	12%	138
Lee Road OS	Locked	No FOP	Violence	50%	50%	2
Minchenden Oak Garden	Locked	Lock	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Oakwood Park	Locked	Lock	Violence/Theft	94%	6%	34

	Part locked	Park Lock	Robbery/Violence	82%	18%	341
Pymmes	Part locked					
Raynham Green	Locked	No FOP	Theft	100%	0%	1
Riverside Park	Locked	No FOP	Drugs	100%	0%	3
Tottenham	Part locked	No FOP	Drugs/Theft	93%	7%	14
Town Park	Part locked	Unlock	Robbery/Violence	94%	6%	139
Trent	Part locked	Unlock	Theft/Criminal Damage	86%	14%	58

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 1.4.2015

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 1 APRIL 2015****COUNCILLORS**

PRESENT Nneka Keazor, Daniel Anderson, Alev Cazimoglu, Krystle Fonyonga, Joanne Laban and Edward Smith

STATUTORY CO-OPTES: 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: Detlev Munster (Head of Property Programmes), Justin Caslake (Principal Asset Management Surveyor), Claire Johnson (Corporate Scrutiny Manager), Stacey Gilmour (Corporate Scrutiny Secretary).

Also Attending: Councillor Neville (substituting for Councillor Laban), Councillor Taylor (as an observer) Councillor Dines (as an observer), Councillor Fallart (as an observer), Ian Davis (Director of Environment), Mohammed Lais (Senior Asset Management Surveyor).

511**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that Councillor Terry Neville was substituting for Councillor Joanne Laban as she was leading on the Call-in.

Apologies for absence were received from the Statutory Co-optees Simon Goulden and Alicia Meniru.

512**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

513**CALL IN OF DECISION: PROPERTY ACQUISITION**

Discussions on this item were conducted under Part 2.

Discussions focused on the terms of the Property Acquisition.

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The Committee **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY** to refer the decision back to the Cabinet member for reconsideration setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.

514

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other items were put forward.

515

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates of future meetings were noted.

516

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

517

PART 2 AGENDA CALL IN RE: PROPERTY ACQUISITION

See Item 513.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 8.4.2015

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2015**

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT Nneka Keazor, Daniel Anderson, Alev Cazimoglu, Krystle Fonyonga, Joanne Laban and Edward Smith

ABSENT

STATUTORY CO-OPTTEES: *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 (Assistant Director, Children's Services), Linda Hughes (Head of Looked After Children), Bindi Nagra (Assistant Director, Strategy & Resources, HHASC), Christine Williams (Public Health Commissioning Manager), Claire Johnson (Scrutiny Manager), Jane Juby (Scrutiny Officer)

Also Attending:

499

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Andrew Fraser, Tony Murphy, Alicia Meniru and Simon Goulden.

500

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

501

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S STANDING ITEM: ADOPTION AND FOSTERING SERVICES

Tony Theodoulou, Assistant Director Children's Services, introduced the Annual Reports, which would be taken to Cabinet on 29 April. Any feedback and comments received from Overview & Scrutiny Committee were welcomed and would be incorporated.

The reports were then discussed as follows:

Adoption Services in Enfield 2014/15

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The Adoption Service fulfils three main functions:

- Matching adoptive families to children;
- Recruiting adopters;
- Supporting adopters and adopted children.

The Adoption Service had had a very successful year with 19 adoptive families approved and 18 children adopted.

Enfield is a member of the North London Adoption Consortium (made up of 6 boroughs) and had achieved comparatively high levels of performance in all three areas cited above.

13 children were currently in adoptive placements awaiting legal adoption.

10 adoptive families had been approved but had not yet been linked to a child.

Due to the national requirement to increase the number of approved adopters and speed up the process of adoption, there were now a greater number of adoptive families available than children waiting for adoption.

Some children awaiting adoption had associated 'uncertainties' such as parental substance misuse which may impact upon their development and it remains a challenge to match these to adoptive families.

Support was offered to adoptive families locally and via the Consortium. Ofsted had recently inspected the service and had judged the level of support to be good; no family was on a waiting list to receive support.

The following questions were then taken:

Q: How much Adoption Allowance did each family receive?

A: Not every adoptive family will receive an Allowance. The criteria for receiving an Allowance relates to the needs of the child. An Allowance may be paid, for example, to cover increased clothing costs for a child with a disability, or to cover sibling groups. The Allowance is means tested.

Q: Please can you explain the apparent higher than average time taken in Enfield for children to be adopted?

A: The Service is primarily measured against an Adoption Scorecard which has two indicators, one of which is the time taken for children to be adopted (from date in care to placement). The Service received a letter in February from Edward Timpson (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Education) regarding our performance against this indicator and a response to this has been finalised this morning. Enfield's performance has essentially been impacted by 4 cases of BME children with complex special needs who had spent extended time in foster placements awaiting adoption. We

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are pleased to report that the foster carers concerned have now adopted these children.

Committee Members requested that a copy of the letter received from Mr Timpson, and of Enfield's response, be circulated **ACTION: Tony Theodoulou/Linda Hughes.**

Q: Is the figure of 6 out of 18 children adopted within timescale over the year a low number or what is expected? How does this figure compare to the previous year?

A: As previously mentioned, the 4 cases of extended fostering have impacted upon this year's and the previous year's indicator in this respect. The year before last did see better performance. We expect the indicator to improve again for 2016. Enfield's performance against the indicator largely depends on the children within each annual cohort. The Service produces a briefing every 3 months to track adoption progress and to ensure no child is 'drifting' in care.

Q: What efforts are being made to increase the numbers of BME adopters?

A: It has been identified across the Consortium that a number of BME children await adoption due to the lack of BME adopters. It wouldn't be correct to say that Enfield would not adopt cross culturally but we find that adopters do not often want to do this. Engagement work is ongoing with faith groups, churches and community groups to build relationships in BME communities and to help encourage a positive view of adoption. We are now also taking a targeted approach with the Service's annual marketing strategy. It is a national issue.

Q: What is a 'good adoption service'? What other measurements besides the Adoption Scorecard are used to determine this?

A: The number of adoption breakdowns can also indicate the success of a service. For a number of years Enfield has not had any adoption breakdowns. In a small number of cases the adoption process has been ceased by mutual agreement before finalisation in the courts. Essentially, the Scorecard is the main means of measuring the service but it can be a blunt tool. It should be noted that Ofsted did undertake a recent thorough inspection of the Service against a given framework so the Committee can be reassured that Enfield has a good service.

Q: Why has it now become the case that there are more adopters available than children waiting for adoption?

A: There has been a very successful national campaign which has encouraged more people to come forward as potential adopters. The time taken to complete assessments has reduced, it has been commented to us by adopters that this might be too rapid and is not giving families enough time to adjust to the idea.

Q: At what point does the supporting/monitoring of adoptive families cease?

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A: If an adoptive family moves out of borough, we would normally provide support for up to 3 years after the family moves. If the family remains in the borough we often try to maintain links as long as possible. Some families, however, withdraw from support eventually as they wish to live as a 'normal family'.

Cllr Smith asked for the total numbers of children in care currently in the borough, which he felt would provide a useful context to the number of children being adopted. He also commented that the age and ethnicity profiles of Looked After Children would help provide additional context for adoption.

Tony Theodoulou responded that 6% of children in care in Enfield currently go out for adoption. He proposed that a further report on Looked After Children be brought to the Committee to provide this additional information **ACTION: Tony Theodoulou/Linda Hughes.**

Cllr Smith then commented that the Report should set out the context around the growth in Special Guardianship Orders, which was a primary contributor to the projected overspend of £150,000 for 2014/15 **ACTION: Tony Theodoulou/Linda Hughes.**

Q: If a family, as previously mentioned, moves out of the borough, who has continuing responsibility for providing support?

A: Enfield would have responsibility for 3 years; we would look to work with any new authority to help provide this service. If there is a risk of breakdown the Service may decide to undertake a visit or have this arranged on our behalf. Adoption is, ultimately, a permanent process with legal status.

Q: If a child did not wish to move from the borough in an adoptive family, would they have to?

A: Yes, as would be the case with any other family.

Q: Was the termination of the previous provider's contract the decision of the contractor?

A: Yes. We have now commissioned a service across the 6 borough consortium.

Q: How does Enfield's Service budgetary position compare with other authorities? Is the projected overspend a regular occurrence?

A: Demand on the service has increased as the population has increased. In Enfield for every 10,000 children living in the borough, 40 will come into the Council's care at any one time. Also, recent changes to legislation has led to an increase in children deemed to be in care – for example, children remanded in custody are now categorised as in care. It is acknowledged as a budgetary pressure, due to demographic pressures.

Fostering Service Annual Report 2014/15

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The following questions on the Report were taken:

Q: Given the projected overspend for the service in 2014/15, could unit costs be reduced to help address this? Why are these not the same as other local authorities?

A: There are a number of established staff members at the top of their pay scale which affects these costs. It should be noted that maximising the use of in-house provision is more cost effective than relying on external placements from the independent sector.

Q: What is being done to improve the uptake of training by foster carers - 86% of carers completing training seems to be quite a low figure?

A: This has been identified as an area for improvement. The Fostering Service has now taken the view that it needed to be made clear that four learning opportunities in a year must be undertaken. In order to improve access we have commissioned a range of opportunities such as e-learning, evening sessions, reading and discussion with supervising social workers etc. It is important that all foster carers keep their training up to date as children's needs are changing.

Q: How feasible is it to make training mandatory?

A: Some training is already mandatory for registration as a foster carer under the Fostering Standard. This includes elements such as health and safety and First Aid.

Cllr Fonyonga commented that comparative data with other authorities would be useful in the Report for those children experiencing '3 or more moves' between foster placements. **ACTION: Tony Theodoulou/Linda Hughes.**

Q: How many unaccompanied children are currently in care the borough? Has this increased from last year?

A: There are 36 unaccompanied children in the Council's care at the moment, primarily young Albanian boys/men who are unaccompanied asylum seekers. The number of unaccompanied children has increased since last year.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers, if over the age of 16, are placed in London boroughs by Croydon Council who oversee a pan London rota. If such children are under the age of 16 and present to Enfield, they are the Council's responsibility. The increase generally in Looked After Children is largely due to an increase in unaccompanied asylum seekers and remands to custody.

Unaccompanied asylum seekers are usually very keen and motivated to access education, training and language courses. They are very motivated to succeed.

Q: Is the number of 122 fostering households a low number?

A: We do need many more foster placements.

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Q: Are unaccompanied asylum seekers arriving completely on their own in the borough?

A: Yes.

Q: Under what circumstances are they arriving?

A: Some of them have had very distressing experiences and have travelled across a number of countries. We are establishing groups that help introduce them to other members in their community, to other children in care and to ESOL classes.

Q: How many such children are arriving in the borough per week?

A: There is no set pattern. Last week 3 unaccompanied asylum seekers presented in the borough.

Q: Is anything being done to work with authorities in Albania to address the problem?

A: Enfield has discussed the issue with local MPs and this may be something that is taken forward by them.

We know that often such children seek asylum because they are fleeing family feuds in rural areas of Albania. There is also an associated risk of people trafficking with such children.

Q: In the Report it mentions 4 foster carers were 'deregistered'. Under what circumstances does this happen?

A: Every child in a foster placement has a social worker attached to them, and in addition, every foster carer has a supervising social worker. Either can raise concerns over the quality of foster care being provided and we expect a certain standard. Training can help but sometimes the decision is taken to deregister. The number of deregistrations for this year is about average. It remains a challenge to maintain the number of foster carers available as some are lost due to deregistration, retirement etc as new carers are recruited. Deregistration can also occur if we have not been able to contact the carer for a period of time, if a significant incident occurs or if a carer is registered to care for a specific child, and that child eventually moves out of care.

Q: Are all foster carers DBS checked?

A: Yes.

502

DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 - TO FOLLOW

The draft Report was tabled. It was **AGREED** that support officers would liaise individually with workstream chairs to update their sections as appropriate; it was also **AGREED** that the Chair and Scrutiny Manager would agree the final draft of the Report by the middle of May. The Report would then be taken to the next Council meeting thereafter.

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503

WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Work Programme was **NOTED** as completed.

504

UPDATE ON THE WORKSTREAMS AND CO-ORDINATION AND SELECTION OF THE NEW WORKSTREAMS

Final workstream meetings were now taking place. Committee members were invited to consider new workstreams for the next Municipal Year and these would be agreed at the planning meeting scheduled for June. The Committee's Work Programme for 15/16 would also be agreed at this meeting.

505

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 26 FEBRUARY 2015

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2015 were **AGREED**.

Councillor Anderson commented that the comparative data requested in respect of the Care Act had not yet been provided and asked that this be followed up **ACTION: Scrutiny Secretary**.

506

MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE/COUNCIL TO SCRUTINY

It was **NOTED** no matters had been referred.

507

REFERENCES TO CABINET

It was **NOTED** that decision KD 3990 'Property Acquisition' considered at the Call In meeting held on 1 April 2015 had been referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

508

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was **NOTED** that meeting dates for the next Municipal Year would be agreed at the Annual Council meeting on 13 May.

The Chair, Members and officers were thanked for their work on the Committee over the year.

It was **AGREED** that provisional dates for the new workstreams be arranged **ACTION: Scrutiny Manager**.

509

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EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

510

**PART 2 AGENDA: SEXUAL HEALTH CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS -
TO FOLLOW**

Cllr Anderson introduced the item; he had previously, with Cllr Pite, met with officers to discuss the matter.

Contracting arrangements were discussed and the Committee thanked officers for their comprehensive update.