

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 6TH DECEMBER, 2021

Present – Councillors Iqbal (Chairman), Grant (Vice-Chairman), Hartigan (as deputy for Councillor Finney), Hornby, Mistry (as deputy for Councillor Adia), Murray, Pattison, Peel (as deputy for Councillor Donaghy), Radcliffe (as deputy for Councillor Connor), Rimmer, Sherrington (as deputy for Councillor Abdullah) and Walsh (as deputy for Councillor Taylor-Burke).

Co-opted Members

None in attendance

Also in attendance

Councillor Galloway	-	Executive Cabinet Member – Children's Services
Ms B. Brown	-	Director of Children's Services
Mr P. Rankin	-	Deputy Director of Children's Services
Ms G. Whitehead	-	Assistant Director – Inclusive Education and Learning
Mrs V. Ridge	-	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Abdullah, Adia, Connor, Donaghy, Finney, Hill and Taylor-Burke and from Canon Bracegirdle.

Councillor Iqbal in the Chair.

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved - The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held on 18th October, 2021 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

19. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Borough Solicitor submitted the Committee Work Programme for 2021/22.

Resolved – That the 2021/22 Committee Work Programme be noted.

20. SEXUAL HEALTH CURRICULUM

Ms G. Whitehead gave a presentation on relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education.

The Committee was advised that new guidance issued by the Department for Education governing the sexual health curriculum was originally due to come into effect from September 2020. However, implementation had been delayed until summer term 2021 due to COVID.

The guidance included:

- Relationships Education in primary schools;
- Relationships and Sex Education in secondary schools; and
- Health Education in primary and secondary schools.

The guidance related to all schools whether maintained or non-maintained including academies and free schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained special schools, alternative provision including pupil referral units and Diocese and other faith representatives. It was also a reference for other local authority staff.

The presentation advised that schools would already have already developed and reviewed and subsequently updated

their policy to reflect the new guidance in consultation with parents. The DfE advised that schools should ensure that the policy would meet the needs of pupils and parents and reflected the community they serve.

The DfE guidance clearly defined what should be included in this policy, as follows:

- primary schools - relationships education:

- families and people who care for me
 - caring friendships
 - respectful relationships
 - online relationships
 - being safe

- secondary schools - relationships and sex education

- families
 - respectful relationships, including friendships
 - online and media
 - being safe
 - intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health

With regard to health education - primary and secondary, physical health and mental wellbeing education was now statutory. These subject areas were split into the following 8 themes:

- mental wellbeing
 - internet safety and harms
 - physical health and fitness
 - healthy eating
 - drugs, alcohol and tobacco
 - health and prevention
 - basic first aid
 - the changing adolescent body

The decision of how and when the statutory topics should be taught had been allocated to individual schools but the content was compulsory for all primary schools.

These themes are statutory and parents could not withdraw their child from these lessons.

Parents could not withdraw their child from aspects of relationships and sex education/relationships education which were covered as part of the statutory science curriculum.

A good understanding of pupils' faith backgrounds and positive relationships with school and local faith communities helped to create a constructive context for the teaching of the subjects.

In all schools, when teaching these subjects, the religious background of all pupils must be taken into account when teaching these subjects and when planning teaching so that the topics that were included in the core content were appropriately handled.

The presentation advised that sex education was not statutory in primary schools. Many primary schools already chose to teach some aspects of sex education and would continue to do so, although it was not a requirement.

Where a maintained primary school chose to teach aspects of sex education (which went beyond the national curriculum for science), the school was required to set this out in their policy and all schools should consult with parents on what was to be covered.

Primary schools that chose to teach sex education must allow parents a right to withdraw their children. The guidance refers to this as granting an automatic right for parents to withdraw their child from sex education lessons.

With regard to secondary schools, parents had the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory relationships and sex education.

Schools were advised to meet with the parents individually to discuss why they wished to withdraw their children from sex

education. Once those discussions had taken place, except in exceptional circumstances, the school should respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to, and until, three terms before the child turns 16.

With regard to LGBT, the guidance stated that schools should ensure that their teaching was sensitive and age appropriate in approach and content.

At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content was fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools were free to determine how they did this and there was an expectation that all pupils would have been taught LGBT content at a timely point as part of this area of the curriculum.

In secondary schools, pupils should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way.

All pupils should feel that the content was relevant to them and their developing sexuality. Sexual orientation and gender identity should be explored at a timely point and in a clear, sensitive and respectful manner.

Pupils should be well informed about the full range of perspectives and, within the law, should be well equipped to make decisions for themselves about how to live their own lives, whilst respecting the right of others to make their own decisions and hold their own beliefs.

The presentation went on to focus on the work that had been undertaken in Bolton schools which included:

- consultation with parents, staff, governors, pupils
- engagement with wider school community
- communications through school platforms
- open door policy for individual concerns/queries

The presentation concluded that the overarching rationale from the DfE guidance was to:

- embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy.

These subjects represented a significant opportunity to help children and young people develop.

Following the presentation, members made the undermentioned observations/comments:

- what the approach of the Authority would be if a parent chose to withdraw their child – Ms Whitehead advised that the parent would be invited into school to establish what their concerns were with the aim of reassuring them – if they still chose to withdraw then the child would receive some sexual education via science lessons which were compulsory;
- the importance of teaching children how to respect each other particularly in the light of recent abusive incidents against women – Ms Whitehead assured members that Head Teachers were aware and had established panels to further develop this;
- the need to provide children in primary schools with awareness of social media even though this was not a compulsory element – members were advised that the primary school curriculum did contain an on-line bullying aspect; and
- the value of recording and logging incidents of bad behaviour in schools, particularly those that were abusive in nature, and the benefits of analysing such data periodically– Ms Whitehead advised that although this was not a statutory requirement, it was general good practice in schools to log such incidents and the Council had various software programmes in use for that purpose;

Resolved – That Ms Whitehead be thanked for her informative presentation.

20. CALL IN – HARVEY NURSERY REVIEW

The Committee was advised that the decision in relation to the report regarding the Harvey Nursery Review had been called in by Councillor Donaghy at the meeting of the Executive Cabinet Member for Children's Services held on 22nd November, 2021, in accordance with Article 5 of the Council's Constitution.

The Committee had previously been circulated with a copy of the report considered at the meeting of the Executive Cabinet Member held on 22nd November, 2021 together with the minutes of the meeting and the procedural options available to the Committee following consideration of the matter.

It was moved by Councillor Peel and seconded by Councillor Murray that –

That the Scrutiny Committee refer the decision to close Harvey Nursery to a meeting of the full Council, with a view to referring the decision back to the Executive Cabinet Member to ask for the following:

1. That the Executive Cabinet Member explain why no action has been taken improve the financial viability of the nursery since the previous call in.
2. That the Executive Cabinet Member immediately re-convene the Collaborative Working Group to explore all and any options that may be available to improve the financial viability of the nursery, as per previous instructions by full Council.
3. That the Executive Cabinet Member ask the relevant Children's Services officers, to afford all assistance that can be given to the nursery in order to promote this excellent facility to the wider population.

Members voting for approval of the motion (7):

Councillors Grant, Iqbal, Mistry, Murray, Peel, Pattison and Sherrington

Members voting against the motion (4):

Councillors Hartigan, Rimmer, Radcliffe, Walsh

Members abstaining (1):

Councillor Hornby

The motion was declared carried.

Resolved – That the item be considered at the meeting of the Council on 19th January, 2021.

22. MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Committee received the minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- Executive Cabinet Member for Children's Services held on 22nd November, 2021.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.15pm)