

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Professor Sir Anthony Coates, Bt, BSc, MD, FRCPath, FRCP
(Chairman)

Councillor Barbara Campbell (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Judith Blakeman

Councillor Victoria Borwick

Councillor Gerard Hargreaves

Councillor Tim Jones

Councillor Emma Will

Co-opted Voting Members

Mr John O'Donnell (Roman Catholic Diocesan Board of Education)

Revd Dr William Taylor (London Diocesan Board of Education)

Co-opted Non-Voting Members

Mrs Kathleen Williams (Headteacher)

Cabinet Members in Attendance

Councillor Elizabeth Campbell (Cabinet Member for Education and
Libraries)

Councillor Baroness Ritchie (Cabinet Member for Family and Children's
Services)

Officers

Mrs Libby Blake, Executive Director for Family and Children's Services

Ms Karen Tyerman, Director for Community Learning

Mr John Page, Acting Director for Family Services

Ms Diana Hall, Head of School Improvement

Mr Mark Jarvis, Head of Resources

Ms Joanne Hay, Acting Director of Commissioning, Performance and
Strategy

Mr Ian Heggs, Assistant Director, School Improvement and Standards,
LBHF

Ms Clair Bantin, Scrutiny Manager

Mr Ivor Quinn, Principal Governance Administrator

A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Robert
Atkinson, Dr Samer Al-Zaher (parent governor), Mr Kieran Parsons

(teacher) and Mr Paul Quinn (parent governor); and from Ms Rebecca Matthews, Director for Schools, Quality and Standards.

Councillor Andrew Dalton

The Chairman, on behalf of the committee, paid tribute to Councillor Andrew Dalton who had died on 24 April. The committee and the two sub-groups he had chaired had been very fortunate in having the benefit of his financial and business expertise. The committee recorded its condolences to his wife and family. It was noted that the family had asked that any donations be sent to the Chelsea Academy Foundation. Members and officers stood in silent tribute to his memory.

Mr Ian Heggs

The Chairman welcome Mr Ian Heggs, Assistant Director, School Improvement and Standards, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, to the meeting.

A2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

A3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A4 VITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the end of year progress report on the Council's Vital Improvements Programme.

Traffic Light Summary

In response to a question from Councillor Hargreaves, the Chairman said that it was usual for there to be no red lights for Family and Children's Services.

11. Seek to establish an academy in North Kensington

Councillor Blakeman asked how the timetable for the feasibility study and funding agreement fitted in with the timetable for planning approval of the Supplementary Planning Document for the site. Mrs Blake said that she would have to provide a written answer.

Action: Executive Director, Family and Children's Services

New Cabinet Initiative - Redefining the Council's relationship with schools

Councillor Jones said that it was important that the committee kept a close watch on this new Cabinet initiative. The Chairman agreed and said that the Schools Mini-Group would need to consider this.

New Cabinet Initiative - Agreeing the Council's approach to reducing child poverty

In response to a comment from Mr O'Donnell, the Executive Director said that the Government required local authorities to reduce child poverty. She added that the early intervention policies referred to in Report A7 on the agenda played an important part in the strategy. Councillor Baroness Ritchie said that although there was a general imperative across the Council to act on this initiative there was a particular significance for Family and Children's Services. Mrs Blake said that child poverty would need to be clearly defined and would include poverty of aspiration.

Arising thereon - Issues suggested by committee members at the beginning of the scrutiny year

Councillor Borwick suggested that the committee should have a progress report on the issues for scrutiny suggested by members earlier in the year. The Chairman asked the Executive Director to produce a list for the next meeting.

Action by: Executive Director for Family and Children's Services

A5 SCHOOLS' FUNDING AND FINANCIAL PRESSURES

A6 NOTES OF SCHOOLS MINI-GROUP

Reports A5 and A6 were taken together.

The Chairman introduced report A5, which provided a briefing about changes to schools' funding and financial pressures, as requested by the committee in February. The briefing had been considered by the Schools Mini-Group on 12 April.

The Chairman said that the Government policy of moving more money directly to schools would mean that the Council's role would continue to diminish. In recognising this, he added that the mini-group thought that Early Years Outreach should be a priority. He thought that it might help headteachers to handle the impact of the changes if schools were able to work together in clusters across the three boroughs or at least across Kensington and Chelsea.

In response to a question about staff losses, Ms Hall referred to table 6 (Summary of Grant Changes from 2010/11 to 2011/12) in report A5, which listed the specific grants which had come to an end. Where there was no longer funding, staff had been made redundant.

Mrs Williams said that one of the concerns of head teachers was whether there would still be a quality service to buy back from the Council after all the changes had been made, and whether schools' budgets would cover buying-back services. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell said she understood the concern and the Council was

doing its best to manage the transition properly. She added that the Council would do all it could to support in-house provision for a year to see if schools were willing to buy it back. To aid this, Ms Hall said that the Council was preparing service level agreements for schools.

In response to a comment from Mr O'Donnell about the fact that the DfE was unwilling to accept that the school population in the borough was higher than official figures, Mr Jarvis commented that the Council continued to challenge the department on this. He added that the overall DSG pupil numbers would not finally be agreed until the end of May.

Mrs Williams said that headteachers were collegiate and would want to work together. Heads wanted to scrutinise the DSG to ensure that funds for schools were maximised. She added that heads wanted to see transparent priorities and value and the heads consultative and Schools' Forum could help to achieve this. Heads needed to see and understand all the financial information available to the Council. Ms Hall said that the Council had already established a headteachers' consultative forum across the three boroughs.

Councillor Jones commented that anecdotal evidence suggested that schools achieved better value from buying-back services rather than going to third parties. Mrs Williams said that schools had always had a good service from the School Improvement Team and other Council services.

Councillor Jones asked if three DSG formulas would operate in the three boroughs. Councillor Baroness Ritchie and Mrs Blake both commented on the Government's current consultation on the future of financing of schools and that 2011/12 was likely to be the final year of the current system. There would continue to be three borough based school finance teams and funding to schools would be transparent. Mr Heggs stated that the sovereignty guarantee meant that each borough would have its own DSG, but there would also be a consistent cross borough portfolio of services.

In response to members' comments about the pupil premium, Councillor Baroness Ritchie said that London Councils had done some work on having a higher pupil premium for London. Mr Jarvis confirmed that this idea had been raised, but the DfE considered that it would be fairer and more transparent to have the same figure applied nationally. It was noted that the premium applied to the pupil and its distribution would not be affected by the tri-borough proposals.

Councillor Hargreaves asked about the role of scrutiny in relation to expenditure by schools if the Council no longer had a role in school finance. Councillor Baroness Ritchie replied that the Council would still have a strategic role in respect of failing schools. Mr Heggs

added that a substantive statutory role would remain for local authorities, including an ongoing audit role.

Councillor Blakeman asked about the future of the PDC and its possible use for non-education purposes. Mrs Blake replied that the Council's new property board was considering all property assets. FCS was well represented on the board and would seek to ensure that its voice was heard.

A7 REPORT FROM FAMILY SERVICES MINI-GROUP

The Chairman introduced the report, which set out the main points made by members of the Family Services Mini-Group during three meetings.

Proposals for savings from a combined fostering service

Councillor Jones said that the group had agreed that there was little scope to save on fostering by outsourcing the service, without prejudicing standards. Councillor Mrs Rutherford agreed that it should be kept in-house.

Mr Page said that the tri-borough proposals would allow a sharing of management, leading to a reduction in costs whilst maintaining local care. Placement breakdowns were expensive and needed to be minimised. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell commented that the tri-borough proposals would provide a better way to procure services from independent foster agencies (IFAs).

Ms Blake said that the proposals for a combined service gave a genuine opportunity to better match children and foster carers.

The committee noted the different OFSTED ratings for the services in the three boroughs, but as comparative financial data was not available it was not possible to say that the ratings reflected different expenditure levels.

In respect of improved recruitment practices, Mr Page said that the Council could learn from the innovative practices of IFAs.

Proposals for savings from increased social work productivity

Mrs Blake said that the proposals were a strand of work arising from the Stronger Families Transformation Programme. Councillor Blakeman said that she dissented from the group's conclusions in this section. Mr Page said that the government objective of having less prescription and less form filling gave an opportunity to increase productivity.

Mr O'Donnell stressed the importance of a high quality initial assessment, which would avoid misunderstanding and distress that might be caused by using less experienced social workers. Mrs Blake agreed that this was important and said that there needed to be a proper threshold to access social work. The Council's threshold was lower than other local authorities which meant that the number

of referrals might be unnecessarily high. The context of any change would remain strong safeguarding. Mrs Blake said that often people saw a social worker when what they really needed was family support or parenting skills. Councillor Borwick said a social worker was needed for the first contact because the initial investment of time was very important. Councillor Baroness Ritchie said that whatever changes were made the Council would still carry out a proper assessment. The Council took fewer children into care than other authorities because it undertook solid assessment work at the beginning. The important point was that the members of staff dealing with the initial contact were appropriately skilled. There would be no merger of front line staff.

Proposals for savings from early intervention redesign

Ms Tyerman said that she had not had all of the data and evidence at the time of the group's meeting, but she was pleased that the evidence did support the comments made at the meeting. The important point was that early intervention was aimed at preventing entry later on into high needs services.

Conclusions

The committee noted the very valuable work the mini-group had undertaken and thanked the members who had taken part. It was agreed that the next stage would be for the officers to report to the September meeting on early intervention. Councillor Blakeman reserved the position of the Labour Group on any proposals that might emerge from the mini-group's report.

Action by: Executive Director for Family and Children's Services

A8 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT

Councillors Elizabeth Campbell and Baroness Ritchie answered members' questions on their report.

Chelsea Academy Building Award

The Chairman said that the award was very good news for the school. Arising from the item, Councillor Hargreaves commented that most residents had now come to appreciate the school and the school did not cause problems.

Parkwood Hall OFSTED Inspection

The committee was pleased to note the outstanding award for the school, which owed much to the dedicated work of the Principal, Mr. Nick White.

Kensington Academy Update

In response to a question, Councillor Elizabeth Campbell confirmed that she would be at the public meeting to discuss the proposals with residents.

'Support and Aspiration' SEN and Disabilities Green Paper

In response to questions and suggestions about who might be consulted, Councillor Ritchie agreed that it would be helpful for the officers to let appropriate parents know about the consultation and advising them of the need to respond by 30 June.

Key Decisions

It was noted that the Key Decision under 14.4 about charges for 2011/12 should be a three diamond one. Mrs Blake undertook to send the draft report to members by email with a request that they submit any views to the Chairman.

The report was noted.

A9 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

The report was noted.

A10 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN PUBLIC ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERED URGENT

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF) - Scrutiny of Children's Oral Health

Mrs Blake reported that LBHF had invited the scrutiny committee to attend a meeting on 11 May at 5.30pm during which children's oral health would be considered. It was agreed that given the short notice it was not possible for a member of the committee to attend. However, it was agreed that the Council should send LBHF a copy of two reports from the Health Scrutiny Committee:

Health Inequalities (January 2008) – chaired by Councillor Blakeman

Review of Dentistry (October 2009) – chaired by Councillor Coleridge

Members would also be able to contribute individual comments to the LBHF study if they wished.

Action by: Executive Director for Family and Children's Services

The meeting ended at 8.20pm.

Chairman