

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

HELD AT 6.33 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 11 JULY 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, WHITECHAPEL

Members Present in Person:

Councillor Abdul Mannan -(Chair)

Councillor Harun Miah

Councillor Abdul Malik

Councillor Suluk Ahmed

Councillor Shahaveer Shubo Hussain

Shiblu Miah -(Muslim community representative)

Joanna Hannan -(Parent Governor)

Hasan Chowdhury -(Parent Governor)

Other Members Present in Person:

Councillor Maium Talukdar -(Deputy Mayor & Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning (Statutory Deputy Mayor))

Members in Attendance Virtually:

Dr Phillip Rice -(Church of England Representative)

Ashraf Zaman -(Parent Governor)

Officers Present in Person:

Steve Reddy -(Corporate Director, Children's Services)

 Lead)

Daniel Kerr

Justina Bridgeman Democratic Services Officer (Committee)

Zaid Ul-Islam -(Strategy & Policy Officer)

Shafiur Rahman -(Interim Director of Youth Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests received.

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Chair requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub Committee for the municipal year 2024/25. Councillor Harun Miah proposed Councillor Suluk Ahmed for the position. This was seconded by Councillor Abdul Malik.

There were no further nominations received.

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Elect Councillor Suluk Ahmed the Vice-Chair of the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee for the municipal year 2024/25.

4. CHILDREN AND EDUCATION TERMS OF REFERENCE, MEMBERSHIP, QUORUM & DATES OF MEETING FOR 2024/25

Justina Bridgeman, Democratic Services Officer requested members to note the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee's terms of reference, membership, quorum and meeting dates for the municipal year 2023/24. The terms of reference were agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 May 2024.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note it's terms of reference, quorum, membership and meeting dates as set out in appendices 1,2 and 3 of the report.
2. Agreed hold all Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber for the municipal year 2024/25.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Sub Committee meeting held on 9 May 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

Co-optee Introduction

Hasan Chowdhury was introduced to the sub-committee as the new Parent Governor. This was officially confirmed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 April 2024.

6. ACTIONS LOG

The actions were noted.

7. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

7.1 Cabinet Member and Corporate Director Reflections for 2023/24 and Priorities for 2024/25

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning, introduced the first item and noted achievements and investments made in the borough such as, the Universal Free School Meals, University Bursaries and the Mayor's Education Maintenance Allowance schemes.

Councillor Talukdar expressed a desire to continue the work that has been completed and to ensure that the preparations for the inspections on Children's Social Care, Youth Justice, and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are in place.

Steve Reddy, Corporate Director of Children's Services, then gave an overview of the directorate and the demographics of young people in the borough, Priorities include the ongoing support for Key Stage 5 students and the development of proposals for the Institute for Academic Excellence. Other priorities are Young Tower Hamlets launch, the Family Hubs and the continued work with partners to deliver the Accelerate! partnership plan. Mr Reddy then outlined the role that stakeholders, the Partnership Board and sub-committee Members play in shaping the service.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Councillor Maium Talukdar, and Steve Reddy:

- Acknowledged that there were issues with the website and digital responses on EMA bursaries, which have now been resolved. Parents were advised to check emails for notifications. Members were requested to forward any feedback on specific cases to Officers for further investigation.
- Clarified that the criteria for EMA bursaries involves an assessment. The funds are limited although they have been increased. Full details on data comparing the percentage of children eligible for EMA funding, the percentage of applications submitted, and the percentage of awards granted will be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.

- Noted that no significant concerns have been made in relation to the safety of concrete used All Saints school in Stepney. Full details will be brought to the sub-committee for review.
- Confirmed that consideration will be given to extending provision for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within mainstream schools and discussions will take place in due course.
- Observed that the Council supports School Governors. Consideration to better represent School Governors to ensure that they represent the community will be given. Parents should address any school concerns to the Headteacher and governing body, and any issues that cannot be resolved should then be addressed to the Department of Education (DfE) who have ultimate authority.
- Noted that significant investment is being made to SEND services and the SEND strategy will combat ongoing concerns. It was acknowledged that more support is required to assist children in the early stages.
- Tower Hamlets have various summer holiday activities in the borough and details will be brought back to the sub-committee for review.
- Confirmed that information on any national or regional funding available for investment into new technologies to support young people with additional needs will be returned to the sub-committee for review.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED**:

1. That data comparing the percentage of children eligible for EMA funding, the percentage of applications submitted, and the percentage of awards granted to be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
2. That an update on concrete at All Saints School in Stepney and a current assessment of safety be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
3. That a written brief on the summer schools available in the borough be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
4. That a written brief highlighting whether there is any national or regional funding available for investment into new technologies to support young people with additional needs.
5. That the presentation be noted.

7.2 CESSC Draft Work Programme 2024/25

The order of business on the agenda was changed at the meeting. This item was swapped with the third.

The Chair introduced Zaid ul-Islam, Strategy and Policy Officer, to present the proposed topics to discuss at the remaining meetings for the 2024/25 municipal year. The Chair informed sub-committee members that the draft was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 9 July for discussion and additional comments will then be submitted to Cabinet for finalisation. The final draft will then return to the OSC in September.

Zaid ul-Islam informed Members that due to the LGA conference, the 24 October meeting has moved to 17 October 2024.

Following the presentation, sub-committee members suggested:

- That a follow-up visit to care leaver services should be arranged prior to the meeting on 05 December for the proposed Corporate Parenting discussion.
- That at the 13 February 2025 meeting, young people should be present to give feedback on the Contract Services 'Free School Meals' (FSM) programme. Consideration should also be given to invite Contract Services to the meeting to hear the feedback.

Daniel Kerr, Strategy and Policy Lead, then requested any additional suggestions be submitted by Members to the Chair.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED**:

1. Confirmation will be given by the Chair on availability for the site visit to care leavers services.
2. The Chair will discuss with Lead Member Councillor Maium Talukdar to determine if there is any feedback from children on the FSM service.
3. That the presentation be noted.

7.3 Youth Services

The order of business on the agenda was changed at the meeting. This item was swapped with the second.

Councillor Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning, introduced the next item and gave an update on the Young Tower Hamlets programme, which was devised in conjunction with young residents who participated in consultations and surveys.

Councillor Talukdar noted that eight youth safe spaces have now opened in the borough and that £488k has been secured for refurbishment and to expand the youth sports offer. Sports coaches will be working with borough

schools to increase participation in sports and physical activities. Members were informed that the Supported Families team recently had a restructure.

Further to questions from the sub-committee, Councillor Maium Talukdar and Officers:

- Confirmed that there will be commissioned youth services in partnership in the proposed model. A written brief of safe spaces for young people in Tower Hamlets, including the delivery method and an agreement status will be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
- Clarified that there will be internships and recruitment opportunities for younger residents to work within the service, as well as training and apprenticeships for young care leavers and collaboration with Universities for qualified youth workers. The Young Tower Hamlets recruitment program will be launched in the coming weeks to fill positions that reflect the community.
- Noted the aim is to have at least one safe space for young people in every ward. A written brief of all safe spaces for young people in the borough, including the delivery method and an agreement status will be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
- Explained that sites are being procured in all wards in equal distance, to ensure that the service is not in close proximity to each other.
- Clarified that all safe spaces require Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to ensure accountability and include spot checks.
- Explained that the recruitment process will also focus on encouraging young girls to join the program. A Young Tower Hamlets website will be launched to promote all services in the borough. A development program to encourage young people to achieve their potential will also be implemented.
- Observed that the input provided by young people will shape the service to ensure that activities provided will engage them and that qualified youth workers are employed to encourage them to participate in a safe environment. The Integrated Detached team will also be available to assist young people with services near them.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED**:

1. That a written brief of safe spaces for young people in Tower Hamlets, including the delivery method and an agreement status be forwarded to the sub-committee for review.
2. That the presentation be noted.

8. ANY OTHER UNRESTRICTED BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

None.

The meeting ended at 8.14 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mannan

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee