

## **PRESENT**

Members of the Committee

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

Councillor Robert Atkinson

Councillor Judith Blakeman

Councillor Victoria Borwick

Councillor Barbara Campbell

Councillor Andrew Dalton

Councillor Tim Jones

Councillor Elizabeth Rutherford

Councillor Emma Will

## **Co-opted Voting Members**

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

Mr Paul Quinn (Parent Governor)

The Revd William Taylor (London Diocesan Board for Schools)

## **Co-opted Non-Voting Members**

Mrs Kathleen Williams (Headteacher)

## **Others in Attendance**

Councillor Elizabeth Campbell (Cabinet Member for Education and  
Libraries)

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

## **Officers**

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

Ms Rebecca Matthews, Director for Schools, Quality and Standards

Mr Mark Jarvis, Head of Resources

Mr John O'Sullivan, Head of Resource Utilisation

Mr John Page, Head of Family and Care Resources

Ms Clair Bantin, Scrutiny Manager

Mr Ivor Quinn, Principal Governance Administrator

## **A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Dr Samer Al-  
Zaher (parent governor), Mr Kieran Parsons (teacher), Mrs Anne

Marie Carrie (Executive Director, Family and Children's Services)  
and Ms Karen Tyerman (Director for Community Learning).

## **A2 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Report A9 - Catholic Children's Society (Westminster)

Mr O'Donnell declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Catholic Children's Society (Westminster).

## **A3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **A4 DEEP LEVEL SCRUTINY: STRONGER FAMILIES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

The Chairman introduced this agenda item by reminding members of what had been agreed at the previous meeting. It was agreed that written contributions on future deep-level scrutiny topics would be optional.

Ms Blake spoke about the progress made in the Stronger Families Transformation Programme. She said that the main focus was on: understanding unit and "fully loaded" costs; local and national service priorities; efficiency; quality; the level of statutory services to be provided - minimum, highest or London average; charges; schools and support services; shared services with Hammersmith and Fulham and Westminster City Councils; outsourcing.

It was agreed that a report on progress should be submitted to the next meeting. The report would be circulated at least two weeks before the meeting to allow members additional time to comment.

**Action: DEDFCS**

During the discussion the main points made by members were:

- Children's Centres should be a focus of cost scrutiny. There were five centres catering for about 200 children, only 66 of whom were deemed to be 'in need'. If the Council was there as a safety net for the most vulnerable, then it should say so and expect children's centres, which it funded, to be the providers of that. The flexibility of provision in the centres made budgeting and financing very difficult. What did the Council want the children's centres to provide and for what client group?
- Expenditure on Family and Children's Services was substantial and there was some overspending and duplication; there should be more careful monitoring and more use of shared services.

- Notice should be taken of the views of staff at ground level where the impact of expenditure reductions would be felt most keenly.
- If the Council was seeking to influence its schools, but not “run” them, then it should encourage schools to know that they had an entirely free choice about what services they bought and from where. This might save money, and the Council should give schools the freedom to choose their own suppliers, freed from Council procurement red tape. This would enable the Council to have a more mature relationship with the schools. What would schools' view of this be?
- Youth Support and Development was a high priority and high cost service. The Council had about eight uniformed services operating in the borough, including the scouts, guides, boys' brigade, air cadets, army, police and so forth. Could a contribution to these organisations provide the Council with a range of support opportunities and also give young people recognised national achievement awards, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh? The Council might contribute to these organisations (financially, but not provide staff) so that it could offer a choice to our young people and they would have organisations that they could belong to week in week out, and not just in summer holidays when the Council ran these services. These were national organisations that offered long term support, which was often what young people needed, and not just for the 13 to 20 age group. Many might then progress to being staff volunteers too. The officers had a good relationship with many of these providers, and there could be a gradual increase in using alternative provision, rather than relying on the Council being the providers.
- There was a difference between the level of savings to be identified: up to 10% in the sub-group's report and 14% in the transformation programme.
- Family Services – the Council had lost social workers over the past year, who it had invested in and trained. The Council was letting permanent staff go, and still using agency staff. Retention was vital and that meant looking at the way the Council provided the service and allocated the social workers to better suit clients' needs.
- As the sub-group suggested, a balance would need to be struck between what was desirable and what was affordable. The financial plight of many families, particularly in the north

of the borough, would need to be borne in mind. Often it was the families just above thresholds that struggled the most with finance, e.g. just above the free school meals threshold. If charges were introduced, those families in the third quartile would be the least able to pay. If thresholds were too low, families receiving modest middle or below average incomes would be severely penalised.

- The outstanding, and improving, examination results achieved by pupils in the borough reflected, in no small measure, the successful partnership of head teachers and the School Improvement Service. When considering the future size and funding of the service, the views of head teachers should be sought.

It was agreed that these points should be submitted to the Cabinet, with the sub-group's report. (A list of questions asked at the meeting and answers subsequently produced is attached to these minutes.)

## **Other Questions**

### **How many children were still without a school place?**

Ms Matthews stated that all children in Reception and Year 6 had been offered a place. Some families had not yet accepted the place they had been offered and might be looking for alternatives - this number reduced on a daily basis. The Education Welfare Service and the Admissions Service were working with families to ensure that places were secured as soon as possible. The number of in year admissions also changed on a daily basis and would continue to do so throughout the year, as it was now the responsibility of the local authority to administer this process. If members received requests for information or help these should be sent to Ms Matthews who would forward them to the Admissions Manager.

It was agreed that the committee should be advised at its next meeting of the number of children who had been offered a place, had not accepted it and were therefore still without a place, despite the Council's best efforts.

**Action: DSQS**

### **Savings to be achieved through the Stronger Families Transformation Programme**

As noted earlier in the meeting, Councillor Dalton commented that there was a difference between the sub-group report, which

discussed savings of up to 10%, and Mrs Carrie's report to the previous meeting about the transformation programme, which might lead to savings of up to 14%. He added that the difference was because the situation was constantly changing and the two figures related to slightly different periods.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking members for their comments and questions.

## **A5 REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND PRIORITIES SUB-GROUP**

Councillor Andrew Dalton, the chairman of the sub-group, introduced the report. He thanked the business group officers for their support - they had been willing to think flexibly and strategically.

The main points made during the discussion were:

- Expenditure on Family and Children's Services was £54m in excess of the specific statutory grants received from the Government. Areas of highest cost should be subject to particular scrutiny.
- Places in children's centres were heavily subsidised - the charge made was £205 per week. If the charge was increased, what would be the effect? Some centres were more expensive to operate than others. If the most expensive centres were closed, could a service for the 66 children in need be maintained?
- The Council had a high cost, high performing education service. Spending per pupil was £9,600 per year compared to an average of £6,000 across English authorities. The Council had the fifth highest expenditure in England. There was a tension between the schools and the education department - what was the correct division between the Dedicated Schools Grant and the centrally-retained budget?
- The annual cost of the Latimer Education Centre/Pupil Referral Unit, at £1.6m, was the most expensive in London.
- Owing to the need to fund places in independent schools, because there was no in-borough provision, the costs of fees for Special Education Needs were among the highest in England.
- The Isaac Newton Professional Development Centre was a strategic site for the Council. It could be used more, to increase income, or the site could be sold.
- There were diverse levels of use of the Council's libraries. The cost of the Libraries Service was amongst the highest in London.
- The Council was the smallest local education authority in London and some budgets were adversely affected by this, e.g. Special Education Needs transport.

- As far as the committee was aware, other business groups and scrutiny committees had not undertaken the same level of strategic thinking represented by the transformation programme and the sub-group's report. The committee was concerned to ensure that the FCS budget would not be hit harder than others just because more work had been done in this area.

It was agreed that a list of those areas where the FCS Business Group spent more than the specific statutory grants should be provided to members.

**Action: HR**

The Chairman concluded the discussion by thanking Councillor Dalton and the sub-group for their report.

#### **A6 ELECT TO HOME EDUCATE POLICY**

Ms Matthews introduced the report and said that the Council had always had a policy about home education, but following the review conducted in 2009 the policy had now been revised.

The Chairman reminded members that he had advised them after the previous meeting that he had to receive notice of questions on information reports in advance of the meeting. He had received no questions on this report. Councillors Atkinson and Blakeman disagreed with this decision and said that part of the scrutiny process involved asking questions without notice. As the Chairman would not permit them to ask questions, the two Councillors left the meeting.

The report was noted.

#### **A7 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT**

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

#### **Outstanding Local Authority Children's Services**

The committee congratulated the Cabinet Members and the officers on the Council being judged as one of only ten local authorities nationally to be judged by Ofsted as performing excellently.

In response to a question about the critical factors that led to the Council's success, Ms Blake said that there was a range of factors, including knowing children and their families really well and having

high expectations for every child. She undertook to circulate a short case study.

**Action: DEDFCS**

## **Key Stage Results**

A one page additional paper (Key Stages 1 - 4 - 2010 - Summary Statistics - Provisional) was tabled. (A copy has been included in the Minute Book.)

Mr O'Donnell commented that if the results for Cardinal Vaughan were excluded, results at Key Stage 3 were often below the national average. He added that 30% of pupils were coming in to secondary schools at level 3 instead of level 4 and there was a lot of hidden work done by schools to make up the gap. It was noted that many pupils starting at the borough's secondary schools had not attended its primaries and that, equally, many of the Council's primary pupils did not go on to borough secondary schools. Ms Matthews agreed that this was a problem and said that there was evidence that if children in the borough went right through their education at the borough's schools then they would do significantly better.

The committee noted that these outstanding results reflected the good team work of head teachers and the School Improvement Service.

## **Future Libraries Programme Joint Pilot Project**

It was agreed that the report for the next meeting on the Stronger Families Transformation Programme should include details of the timetable for this project.

**Action: DEDFCS**

## **Sion Manning Ofsted Inspection**

Mr O'Donnell reported that the religious education provided by the school had been judged outstanding by the Diocese.

## **Chelsea Academy**

It was agreed that all committee members should be invited to the official opening on 22 November.

**Action: DSQS**

## **National Policy Developments**

It was noted that the proposals in paragraphs 12.3 to 12.5 (the Education and Children's Bill, the White Paper and a second Education Bill) all overlapped. It was agreed that some estimate of the effects of the possible changes to School Funding from 2011/12 should be included in the report to the next meeting on the transformation programme.

**Action: DSQS/DEDFCS**

### **A8 VISITS**

The committee agreed the suggestions for visits set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report. The draft questionnaire was agreed for use in all visits.

### **A9 FORWARD PLAN**

#### **Transfer of Responsibilities from the Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) Adoption Agency**

Mr O'Donnell declared a personal interest as a trustee of the Catholic Children's Society (Westminster). Following a suggestion from Ms Blake, it was agreed that this Key Decision be changed from a two diamond rating to one.

The report was noted.

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

Mrs Anne Marie Carrie, Executive Director for Family and Children's Services

The Chairman, on behalf of the committee, paid tribute to Mrs Carrie's work with the committee and the Council. She was an outstanding officer whose passionate concern for children was reflected in her appointment as the next chief executive of Barnardos.

The committee placed on record its thanks to Mrs Carrie for her dedication and hard work and wished her all the best for her future career.

The meeting ended at 8.25pm.

Chairman