

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Jenny Headlam-Wells (Chair), Lotis Bautista, Matt Cooper, Julian Fulbrook, Sylvia McNamara, Tom Simon and Nanouche Umeadi

Co-opted Members Sarah Jafri, Reverend Guy Pope and Dr Rachel Wrangham

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillor Shiva Tiwari

Co-opted Members Aya Elgool, Margaret Harvey and Samir Qurashi

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families
Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member Young People & Culture

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Shiva Tiwari and Co-opted Members Aya Elgool, Margaret Harvey and Samir Qurashi.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

Councillor Tom Simon declared they were a member of the board of governors at Abacus Belsize Primary School.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

Broadcast of the meeting

The Chair made the following announcement: "In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to having your contributions recorded and broadcast, including video when switched on, and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes."

Welcome to the new Executive Director of Children and Learning

The Chair welcomed the new Executive Director of Children and Learning, Tim Aldridge, on behalf of the Committee. This was their first meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee, having started their role in Camden Council on 29 August.

Welcome to new Committee Member

The Chair also welcomed a new member of the Committee, Councillor Nanouche Umeadi, replacing Councillor Shah Miah.

4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were no deputations.

5. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

7. UPDATE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

Before speaking to the paper, the Cabinet Member reassured the Committee that there had been no news from the Department for Education (DfE) that there was any collapse-risk concrete in any Camden schools.

The paper and verbal summary from the Cabinet Member gave updates in the following areas:

- Camden Learning update
- Diversity in school governors: Annual Survey, Support for Recruitment and Outreach
- School Place Planning
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Family Hubs
- Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB)
- Social Work Academy
- Secondary School Free School Meals 'Test and Learn'
- School results

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the update and invited questions and comments from the Committee. In addition to the paper, the following was discussed:

- In relation to Camden's ambition to widen the diversity of school governors, a Member asked how headteachers were engaging in the process. In response, it was confirmed that there were several ongoing initiatives, mentoring and research taking place. The Cabinet Member stated that Headteachers and teachers had bought into the scheme and ambition and they would be meeting with them to discuss what their view was on the next steps to diversify school governor boards.
- Secondly in relation to the diversity of school governors, a Member stated that governors were mostly older and asked what were the practical steps and research to encourage young governors to sign-up. The Member stated when they were a governor, meetings were held at 4pm which was challenging for governors with dependants and other daytime commitments. During the pandemic, meetings were held online which was more accessible, but return to business as usual some boards continued to favour in-person meetings. The Cabinet Member agreed that there were barriers for working people and parents attending meetings at some boards which met in-person which needed to be evaluated. When collecting data on the make-up of boards, the Council circulated guidance on succession planning. There were a number of boards which were in need of refreshing to become younger and more diverse. To make boards more attractive to those groups, boards could

increase the number of online meetings and for agenda papers to be shorter and concise for those with a busy schedule.

- Thirdly in relation to the diversity of school governors, a Member stated that they had researched and interviewed present and former minority school governors. Feedback from those governors was the trauma involved on sitting on boards as the only minority person and in addition sometimes the only working-class person, which could result in being treated as an outsider and the expectation of the board in having to represent every minority and working-class person. The Member stated that the Global Majority Network was a great place for people of colour to come together and share their experiences.
- In response to the full discussion of diversifying school governors, the Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture stated that as well as diversifying the governor cohort, the boards needed to be ready to receive the new diverse governors. The boards had to be a welcoming, educated and be an understanding setting.
- It was corrected that on section 2.4, St George the Martyr was a Church of England school.
- In relation to schools' partnership work, a Co-opted Member commended the work and asked how the Council would ensure the benefit was spread across the borough. In response, it was confirmed that the Council was undertaking a lot of work to understand the structures of schools and seeing how they could work in partnership as a cultural fit and any financial and legal implications in joint working. It was the school's decision if they partnered up with another school, having evaluated the careful work in measuring compatibility. The work was applied across the borough and there were schools in the north of the borough who were looking to join up SENCOs.
- In relation to section 5.1, SEND, a Co-opted Member asked why the Council was celebrating a net increase of six Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) between 2022 to 2023. In response, the Cabinet Member said the figure was positive because of the focused work on early intervention through Exceptional Needs Grants (ENGs). Camden had a lower increase in EHCP than the national trends due to ENGs, which were offered when that earlier targeted support was suitable for a child's needs and not in place of an EHCP.
- In relation to section 6, Family Hubs, a Member asked if there had been any parent feedback about the integrated Early Years structure and if there was any sense that parents were worried or suspicious about the Council's intentions in sharing information from those settings to other departments of partners. In response, the Cabinet Member confirmed that this a concern which should be considered and addressed. There were similar concerns about families who were hesitant to take up vaccines due to distrust of public bodies, which resulted in those groups not accessing services.

The Committee noted the update.

8. UPDATE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture.

The paper and verbal summary from the Cabinet Member gave updates in the following areas:

- A-Level Results
- Full Council Debate on Youth Safety
- Youth Safety Steering Group special meeting with Sir Keir Starmer MP
- Summer activities

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the update and invited questions and comments from the Committee. In addition to the paper, the following was discussed:

Members praised the work of the Cabinet Member in supporting setting up and backing a number of successful and accessible family events, where many attracted wider-Londoners to visit the borough. The Cabinet Member stated that this year there were many events in the calendar, which were a pleasure to be involved in. Some examples of upcoming events included the Music Walk of Fame, Black History Season, Day of the Dead Sommers Town, and arranging the Christmas lights to bring together smaller communities. The Cabinet Member and Members of the Committee praised the Windrush 75 Anniversary Camden events, and in particular the success of the Talacre Gardens celebration day to honour borough's Windrush pioneers. The Cabinet Member stated that the cultural calendar should be challenging, and Camden had a rich history to celebrate.

The Committee noted the update.

9. UPDATE ON PROVISIONAL SCHOOL EXAM RESULTS 2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning.

The Chief Executive Officer of Camden Learning, accompanied by the Chair of Camden Learning, presented the report and presentation within the supplementary agenda. The presentation provided the 2023 provisional Early Years foundation stage outcomes and the end of key stage outcomes from Primary (KS1 & 2) and Secondary (KS4 & 5) Camden schools that were released during July/August 2023. The final validated outcomes would be released later in the year and presented to the committee in February 2024. There was currently limited analysis on the performance of groups within headline data sets. The Chief Executive Officer of Camden Learning stated that caution was advised when considering trends over time due to the legacy of the pandemic, and for secondary schools, the Ofqual announcement of a return to pre-pandemic grading at GCSE and A Level in 2023.

The Chair thanked officers for their report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- It was confirmed that due to the method of measuring of progress scores, a high progress score may be due to a previously low score. Additionally, it was noted that in the 2019 cohort there was a change to KS2 tests which may have impacted the score.
- A Member noted that it was good to see Camden ranking well across the chart nationally in the provisional results. However, it was noted by officers that the information today masked huge differences between schools.
- In relation to the disadvantage gap, it was confirmed that the disadvantage gap of 19% for KS1 maths could be accounted to new arrivals to the country, foundational learning or SEND. It was important in this area to look at the differences between schools and focus targeted support. The initiative for 'every child reading by 7' would be important to reduce the disadvantage gap in reading and supporting children and giving them the skills to succeed from the start of their educational career. Additionally, for older children, there should be attractive places to study, such as libraries that were safe and suitable.
- Secondly in relation to the disadvantage gap and what the Council was doing to tackle the issue, it was confirmed that schools received different amounts of pupil premium funding which should be spent to benefit those children. It was also important to ensure the curriculum was appropriate, noting that anything that was beneficial to disadvantaged children would be positive for all children, including those with SEND. The data indicates which schools had strong practice which other schools could learn from, and it was the ethos of Camden Learning to identify and enable sharing strong practice across schools.
- A Co-opted Member asked what Camden Learning was doing to support schools doing well and helping schools find statistical neighbours. He stated that the demographic of disadvantage was different between schools, and noted particular challenges of supporting young white boys and without the granular data it was hard to draw conclusions. In response, it was stated that Camden Learning was speaking to each school individually about their results and surfacing contextual reasons for their performance. Struggling schools could access support programmes and Camden Learning could monitor concerns and provide wrap around support. Schools were fragile to external societal events, and they would be supported in regular meetings with Camden Learning and the schools ecosystem was strengthened by partnership between schools.
- A Co-opted Member noted that differences in attainment between different key stages may be due to the differences in the demographics of the cohorts.
- It was confirmed that within the measure of reading as a whole area, children might score differently in different sections. Phonics as a measure however was specifically measuring phonics and measured by teacher assessments, which was more subject to potential variability.
- A Member asked why there was a dip in KS2 maths from the previous year. In response, it was confirmed that despite Camden still being above the national average, a primary maths consultant had been commissioned and would be

disseminating best practice between schools. They would bring back more granular data to understand this area in the February report.

- A Member asked why KS5 results were lower than the national average. In response, it was stated that there were a number of sixth forms in Camden which provided a vocational offer which allocated lower entry levels and points for achievement than A-Levels, contributing to overall points score in results.
- Secondly in relation to post-18 academic pathways, it was confirmed that Camden offered a range of opportunities for vocational and academic pathways, where many young people travelled into Camden from around London to access courses. Camden wanted to signpost pathways for young people at the right time and the types of courses available, which was a part of the Building Back Stronger Education Strategy.
- It was confirmed that this would be the first year validated results would be published nationally school by school.
- It was confirmed that school attendance was a challenging area, locally and nationally. There was an ongoing attendance campaign to help tackle issue.
- The amazing success stories of refugees in their results were praised and congratulated by Members and officers.
- The Chair of Camden Learning stated that they were a few months into the detailed review of the implementation plan, by reviewing the impacts of practices and checking to see if the strategy was leading to the desired outcomes.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

10. CAMDEN LOCAL AREA SEND STRATEGY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion.

The Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion summarised the report which outlined the implementation of Camden's Local Area SEND Strategy 2022-2027 and the three priorities; the local context; the national context including the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan 'Right Support Right Time' and the New Local Area SEND Ofsted Inspection Framework; and the next steps in this area of the SEND and Alternative Provision Change Programme. Camden was in a positive position nationally, the quality of what was on offer was being reviewed the Council was on a journey to further improve the service.

The Chair thanked officers for their report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- It was confirmed that the SEND inspections took place over a three-week period unannounced. Upon visit, an inspector would ask for evidence from the Council based on key lines of enquiry. The last inspection was positive before the pandemic and the Council was preparing for the next visit and aiming for outcomes which built on the prior work.
- A Co-opted Member asked officers why the lower increase in EHCPs was a cause for celebration, to follow up the same question previously put to the Cabinet Member. The question routed from concern that there were some children in need of an EHCP who were not receiving them. In response, it was stated that the net increase of EHCPs did not mean that six new children were entering the system, but reflected the outcomes when a plan had ceased, and outcomes had been met and agreed to be met. Camden refused few requests for needs assessments. In addition, Camden was carrying out more work on the local and national tribunal work. Officers confirmed their ENG work on SEND early intervention and pre-statutory funding and additional funding to schools was nationally recognised which focussed on meeting children's needs without requiring an EHCP. There was further working taking place on ENG quality assurance, building on success based of outcomes. Officers agreed to share statistics on the patterns on Camden SEND provision with the Committee.

Action By - Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion

- In relation to section 5.8, it was confirmed that the SEND Annual Report would be added to the work programme and report to Committee once completed in the spring.
- In relation to sections 5.3 and 5.7, parent carer forums, a Co-opted Member raised that it was difficult for SEND parent carers to attend parent carer forums due to the existing pressures on their scheduled and asked if there would be payments for their time. It was confirmed by officers they were continuously looking to reduce the barriers to attend meetings, one example is they had introduced a creche facility. They were looking to expand the offer by involving Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS), voluntary sector leads, and community leaders. The aim of the forum was to attain a wide voice of parent carers and capture the key themes emerging.
- In relation to section 3.3, the gender balance of children receiving an EHCP, it was confirmed that the discrepancy between boys and girls was due to different rates of development at different times and how their needs were expressed, which was a national matter. This meant that girls maybe assessed later in their lives due to presenting differently, for example autism. Officers confirmed that there would be more analysis on this issue in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) about how needs were identified in different profiles.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

11. PROPOSAL TO FORM A SCRUTINY PANEL TO INVESTIGATE THE SEND PROVISION FOR CHILDREN IN CAMDEN

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Sylvia McNamara introduced the report which set out proposals to establish a scrutiny panel to investigate SEND provision for children in Camden. Councillor Sylvia McNamara stated that the ambition of the panel would be to; investigate whose criteria assessed best value and what different stakeholders understood as best value; explore the accessibility of services; explore the tensions between what the Council offered, what parents wanted, and what was delivered by schools; understand the picture of what could and could not be offered by the Council in terms of resources; and how the service communicated with disadvantaged children and families. Councillor Sylvia McNamara stated that now was a good time to investigate the SEND provision in Camden, because the Council was adjusting to the new leadership structure of Children's Services and there was funding and activity in the SEND area.

The Chair thanked Councillor Sylvia McNamara for the report summary and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- It was confirmed that the intention would present the final SEND Scrutiny Panel report to the July 2024 Committee, which would allow time for the Panel to 'deep dive' and trace back on areas of evidence gathering previously touched on and speak to different groups again if required.
- Members raised that the Panel should ensure there was a diverse group of children and families included in the investigation, to reflect Camden's population.
- Officers welcomed the report and stated the timing of the national and local SEND policy and focus would benefit the Panel's investigation. SEND was an active space with numerous work flows which the Panel would find useful to start their work and would have resources to draw upon in making their findings.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee

- a) agree a scrutiny panel be set up, in line with the terms of reference in Appendix A, to investigate the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision for children in Camden.
- b) agree the following membership of the panel: Cllr Sylvia McNamara (Chair), Cllr Bautista, Margaret Harvey, Cllr Headlam-Wells, Sarah Jafri, Cllr Umeadi, Dr Rachel Wrangham.

12. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2023/24

The Chair stated that before reporting to the 15 November Cabinet meeting, the Camden Youth Justice Plan 2023-25 would report to the next Committee meeting on 9 November.

It was noted by officers that the SEND Annual Report would be available in the spring, and following release, would report to the next available Committee meeting.

It was confirmed that the more granular results on achievement and standards would report to the Committee in February.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES

The following remaining meeting dates of the municipal year were noted:

- 9 November 2023
- 19 December 2023
- 18 January 2024
- 26 February 2024
- 13 March 2024 (additional meeting)

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END