

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the People
Scrutiny Commission



3 February 2020 at 11.30 am

Members of the People Scrutiny Commission Present:-

Councillors: Claire Hiscott (Chair), Eleanor Combley, Jude English, Carole Johnson, Brenda Massey, Celia Phipps, Ruth Pickersgill and Tim Kent

Also present:- Councillor Anna Keen, Cabinet Member Education and Skills

1. Welcome, Introduction and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kirk and Smith.

3. Declarations of Interest

The following non pecuniary interests were declared;

Councillor Kent declared a member of his family has an EHCP.

Councillor Ripington declared a member of his family has an EHCP.

4. Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Hiscott, thanked all parents and carers for their engagement; noted that the meeting was being webcast, ([available here](#)); advised that any statements relating to EHCPs would be taken into account in the Evidence Day which was to follow the meeting; and that findings of the Evidence Day would be on the next People Scrutiny Commission agenda on the 27 February.



RESOLVED;

That the Chair's business be noted

5. Public Forum

The following public forum was received and a copy placed in the minute book;

Statements

S1: Statement from Fiona Castle

S2: Statement from Sara Stocks

S3: Statement from Jen Smith

Questions

Q1: Question from Sarah McClelland

Q2: Question from Emma Boyes

Supplementary question from Emma Boyes: What lobbying has been done and has anything come of it?

Answer: The council has a policy team who will coordinate with central government – SEND funding is an issue Bristol is talking to government about. We are meeting with the Department of Education, and will continue to engage with them at any opportunity.

There is a national SEND review which is an opportunity to air concerns regarding funding.

The Chair noted that the Local Government Association had provided a House of Commons briefing on local government funding and the link should be made available: [briefing can be found here](#)

Q3: Question from Jen Smith

Supplementary question from Jen Smith:

Referring to the 98 complaints the councils received in 2018-19, given only 1 of the 21 pre-action letters issued to went to Judicial review does the Council concede that it's placing obstacle in front of children and young people getting send support they are legally entitled to?

This question did not directly relate to the original question, the Chair allowed it and a written response would be provided.

Supplementary question from Jen Smith: what would the Council say to children and young people whose education has been affected?

Answer: Officers' had provided a written response; written responses would be posted on the Local Offer website.

Q4: Question from Kirsty Cottier

RESOLVED;

That the public forum business be noted.



6. Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection - Update

During the discussion, the following points were made:

The report identified a high churn in senior leadership; there was a big challenge to get the right people in senior leadership post. There was confidence that Bristol had got the recruitment right this time with the new Director of Education and Skills.

The new structure had enabled achievable delivery, with a delivery group for the Statement of Action, which had collective responsibility. This protected delivery from risk of churn of staff, as the structure would still deliver.

There had been a national shortage of educational psychologist training posts; there was a requirement for more places. The Council had recruited 6 new Educational psychologists straight from training.

Regardless of the status of a school there was a duty and right to hold all schools to account.

The inclusion agenda was being prioritised.

A key observation of inspection was that the system had not been developed through coproduction. One of key objective of Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was to drive forward co-production, it being at the heart of what we do and how we do it. Co-production was aimed at involving children and young people as well as parents and carers.

The WSoA would provide more detail on co-production and how schools would be held to account.

There had been investment in a quality assurance process, and extra capacity, so to have achieved quality as well as timely target.

There was a need to have a review of the process as a whole; to have moved away from paper based process; there was a need to re-design templates.

Strengthening of joint working and joint commissioning had been a strong improvement; this ensured we had the right data and right people around the table to make decisions.

The Youth Council have had a focus on SEND; have worked with them and would do in the next steps.

The SEND partnership group had the Parent Carer Forum representative on it.

The group had met monthly; there were also a number of sessions across the city to help develop the WSoA.



Director of Education and Skills chaired the Excellence in Schools group – which was a standards board which looked at a remit broader than SEND, but SEND would be prioritised. Every Local authority had a School standards board.

There was a discussion about training and development, and the Commission was advised that there was an ongoing project looking at workforce development across the city; this would be in the WSoA; and that there would be requests for Member training as part of the Member development after the upcoming elections.

Alternative learning provision was identified as needing attention; need was being identified, so as to anticipate future demand and ensure sufficient places to meet need.

There was a discussion about the EHCP process and funding, and Members were advised that just fewer than 500 plans – including new plans – were in the system including backlog. There was a focus on identifying provision and to ensure funding follows in a timely manner.

Members were advised that there had been a significant data cleanse to ensure the accuracy of data going forward. This would be submitted to the Department of Education, and this data would be available on a quarterly basis to Members and to the public via the Local Offer website.

There were no dates available to say when the backlog would be addressed, but there was an escalation of work, helped by extra recruitment which had doubled the team, plus process efficiencies which will have a significant impact on timeliness and help to clear the backlog.

The Chair noted additional public statements submitted at the meeting:

- 1. Nura Aabe – Autism Independence: Families who don't speak the language don't understand and feel excluded. Families I work with will not be able to be included. There should be questions about how officers plan to give voice to Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- 2. Sally Kent: There are 42 % of children with a plan in special schools - there is a lack of school places and where children would be placed needs to be addressed.
- It was also noted that parents would like more contact with and representation by the Parent Carers Forum.

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills stated that it is important that parents and carers are and feel properly represented and the Council would look at the way parents and carers are represented; and involvement and feedback is important, we need an EHCP process reflecting what families and young people need.



The Chair stated as a parent who has experienced a child not being diagnosed with SEN she has an insight and understands what parents experience; and that every outstanding EHCP was a child with needs not being met. This issue would remain a priority for scrutiny.

RESOLVED;

That the EHCP and SEND would be incorporated into the elected Member development schedule.

Members would receive progress reports on how the EHCP backlog was being dealt with.

Meeting ended 12.40pm

CHAIR _____

