

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EQUALITIES BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2023

MEMBERS: Councillors Nia Stevens (Chair), Margaret Greer (Vice Chair), Mustafa Cetinkaya, Hivran Dalkaya, Hannah Dyson, Alessandro Georgiou, Patricia Gregory, Nelly Gyosheva and Ruby Sampson

Officers: Peter Nathan (Director of Education), Richard Sorenson (Head of The Housing Advisory Service), Nnenna Urum-Eke (Head of Development), Sujal Zaveri (Governor Services Manager), Ian Hewison (Head of Admissions, Attendance & School Place Planning), Mervin Cato (Head of Secondary Support Service), Karen Maguire (Strategic Property Services), Victoria Adnan (Policy and Performance Manager) and Petra Stephenson (Governance Officer)

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Joanne Drew (Strategic Director of Housing and Regeneration) and Harriet Potemkin (Head of Policy and Strategy).

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr Pat Gregory.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND DIVERSITY IN LOCAL SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

RECEIVED the reports of Peter Nathan, Director of Education and Sujal Zaveri, Governor Services Manager.

An update on suspensions/exclusions and diversity on governing boards, and children and young people from schools in the borough were provided in tandem as they impact each other.

A summary of actions currently undertaken to improve diversity and awareness were Noted.

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1. Peter Nathan (Director of Education) and Sujal Zaveri (Governor Services Manager) confirmed that the data showed diversity is improving.
2. Schools have a responsibility to recruit governors themselves
3. Significant effort to effect change and raise awareness has been made. Enfield was the first authority to provide various training sessions to improve diversity on boards and panels which garnered a lot of interest and attendance. Next year there will be four sessions on diversity and race equality.
4. In response to questions on diversity and representation of the community on the Governing board, officers explained that even if a school's demographic was all white it could have a diverse board to reflect the country's population as children need to understand global ethnicity. Background is also important but it is far better for the governing body to reflect the community as much as possible. Skilled governors are needed. Campaigns around the borough to encourage more people to become governors, targeting specific communities where there is under representation would be ideal but there are financial restraints.
5. Officers confirmed the same applies to religious dynamics, governors are chosen to reflect the differences as well as skill sets.
6. In answer to questions on opportunities for shadowing and mentoring officers highlighted the success of "Walk this Way". This group did a zoom meeting, in response to complaints received on the lack of diversity, which brought together a panel of black governors from other boroughs who spoke about what is needed to become a governor. Since then, school governors undertook training and Enfield has increased representation in schools. There is always an opportunity to shadow, new governors shadow one committee meeting and one governing board and an experienced governor works with them in their first year.
7. In response to further questions officers confirmed efforts are made to ensure recruitment takes place in religious places and encourage black governors to network in their organisations to encourage others, build a bigger community and spread the word. Leaflets are distributed in libraries and social media utilised.
8. In response to Member suggestions, marketing materials will also be sent to community centres in future.
9. In respect to disadvantaged communities officers currently do work together to make sure their representation is increased, especially in areas where they have the biggest population.

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School exclusions

9. Peter Nathan (Director of Education), Mervin Cato (Head of Secondary Support Service) and Ian Hewison (Head of Admissions, Attendance & School Place Planning) said the level of school exclusions is low. The aim is to have no permanent exclusions. Last year, 15 schools in the borough did not exclude at all. Since the pandemic, behaviour reviews of the whole school culture has taken place.

10. Officers stated that the data is, again, problematic as it is always out of date. LBE aims to purchase a live attendance register – software that gives instant notification of attendance marks so officers receive immediate notice of a suspension meaning resources can be linked immediately to the child and support provided.

11. In response to Member questions on how to tackle the race element around exclusions officers stated figures are in fact really good. Previously excluded students would be predominantly black and from faith schools. It is a work in progress, but officers are working with communities and different faiths to lower the rate.

12. Members wanted to know how teachers with stress are being looked after. Officers confirmed that there is an issue around stress, a lot of teachers are moving out of education, as a result there is a push on recruitment including sourcing from abroad. It is now common to have an on-call system in schools which does alleviate some of the stress on teachers. A strong culture and support system is very important.

13. In response to further questions on support in difficult situations. Officers emphasised the importance of Inclusion rooms. They have proven key to preventing the grooming of other students to gangs seen in schools previously. If every effort by the school fails the child with issues will be “managed moved” of which the success rate is 70% Officers stated that nurture groups and providing space for pupils is clearly working, it is about balancing the budget but there is a lot of enthusiasm for expanding the nurture groups and supporting schools.

14. Officers agreed with members comments that there are good relationships but it is still challenging. Since George Floyd there has been a rise in advocates, companies that are supporting parents on the point of permanent exclusion.

15. In response to additional questions on violence in schools and whether the statistics show there has been an improvement, officers confirmed that stats from Ofsted indicate schools are getting better and data from the police in terms of youth violence show Enfield is no longer but is now ranked middle of the tables. Nexus 325 has had a positive impact by providing activities to school children between 3-5pm, serious youth violence has declined in that period.

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16. The Chair, Cllr Stevens and Cllr Greer congratulated the officers in terms of exclusions and suspensions as the numbers have dripped substantially since presenting to the board in 2021

4. EDUCATION PATHWAYS AND OUTCOMES FOR THE GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER (GRT) COMMUNITY

Karen Maguire, GRTBS Lead presented this item highlighting key points from the updated report.

It was confirmed that the team are active in the Roma community weekly with the Steps Programme, which assists adults from the age of 18 years upwards into employment. Seventy are currently enrolled in the conversation club and ESOL classes. Those who want to upskill have been referred to the construction academy at Meridian Water. Families want their children educated and at school.

In response to Member questions on working in Enfield with GRTBS officers explained that they work with advocacies and key stakeholders who provide support and have strong relationships in those communities which continue to evolve and grow in Enfield.

Action: HR to provide the number of Roma Gypsies who work for the council

Members expressed how impressed they were with the programmes, particularly the family liaison and steps programme.

Regarding the Roadside Education Support, Members were keen to understand numbers, what the programme aimed to achieve each month and what is considered good. In response, officers explained that families who had partaken in the family engagement work, showed a strong interest in going to schools locally. Families also receive support from the fully accredited Odette which is specifically for GRTBS students. Under the Fairer Access code schools must take the pupils and are offered support.

In regard to educational attainment, full data for this year is unavailable as validated data does not come out until later in the year.

Actions: To provide comparable data on educational attainment, and local school data around GRT performance.

The Chair, expressed thanks to the team for bringing attention to the fantastic work being done and improving the employment and life prospects in so many ways for the GRTBS community.

5. INEQUALITIES IN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

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Received a presentation on the development of new homes, an update on housing allocations and ongoing and planned Council Housing tenant engagement.

Equalities perspectives were presented for each as follows: a. An overview of housing supply b. An overview on the housing needs register and allocations (including out of borough) c. Feedback from tenant engagement programme.

Noted

Richard Sorensen (Head of The Housing Advisory Services) and Nnenna Urum-Eke (Head of Development) responded to questions and comments as follows:

1. In response to questions on ethnicity on the housing register, Members were guided to p.16 of the report which provided more robust data as there has been a gap in the monitoring. The graph clearly shows that it is overwhelmingly ethnic families impacted.
2. The Chair inquired how families are supported, in terms of preventing them from being moved out of the borough, helping them settle, and mixing with /accessing their cultures. Officers reassured Members that all aspects are considered and taken into account, but homelessness is a symptom of poverty and inequality. The current crisis is driven by the gap between the amount of benefits a household can claim and the rent which is rising at an astronomical rate.
3. The fundamental issue is the statutory duty to provide accommodation, particularly when children are involved. The council cannot accommodate them or afford to do so locally. Landlords are moving out of the market or letting to higher income groups. It is a national problem.
4. When placing out of borough the settlement must be a success. If the tenant becomes homeless again within two years, Enfield is still responsible for their welfare. Therefore, a key factor is making sure the community they are being placed into is receptive and offers support. The policy provides for a suitability assessment which can be challenged in the courts.
5. In response to a question on how many homeless are on benefits, officers confirmed that a large proportion are on benefits with around 40% in some sort of employment.
6. Current efforts are focused on moving people out of temporary accommodation.

Action: Richard Sorensen is to provide figures on the number of homeless claiming/on benefits.

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The Chair thanked Officers for their informative and interesting update.

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

The updated work programme was **Agreed**

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Date of next meeting – Post Meeting Note: Due to Christmas holidays, the next Equalities Board meeting has been re-scheduled from 8 January 2024 to 29 January 2024.

The meeting ended at 9:15pm

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