

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

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

Councillor Barbara Campbell (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Robert Atkinson

Councillor Judith Blakeman

Councillor Andrew Dalton

Councillor Gerard Hargreaves

Councillor Tim Jones

Councillor Emma Will

Co-opted Voting Members

Dr Samer Al-Zaher (parent governor)

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

Mr Paul Quinn (Parent Governor)

Co-opted Non-Voting Members

Mrs Kathleen Williams (Headteacher)

Others 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, Director for Family Services

Mr Mark Jarvis, Head of Resources

Ms Melanie Smith, Director of Public Health (for item A4 only)

Mr Ivor Quinn, Principal Governance Administrator

A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Victoria
Borwick, Mr Parsons and Revd Dr William Taylor; and from Ms Rebecca
Matthews, Director for Schools, Quality and Standards, and Ms Clair
Bantin, Scrutiny Manager.

A2 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

A3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

A4 PRESENTATION BY MELANIE SMITH, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, NHS KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

The Chairman welcomed Melanie Smith to the meeting and began by congratulating her, on behalf of the committee, on her recent appointment as Director of Public Health for Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. It was noted that the PCT was creating a merged management structure across the three boroughs with one public health team under a single director.

Ms Smith gave a presentation to the committee about the public health White Paper, which set out the government's long term vision for the future of public health in Britain. A copy of the slides was circulated separately.

The main points made were:

- From April 2012, there would be a new national public health service called Public Health England, which would hold a ring-fenced public health budget.
- From April 2013, local authorities would be responsible for public health services, with a duty to take steps to improve the health of their population.
- Key to the proposals was devolving responsibility for public health to local authorities, with greater freedoms and funding to deliver services that met local need.
- A 'Public Health Responsibility Deal' was proposed to create partnerships with the statutory and voluntary sectors in respect of food, alcohol, physical activity, health at work and behaviour change.
- The government's overall approach to improving health and well-being focused on action to strengthen self-esteem, confidence and personal responsibility; positively promote healthier behaviours and lifestyles; and adapt the environment to help the public make healthy choices. This approach drew upon the Marmot Review, which emphasised the wider determinates of health and linked health to socio-economic factors.

During the discussion the main points made were:

- Ms Smith agreed that sharing public health services across three boroughs should be considered because there were similar needs.
- The Council would be responsible for school nurses, but not for health visitors. The health visitor workforce was being expanded and the Government judged that this was best handled nationally, at least initially.
- It was surprising that sexual health services were going to be devolved to local authorities as these services had an open access approach for patients and the service was very clinical, led by doctors and nurses.
- It was hard to marry up the varying approaches of the departments of health and education and the fact that the Every Child Matters agenda was being abandoned. Ms Smith said that there were clearly tensions between government departments.
- Ms Smith said that the budget was tight (£4bn nationally), but it should be adequate.
- In respect of the coordination of the assessment of need by GPs, Ms Smith said that she hoped the GP commissioning consortia would use the local public health body to coordinate.
- In response to a question about obesity, Ms Smith said there was very little evidence of success in preventing obesity, although there were more positive results for treatment.
- There seemed to be a move to centralising control of public health and it was not clear how accountability would work - the resource was centralised, but the work was done locally.
- There ought to be opportunities for joint working with the Council's Health, Environmental Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman thanked Ms Smith for an excellent presentation.

A5 TRI-BOROUGH PROPOSALS REPORT

Mrs Blake introduced the report and outlined the background to the proposals. She said that the aim was to combine (not merge) services to save money, reduce bureaucracy and improve management efficiency, whilst protecting the sovereignty of the three boroughs. Mrs Blake explained the detailed work that had been carried out in respect of children's services and libraries.

Councillor Baroness Ritchie said that, as well as making savings, the proposals represented an opportunity to understand and share best practice. She added that the Council would proceed with great care because children's services were very sensitive. Councillor Elizabeth Campbell said that the proposals in respect of libraries made sense

and a combined library service might be much better than the Council's existing service.

Members made the following comments:

- The proposals were cautiously welcomed, although this was not a unanimous view.
- The Council's services for families and children were in general outstanding - the hope was that there would be a levelling up of standards across the three boroughs, but there was also a danger that standards would be levelled down. It was noted that officers were approaching tri-borough working in a non-competitive way, with the aim of raising all services to those of the best. There were external assessments to assist in ensuring standards improved rather than fell. In addition, managers of the combined services would be selected after competitive interview.
- There should be a clear strategy to drive the improvement of standards. The structure of any new delivery body was important. It was noted that it was proposed to have a single director of children's services for the three boroughs, but decisions had not yet been made about the management team below. It would be important to ensure that professional links were maintained between the director and each borough. There was a danger that a busy director would concentrate on the least well-performing borough rather than the best.
- More information should be provided about the make-up of each borough to aid understanding of similarities and differences.
- Consultation with all interested parties needed to develop as the proposals became more detailed.
- Although it was noted that the size of the three boroughs combined would be about the same as Leeds or Sheffield, the difference was that those cities had unified political control with one set of Councillors, whereas the three boroughs would remain as three separate authorities.
- Concern was expressed about the maintenance of the Council's high education standards. It was noted that, in future, schools would be responsible for school improvement, and a new market place would be established, with the Council operating a small arms-length commissioning unit for education services. The relationship between schools and the Council would inevitably change because of this. The proposals represented a retreat and this should be recognised. Responsibility and accountability were being moved from the Council to schools. The Council's finances were being squeezed and it had to manage the retreat from certain service areas. Although in future the Council might not be involved in supporting improvement in a school, if a school

failed then the Council would have to pick up the pieces because it would still continue to have a statutory duty to intervene. However, if not enough schools bought back Council services then those services would not be provided and the Council could not afford to employ appropriate expertise, even if at a later date such expertise proved to be necessary. Although the education delivery arm would have sufficient staff for one year, if there was insufficient buy-back after that then the service could not continue. Financial modelling was needed to understand the effects of schools not buying back services. This would be considered by the committee in June.

- The government was encouraging the development of a range of schools, including academies and free schools, in addition to community and voluntary-aided ones, and the Council's responsibilities for each type would differ. The Council and schools would need to be clear about their respective responsibilities. It might help if the legal status of all schools was codified.
- Headteachers were concerned about the quality of services and the impact on standards. Although the schools' budget would increase by about 1%, there was concern that this would be insufficient to cover incremental increases in costs of salaries and pension contributions. The ability to buy back services and to maintain current staffing levels in schools might be affected. In view of the importance of this subject, these points would be considered further by the committee's mini-group on schools.
- Funding of nursery schools should be maintained and places should be for the whole day where there was demand. It was suggested that it might be possible to rationalise provision by amalgamating two or more schools.
- In noting that 49% of the school workforce was support staff, including teaching assistants, it was suggested that rationalisation of non-teaching jobs should be considered.
- The Latimer Education Centre (Pupil Referral Unit) had recently been judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory. It should improve and ought to be good, if not outstanding. It was noted that Hammersmith and Fulham's PRU had been judged to be outstanding.
- It was noted that the tri-borough proposals would not affect how children were placed with foster carers, but they would provide a means to rationalise the support to carers. Caution would be needed in using independent fostering agencies and

Careful checks would need to be made to ensure quality control.

- One borough might benefit more from savings or service changes than the other two. It was noted that the Council's Director of Finance was working on a formula to ensure that savings were allocated properly between the boroughs.
- The report on page 35 said that one of the key drivers of the education merger was to make significant savings of 20% by 2014. This should be made clearer - was that 20% in total for three boroughs or 20% savings for each?
- The Council should give priority to certain services to avoid losing the best of its services and to maintain excellence. It was noted that the boroughs currently spent different amounts on different aspects of their services and this would continue in future.
- It was noted that Westminster retained 15% of its Dedicated Schools Grant, whereas Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea kept 10%. The Council had a very close and supportive relationship with its schools and did not have failing schools.
- There was a danger of discussing two aspects of the proposals at once. The first aspect was the focus on management costs; the second was the quality of service. These two points were separate and should not be muddled.
- The Council should be confident in its belief that services could be managed by one team and not three, and that the consequent savings could be used to improve services or to reduce expenditure. All members wanted high quality services so the separate question was how could this best be achieved by the management team.
- There was a tendency for confusion about whether the proposals represented a merger of services, or combining or sharing them. There was evidence from other organisations that, where services were combined, over time one of the previously separate parts would come to dominate.
- There had been varying degrees of consultation with schools. School governing bodies had not yet been consulted, apart from at the termly meetings of chairmen of governors.
- Schools must be free to review all their Service Level Agreements with the borough to see if they continued to offer best value for money. Although the Council hoped that schools would buy back its services, this would not necessarily be the case and the message needed to get down the

structure to officers that they would be challenged on their costs and they should not respond defensively.

- The committee would be considering at a future meeting the Green Paper - "Support and aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability - a consultation", and the Wolf Review of vocational education.

The Chairman thanked members for their contributions, which would be passed to the Cabinet.

A6 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT

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

A copy of a paper with additional items would be circulated separately.

The report was noted.

A7 MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Mini-Groups

It was agreed that another meeting of the Libraries Mini-Group should be arranged. It was also agreed that a second meeting of the Schools Mini-Group should be arranged.

Action by: Governance Services

The report was noted.

A8 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN PUBLIC ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERED URGENT

Visits

It was agreed that visits by members of the committee were always worthwhile, although it was recognised that many members were unable to make visits because of other commitments. Any member wishing to make a visit should contact the appropriate director.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

Chairman