MINUTES OF
CHILDREN'S SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 January 2018
(7:00 - 8:04 pm)

Present: Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe (Chair), Cllr Simon Bremner, Cllr Syed Ghani, Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole and Cllr Danielle Smith; Mrs Glenda Spencer and Mrs Ingrid Robinson

Also Present: Cllr Maureen Worby and Georgia Harley

Apologies: Cllr Melanie Bartlett, Cllr Syed Ahammad, Cllr Josephine Channer and Cllr Irma Freeborn,

20. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Appointments / Resignations

The Select Committee noted that Ellen Grant, Parent Governor Representatives (Primary), had resigned from the Committee.

22. Minutes - 27 November 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2017 were confirmed as correct.

23. Improving the Employability Prospects of Barking and Dagenham's Young People - Scrutiny Review 2017/18

The Group Manager for Integrated Youth Services, 14-19 Participation and Engagement (GMIYS), presented for consideration the initial draft recommendations for the Scrutiny review of ‘Improving the Employability Prospects of Barking and Dagenham’s Young People’, which was attached to the report. The GMIYS reminded the Select Committee of the scope of its mini review and how it had identified a gap in the consultation and experience of young people, their parents, BAD Youth Forum and businesses, around work related learning and apprenticeships. The GMIYS gave the background for each of the draft recommendations, which were set out in the draft report, and explained how the draft recommendations had emanated from the research, events and discussions, including at the 27 November 2017 meeting of the Select Committee (Minute 15, 27 November 2017 refers). The recommendations made by the Select Committee would be key to achieving improvements in the offer of work-related learning, work experience and apprenticeships for the Borough’s young people.

The Chair commented that whilst some work was ongoing under other auspices, it was important that the issues raised by the Select Committee were taken forward as the issues had been identified as a gap in service or process. The Select Committee was now being asked to consider the initial draft recommendations and give direction to officers as to whether those met its aims or needed further change, in order that the final version of the report can be produced for its 21
March 2018 meeting.

The Select Committee discussed several issues including:

- The low number of businesses represented at the 27 November meeting.
- The level of awareness amongst local business of work placements and apprenticeships schemes.
- The practical support, but not funding, which Trident provided to business for work experience placements.
- Ring-fenced placements for care leavers at the Council and the need to ascertain what training or courses they may be going into when leaving school and why.
- Noted the introduction of a grant to the Council’s care leavers for participating in training.
- The impact the Apprenticeship Levy has had in increasing the number of apprenticeships, including in the Council.
- The number and types of apprenticeships and work experience placements at the Council.
- How bright students could be identified and targeted by both the colleges and the university in the Borough and how the Council’s placement opportunities could be used to encourage bright students’ development.
- The cessation of the statutory requirement in 2012 for schools to provide careers services.
- The lobbying of schools through the 14 to 19 Partnership and Headteachers forums to actively support and promote work experience placements, apprenticeship and careers events etc
- A list of those schools currently buying into the Council’s traded services being provided possibly as an appendix to the report.
- If possible a named careers / work placement contact for each secondary school would be useful as an appendix to the report.
- School governors have a right to details of what services are provided to their individual school and this could be provided to a school governor on request to the Commissioning Director, Education.
- The potential for Trident to undertaken whole year secondary school assemblies and events for primary school children to encourage ambition early.

In response to a question from the Select Committee the Commissioning Director, Education advised that the recommendations would be implemented,
and a proposed timescale of the actions would be included in the final report.

The Select Committee:

(i) Requested that officers check that the discussions at the meeting were reflected appropriately in the draft report;

(ii) Agreed the proposed recommendations and that the final report should be presented to the 21 March 2018 meeting for confirmation.

(iii) Noted that the monitoring of the Action Plan will be subject to the Council’s future arrangements for scrutiny being confirmed.

24. Adoption Scrutiny - Update

Councillor Maureen Worby, Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration, reminded the Select Committee that its review on Adoption was published in July 2017 and the Select Committee had requested an update on progress after six months. (Minute 4, 12 July 2017 refers). The in-depth scrutiny on the scorecard performance and on the adoption service more widely Scrutiny review had occurred as the Council’s performance had been moving further away from government targets and the trend was projected to continue into 2016-17 and beyond. The Scrutiny Review had contained nine recommendations for the service to implement and this was the first update report on the Action Plan.

Cllr Worby advised that in addition to following through on the Action Plan, there had been two intensive workshops held in October and November to look at and challenge both the processes and practices and the results from those would have significant impact on how the Council operates going forward. Those changes had been driven by both the scrutiny review and because of an increasing awareness of the need to adopt a different approach.

Cllr Worby advised that process changes had been put into place since the July 2017 Scrutiny report, however, the statistics on adoption are reported on a three-yearly cycle, therefore, improvements arising from those changes would not be shown statistically until 2020 and beyond. Whilst the statistics do not show improvement currently, an important point of note was that practices had changed, and the trajectory indicated a positive change and more placements were being made within the government timescales.

Cllr Worby drew attention to the caution and willingness of the Courts to make placements, particularly with ‘hard to place’ children, which in addition to the effect on performance, may reduce the number of more challenging children available for placements. The positive side of this was that it would allow more time to find the correct long-term solution for the child, possibly through long-term fostering and would not artificially raise the expectation of a child that they will get a long-term family when they may not.

In response to a question about placing hard to place children across authorities, especially where only one borough came forward, Cllr Worby advised that this would be clearer as the regional adoption approach became more established and information sharing became more common. LBBD was happy to share
information, but this was not always reciprocated by other authorities.

Cllr Worby stated that as the lead member for adoption, she was confident that positive changes and had been made and she would be happy to provide a further update on progress in due course should Scrutiny wish to receive one.

The Select Committee received and noted the update and agreed that a further update on the progress would be welcomed, subject to the Council’s future arrangements for scrutiny being confirmed.

25. Cabinet Forward Plan

Noted the Forward Plan.

26. Work Programme

The Select Committee:

(i) Noted the Work Programme for the last meeting in the municipal year;

(ii) Noted that monitoring and follow-up arrangements will be put into place for the outstanding Scrutiny issues; and.

(iii) Noted that the arrangements for future Scrutiny have still to be discussed, therefore, any issues which Councillors may wish to be considered for future scrutiny should be provided to the Commissioning Director, Education.