

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 1st November 2021

Official Attendees for the record

Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)
Cllr Caroline Selman
Cllr Anya Sizer
Cllr Lynne Troughton
Cllr Humaira Garasia
Cllr Katie Hanson
Cllr Sarah Young
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)
Shabnum Hassan (Co-opted member)

Connected Virtually

Cllr James Peters
Steven Olalere (Co-opted member)
Salmah Kansara (Co-opted member)
Ernell Watson (Co-opted member)
Two members of Hackney Youth Parliament

In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play
- Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Fran Cox, Head of High Needs & School Places
- Joe Wilson, Head of SEND
- Joshua Naisbitt, Early Help Project Manager
- Peter Algacs, Team Leader, Young Hackney
- Hillside and Fernbank Children's Centre representatives: Natalie Aguilera, Lizzie Kenyon & Nick Yates

Cllr Margaret Gordon in the Chair

Welcome and introduction

The Vice Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. The Vice Chair noted that the Chair, Cllr Sophie Conway was unwell and was therefore not able to attend the meeting.

The Vice Chair reminded those attending that this was a hybrid meeting, with members of the Commission and officers attending both in person and connecting virtually and that the meeting was being broadcast live via the internet.

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)
- Cllr Anna Lynch.

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2. Declarations of interest

- 2.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:
- Cllr Margaret Gordon was a member of the Member Oversight Board for Early Help and Early Years and would therefore not participate in items 4 and 6;
 - Shabnum Hassan, was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with SEND;
 - Cllr Sizer was a trustee of Ivy Street Family Centre and in relation to item 5, was also a parent of a child with SEND currently looking for a secondary school placement;
 - Cllr Caroline Selman noted that in relation to item 4 she was a mother of a child in early years education and was until recently, a Governor at a school outside the borough which had an Additional Resource Provision (ARP). Cllr Selman indicated that she would not participate in item 6 given her previous Cabinet position and part in decision making around Early Help. In relation to item 5, Cllr Selman had visited Side by Side SEND provision as a ward councillor.
 - Jo McLeod was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with additional needs;
 - Cllr Peters was a Governor at the Garden Special School in Hackney.

3. Urgent Items / Order of Business

- 3.1 Given that the Vice Chair would not be able to participate in items 4 and 6 other members were nominated to Chair these respective items:
- Cllr Caroline Selman would Chair item 4 - Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children's Centres;
 - Cllr Katie Hanson would Chair item 6 - the Early Help Review.
- 3.2 To help assist flow of agenda, it was agreed that the running order of the agenda would change, where items 5 and 6 were switched.

Cllr Caroline Selman in the Chair

4. Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children's Centres

- 4.1 At the last meeting of the Commission on October 6th 2021 the Commission noted plans for the development of Early Years Strategy and questioned officers on proposals to reconfigure local children's centres. A public consultation is in progress which runs through to November 16th 2021, and the Commission will formally contribute to that consultation.
- 4.2 To support the Commission's response to the consultation, parent representatives from the two children's centres which have been proposed for closure were invited to attend and present their views on:
- What impact the planned closures will have on children and their families;
 - Planned mitigations and support to help parents move to alternative services;
 - The consultation and engagement strategy.
- 4.3 It was noted that whilst it is not a decision making body, the Commission welcomed this contribution from parents which will further inform its response to the public consultation.

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Parent representatives from Fernbank and Hillside Children's Centres

4.4 Three parent representatives attended and presented to the Commission and highlighted the following issues in relation to the planned closure of Children's Centres. Natalie Aguilera highlighted the following points:

- The proposed closures would have a significant impact on the availability of subsidised childcare in the locality and would impact directly on those 90 families currently using the nursery facilities and a much larger number of families using open access services (drop-in / Stay And Play).
- The proposals would also mean that 35 staff who support these children's centres would be made redundant.
- Parents cited concerns over the decision making process for the planned closures given that details of the children centre closures were published in local media on the 13th September, despite the Early Years Strategy (of which there was no mention of specific closures) not being approved by Cabinet until the evening of the 13th September.
- The consultation process on both the Early Years Strategy and the planned closure of children centres was launched on the 15th September. Parent representatives were unclear as to why the consultation was taking place on the Early Years Strategy when this had been approved by Cabinet on the 13th September and why the planned closures were not disclosed as part of the Early Years Strategy report.
- Parent representatives were also concerned that policy making decisions had been conflated with budget making decisions and that these issues should have been treated differently and subject to separate consultation processes.
- It was felt that the planned children centre closures were not given adequate recognition within the consultation survey with just one multiple choice question provided for parents to feedback their views.
- Parents were not assured about the robustness of the process in which the children's centres were identified for closure, particularly as there did not appear to be a 'Plan B'. As there had been little data or evidence forthcoming about the rationale for closure, this suggested to parents that the planned closures were a 'done deal'. At the time of this meeting, no data had been provided from a Freedom of Information Request which was submitted to the Council.
- To conclude, it was reiterated that parents were dissatisfied with the consultation and decision making process for the Early Years Strategy and reconfiguration of children's centres.

4.5 Lizzie Kenyon, a parent of 3 year old at Hillside Children Centre, highlighted the following issues:

- There has been a lack of information to support the consultation on new Early Years Strategy and the proposed closures of children's centres, for example, parents' views were referenced in the development of the Early Years Strategy but there was no document provided to substantiate this.
- There were also concerns in the way that data has been used to substantiate the proposed closures, for example, the local vacancy rate has been suggested as a reason for proposed closures which relates to vacancies across all settings rather than specific to children's centres. It was also noted that the Childcare Sufficiency Report which evidenced the vacancy rate, is just a 'snapshot of provision at this time'.

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- There was also concern that underlying assumptions about current and future service use were predicated on evidence collected during the pandemic, which might not be representative or illustrative of future patterns of service use by local families.
- The Council issued a Q & A format response to support the consultation on the 20th October which was somewhat into the consultation process and those parents completing the survey before this time would not have had access to this information.
- A central premise of the Early Years Strategy is to target resources on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families, yet, by its own admission the Council's own Equality Impact Assessment (in the Cabinet Report) acknowledged that low income families and working families will be directly affected by the planned closures.
- There were also concerns about some of the assertions made in the consultation literature, particularly in relation to the accessibility of alternative services given that suggested alternatives did not offer a 'like for like' service and that some parents already travelled some distance to access specific services.
- It was also emphasised that the planned closures had come out 'out of the blue' for parents and that the proposals to close children's centres had caused significant anxiety for those parents affected. The 8 week consultation process was also a challenging time frame to enable local parents to come together and meaningfully contribute.

4.6 Nick Yates, also a parent with a child at one of the children's centres proposed for closure also highlighted the following:

- Considerable efforts had been made to contact and engage parents across affected children's centres and to understand what impact the planned closures would have on them. The views presented at the meeting reflected a wide range of parents' views and not just those parents presenting tonight.
- Children's centres offer childcare from 7.45am through to 5.45pm which is critical in supporting working parents. These hours were generally not available in the independent sector.
- Parents were clear that these children's centres provided a high quality service where staff were passionate about the care and support that they provided to local children and their families. Children like attending the services provided by both centres and they looked forward to attending each morning.
- Parents indicated that the Council had not offered any guarantee about alternative provision for those affected by the closure which was of concern given that alternative sites were known to have long waiting lists. Additionally, alternative childcare provisions such as childminders or independent nurseries were not affordable or always suitable for children and families.
- Parents were of the view that the planned closure of children's centres represent reduced access to affordable childcare to local families which would reduce opportunities for children from different communities to meet and be educated alongside each other. In this context, parents questioned whether the Council wanted children to be educated within inclusive settings where children were taught in mixed classes which reflected the diversity of Hackney.

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Questions from the Commission

- 4.7 What proposals have been put forward to mitigate the impact of the proposed children centre closures, particularly in relation to the accessibility of alternative services?
- One parent noted that they had initially applied to 10 local children's centres yet only one was able to provide a place. This suggested that there were limited spaces in alternative local children centre settings.
 - It was noted that alternatives are presented as 'like for like' when in fact two of the alternative children centre's target specific communities for support. Given the differences in services provided, parents struggled with the notion that they can use different children's centres interchangeably, and noted that just 5-10 minutes additional travel time may mean that services are inaccessible.
- 4.8 The Commission understood that whilst vacancy rates may change, there was a high vacancy rate at the Children's Centres concerned? As parents, why do you think there is a vacancy rate and why are parents choosing to send their children to other non-subsidised nurseries? Are there any aspects of children centre provision which makes this less attractive to parents?
- The 30% vacancy rate is across all nursery provision including independent and maintained sectors. Further still, this figure was taken mid-pandemic which may not reflect the true demand for childcare services. In consultation with the Centre manager, parents noted that occupancy had been around 93% at Fernbank during the summer. Given the demand for children centres places, parents could not understand why there would be a vacancy rate for this type of childcare provision. Parents were adamant that there was not a surplus of affordable childcare in this area and the Family Information Service had not given any notification of any vacancies at the Centre for many years. If there are any vacancies at this site, it was suggested that this is more to do with visibility and promotion rather than the nature of services on offer.
- 4.9 How clear and accessible did you find the documentation to support the consultation?
- Parents were expecting more substantive documentation to support the consultation, whereas the consultation document itself was just two sides of A4. So aside from the Early Years Strategy itself (which was a strategic document) parents had very little information to inform their participation within the consultation. Parents wanted to know about the background information and underpinning evidence which supported the strategy and the proposals to reconfigure children's centres as provision of such information was critical to their meaningful engagement in the consultation. In the absence of this information being provided, parents have had to undertake this research themselves which has enabled them to ask questions and challenge proposals being brought forward.
 - Parent representatives acknowledged that what consultation information was provided was clear and in plain English, and could be readily understood.
 - Parents were only provided with one date where they could attend and ask questions of officers about the plans for the children's centres. Whilst this session was useful, many parents could not attend and it's not clear if the

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minutes from the meeting will be made publicly available. Although parents were reassured that their feedback was being captured, requests for the minutes of the meeting have been declined. A further consultation session had now been set up for the 9th November 2021.

- Parents noted that many attendees at the consultation session were only able to do so because staff at the Children Centre worked later to look after their children, which again, was testament to the dedication and commitment of staff.

4.10 Notwithstanding the years of government austerity and reductions to local council's funding, do you think that if the consultation process could be improved, this may lead to a different substantive outcome?

- Parents were cognisant of the pressures that councils were under, but no evidence had been presented to substantiate the proposed cuts to services, such as for example, a fall in the demand for local children centre places. In this context, parents found it difficult to understand the rationale for the cuts. Data from the Homerton Hospital suggested that the local birth rate was buoyant at around 6,000 births per year which would suggest strong underlying demand for provision. Furthermore, parents again challenged the supposition of the consultation which suggests that there was an excess of affordable childcare available locally.
- It was emphasised that it was not the role or responsibility of parents to speak to finances of this service, but to ensure that officers understood how valuable children centre's services were to local communities and the positive impact that these have on local children and families. Aside from the proposed closure of children's centres, it should also be understood that no different funding options have not been presented to parents, therefore as parents of children at centres proposed for closure, the only option is to set out what the impact of the closures will be.

4.11 What were parents' perceptions of other proposals contained with the rest of the Early Years Strategy, such as Family Hubs?

- The Family Hubs were a different service offer with a new extended client group, which whilst to be welcomed, their inclusion within the consultation was unclear.
- Parents were of the view that there was insufficient information presented on the Family Hubs for them to meaningfully contribute, for example, data on how these have been implemented elsewhere. With the target age group being extended to 0-19 year olds, parents were unclear as to how such a wide range of services can be collectively provided through one setting and were worried that this may be a dilution of early years services currently available.

4.12 The Chair thanked parent representatives for attending, preparing their written submission and for responding to questions from members of the Commission. The Chair acknowledged how important children's centre services were to the local community and the anxiety that proposed changes had for local parents. The Chair once again emphasised that the information which parents have provided had been very helpful to the Commission, and that this will inform its own response to the public consultation which closes on the 16th November.

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- 4.13 The Group Director for Children and Education was invited to set out the next steps for the consultation and decision making on Early Years Strategy and the reconfiguration of Children's Centres. The Consultation will close on the 16th November and a report of the findings will be produced and shared with the Senior Leadership Team. Following on from this, a paper will be taken to Cabinet in December outlining proposals for Cabinet members to take a decision. It was confirmed that the consultation report would be a supporting document and would be published alongside the proposals to Cabinet.

Cllr Katie Hanson in the Chair

5. Early Help Review

- 5.1 A review of Hackney Council's Early Help Services has been ongoing since 2019. This review has encompassed services provided through Young Hackney, Family Support Service and Early Years & Children's Centres. Members of the Commission were invited to review reports which set out the aims and principles underpinning the review, as well as the resultant outcomes and priorities and the possible implications for local services.
- 5.2 The Group Director introduced the report. The review sets out those principles and processes which should inform the Council's internal early help offer. The review also details short, medium and long term actions to support the service development process.
- 5.3 The Project Manager for Early Help reported to the Commission the key findings from the review which are summarised below:
- Early help is non-statutory support that is provided to children and families at risk of poor outcomes and need additional help to achieve a good level of well being.
 - There were three drivers to the review: 1) ensure that the model of early help was fit for purpose 2) changes in social and political landscape (e.g. increase in families in temporary accommodation, cumulative impact of austerity) 3) financial sustainability.
 - The scope of the review encompassed early help delivered through Early Years & Children's Centres, Young Hackney and the Family Support Service. Whilst the review was internal to Hackney services, it was recognised that there were a wider range of partner agencies involved in early help and that the outcomes of the review would inform a broader multi-agency partnership approach (e.g CVS, Health, Police).
 - The review was overseen by an officer working group and a member oversight board. Stakeholders were also involved in the review process where over 200 individuals, including young people and their families, contributed.
 - The review identified a number of strengths to existing early help provision (breadth of service provision, supporting complex needs, multi-agency approach & high aspirations for young people) which would be retained and enhanced in the new early help offer.
 - The review highlighted 6 key aspirations for the new early help offer: 1) service visibility 2) effectively communicated support 3) addressing the needs of the whole family and increasing parenting capacity 4) build trusting

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relationships 5) address specific needs of young people 6) outcome focused interventions.

- A range of short, medium and long term priorities have been developed for early help services to enact from 2022. Short term goals include the development of a single assessment process through an early help hub (within the MASH), and the establishment of supporting protocols and standards to ensure that interventions are consistent, timely and effective.
- The delivery of these priorities will not equate to any job losses or change in job rolls and will be delivered within current budget frameworks.
- The review marks the end of Phase 1, and the next phase will be to engage the early help multi-agency partnership group which will ultimately report into the CHSCP Board. From this, a borough wide multi-agency partnership early help strategy will be developed.
- The principles and priorities for the early help review will be taken to Cabinet in January 2022 for approval. Subject to that approval the development priorities and actions will be implemented thereafter. An Early Help Partnership Group will be established in January 2022 to lead on strategy development.

5.4 The Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care highlighted a number of points:

- Trusting relationships was highlighted as a strength of the existing model of early help and the Council would build on this;
- There is a need to further engage and involve the voluntary sector in early help work;
- Hackney Education Service have played an integral role in this early help review.

Questions from the Commission

5.5 The review notes that much of early help and support is provided on a consensual basis to local families in need. Given that some communities may be reluctant to engage with local support services, particularly where this engagement is voluntary and where there may be a genuine mistrust of public services / social care interventions, what community engagement is planned alongside the development of the Early Help Strategy to build trusting relationships and ensure that those children and families in need of support come forward and are accepting of help?

- The Group Director indicated that children are seen in a wide range of early help settings and organisations including schools, GP's, Health Visitors. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now extending its role to look at early help and actively seeking to enable parents in need to access services and support. This system is in its infancy, and at the moment it is important to make sure everyone is aware of it, everyone working within the system is working to the same goals and standards. Not all early help comes from the Council, as there are a wide range of services providing support to children and families. The service will have a particular focus on disproportionality as it is known that black and other minority ethnic groups are accessing early help services, as it's not clear at the moment if these groups are not being offered services or there is a reluctance on behalf of the communities to take up support. The service is committed to addressing such disproportionalities.

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- 5.6 It is important to include the voice of young people in this new approach to early help and to ensure that it reflects and responds to the lived experience of young people. How have young people themselves been involved in the development of this model of early help to date, and how will they be involved in the future as the strategy evolves? How will you make sure you get feedback from young people being supported through early help?
- 26 families and 7 young people were spoken to as part of the early help review and these were mainly families who were using the early help services. An on-line survey was carried out which makes up the remainder of the consultation with children and families. Whilst it was acknowledged that more young people could have been engaged at this early stage, services would need to develop ongoing 'feedback loops' with young people to constantly reappraise and refine early help service provision in the future.
 - It was emphasised that the new early help model would focus on outcomes rather than processes and what impact that it would have on young people's lives. It's important to understand that we review and monitor outcomes to know that interventions are having a positive impact on children's lives.
- 5.7 In terms of performance of the new model of early help, can further information be provided as to how the outcomes of families referred in to the early help hub will be measured and monitored? How will we know that this new model of early help is effective and delivers good outcomes for local children and families it supports? What tangible outcomes will the early help model deliver?
- Data is critical to the success of the service. At the moment requests for early help can land at a number of possible services including Young Hackney, Family Support or children centres, and it's not possible to capture the needs of young people and their families, and the nature, timeliness and effectiveness of interventions delivered. A singular point of access through the early help hub will bring greater oversight and consistency to the early help process, and the singular point of access will enable local services to know what is working best to support parents and children. It will also help the local multi agency partnership to understand where to appropriately direct and focus resources to best meet the needs of children needing early help. It was emphasised that earlier interventions were known to be more effective for children and families and were also more financially effective.
- 5.8 Is the aim of the early help review to help more families or to provide more in depth support to a number of families. Is the aim of the review to provide early help services more cheaply? Are there a target cost savings attached to this review or is the review aimed to contain spending?
- There are no budget savings attached to the review. The review is all about improved services for greater impact for families for children and families across Hackney. The main reason for establishing the early help hub is to ensure that children are directed to the right help at the right time. If multi-agency partners are working together better to provide early help, then more families are likely to get the right help when they need it.
 - The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care noted that it was also important that the early help model would also bring more services together in the same location so that those in need of multi-agency support do not have to access multiple sites across the borough.

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- 5.9 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. Given the sound problems in the Chamber, it was requested that if members did have additional questions that these could be sent to the Clerk who would then seek a written response from officers.

Cllr Margaret Gordon in the Chair

6. School Estates Strategy

- 6.1 In response to falling school rolls in mainstream settings and increased demand for in-borough placements for children with an EHCP, Hackney Education Service is in the process of developing a School Estates Strategy (SES). An outline of the emerging strategy was provided to members including the rationale for change, together with plans to increase in-borough provision for children with SEND and effective use of the boroughs school estate.
- 6.2 The Director of Education introduced the item. The School Estates Strategy was still in the process of development, including the finance and resources required to support planned developments. Officers set out the rationale and context for change and ambitions to extend SEND placements within Hackney mainstream and specialist school settings.
- 6.3 The Head of High Needs and School Places presented to the Commission highlighting the following issues:
- The SES would address two key issues - falling school rolls and an increase in the number of EHCPs. Hackney was not alone in facing these issues, indeed, these were London wide trends.
 - A healthy surplus for the primary sector is considered to be between 5-10% of places, but in Hackney this is currently 16% (505 vacant places in reception). There were around 50+ surplus currently across secondary schools when ideally this should be around 0.
 - Conversely, an additional 400 EHCPs were expected year on year up until 2026.
 - In terms of post 16 provision, most of the young people with SEND have placements outside of the borough.
 - The proportion of young people on SEND support had fallen from 19% in 2009 to just below 14% in 2020. Conversely the number of children with an EHCP has grown from 1,216 to 2,249 over the same period. This would further suggest schools need more help to deliver a graduated response to supporting children with SEND.
 - Comparatively to the rest of London, Hackney has more children with an EHCP in mainstream settings and fewer children in specialist schools.
 - The strategy has 4 priorities: 1) creation of additional places in special schools, 2) partnering with primary and secondary schools to combat falling school rolls 3) sustainable site usage across the maintained sector.
 - Additional SEND provision will be provided through additional ARP's, and more places in Special Schools.
 - There will also be a new role for NRC where it will be more proactively working with local schools, to focus on early intervention and early help and helping young people in need to achieve better outcomes.

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- Firstly, the borough needs to move to a point of '10% of surplus school places' (from 16%) which equates to a reduction of 450 primary places (135 have already been agreed). HES is drilling down into local neighbourhood data to understand what is happening in local communities and the education choices parents are making.
- Education sites are important and need to be protected and maintained and the strategy will set a long term plan for their sustainable use of the estate.
- The SES will be taken to Cabinet in January 2022 which will contain the project plan and budget case for the strategy (Capital and Revenue). The service was also building an 'invest to save' business-case, it was also clearly more cost effective to support young people with in-borough settings than commissioning external independent provision. The implementation plan will then be taken back to Cabinet in March 2022.
- The SEND expansion programme would commence in September 2022, where it was hoped some additional capacity would be available through additional ARPs.
- HES was currently working with a range of local stakeholders to support the emerging strategy.

6.4 The Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care highlighted a number of displacement issues underpinning the number of vacant places on school rolls:

- Free Schools, which have no obligation to consult the Council, have set up schools which have impacted on school rolls;
- The cap on housing benefits had impacted on families ability to live and stay in Hackney;
- Brexit had also impacted, with families choosing to remain in Europe after the pandemic;
- Whilst many families like and want to live in Hackney, the comparative benefits of living outside an inner city area (e.g. improved access to larger properties with gardens) were proving an incentive for some families to relocate.

Questions from the Commission

6.5 To what degree is there a link between new ARPs and those schools with falling rolls? How can we ensure that ARPs are developed in a strategic way and located where they are most needed?

- Schools have been asked to submit expressions of interest and there has been a very good response. School responses had been analysed alongside other factors such as their location, availability of on-site space, school ethos and views of inclusivity. Therefore this combined data will help provide a more strategic assessment for the placement of ARPs (structured scoring system in place). The second step was about working with potential sites to identify how the ARP may be codesigned with schools and parents and young people as to what the provision may eventually look like.
- A viability assessment will be commissioned for all ARPs to ensure that the best use of public funds are made for each new location selected.

6.6 Could you expand further around some of the financial considerations within the School Estates Strategy? Can you outline what financial drivers are behind the

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strategy and the nature of revenue costs and capital investment which are envisaged to be needed? How will planned variations impact the High Needs budget?

- Although a lot of hard work was being undertaken by colleagues in finance, it was too early to give any concrete figures around capital or revenue expenditure. What was clear however was that it costs on average around £45k to support each child in independently commissioned SEND provision, yet local specialist schools costs are well below this (c£35k). It was also noted that greater use of independent provision outside the borough also incurred significant transport costs.

6.7 What will be the underpinning objectives (e.g. more in-borough placements, quality of provision) of the commissioning strategy for special school places for the Orthodox Jewish Community? What has been done so far to capture the views and opinions of this community in support of this strategy?

- Side by Side (an Orthodox Jewish SEND provision) was very inclusive and would provide a good model (inclusive practice, good rating by Ofsted, and good value for money) which can be replicated or inform additional provision across the borough. Working with this provision will further help the SEND team to understand the needs of the OJ community and map out how their needs may be met locally.
- The SEND team is working to engage and involve the OJ community and had recently met with Step by Step to gain an understanding of the families that they are working with.
- The Head of SEND was also working with the local independent OJ schools to help improve SENCO support to help identify and support young people with additional needs in these settings. Independent schools were very positive about this development and the service was considering whether an ARP could be set up in the independent sector (with support from Side by Side) to provide additional SEND support to the OJ community. It was reported that the community was very positive about these new developments.

6.8 The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play noted that the school estates strategy had been broadly welcomed by local Head Teachers who recognised the need for a strategic response to evolving SEND needs. The Commissioning of SEMH was very complex and difficult to resolve and a lot of this work was undertaken outside of the borough and would require substantive change to bring this back into the borough. This may be an area of interest to scrutiny at some future meeting. The Cabinet member thanked SEND officers for their leadership and support in taking this work forward.

6.9 Can you outline how the 336 additional places required will be delivered by 2023? Assuming that ARPs have 10 pupils this will deliver 40 places and with the capacity of local special schools around 450 at present, how feasible will it be to deliver the remaining 200 places in these specialist settings?

- It was acknowledged that the strategy is ambitious and the need is urgent not only from a financial perspective but also to best respond to the needs of local young people with additional needs. The service has benefited from over a year of data analysis to understand the nature of local SEND needs

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- Subject to viability assessments, it was hoped to expand provision at each of the 3 local special schools by 50 places (150) and where possible, each of the ARPs will deliver 24 places.
- Some of these additional places will be on-line much earlier than 2023 and some may take longer to put in place, but the service was working to prioritise those options that will deliver places more quickly.

- 6.10 What strategic needs assessment underpins this strategy in terms of the evolving cumulative needs of young people? Is further support required for particular needs groups?
- In terms of the strategic analysis of need, analysis had shown what was needed was greater volume of what was already being provided. Analysis of spending had shown that resources were being equally spent in local mainstream and specialist schools. There was however a growing need to support children with autism which would need to be reflected in the SES.
 - In secondary schools there was a growing number of young people with MLD. In this context, the SES was not just about increasing capacity, but must also be viewed in parallel to developing and improving actual SEND provision in mainstream settings. Therefore whilst the authority wanted to develop MLD offer through expansion of Stormont House School, it also wanted to develop the way that Stormont House School worked with other local schools to improve support to pupils with MLD in the mainstream sector. For example, there could be opportunities to develop innovative curriculum for young people with MLD in mainstream schools.
- 6.11 How have the three local special schools been engaged thus far, and what are their views about expanded provision if appropriate local sites can be found?
- A workshop was held with the 4 local special schools (including Side by Side) to drill down into what their offer is to local families and ensure that this is clearly communicated. This then needs to be made clearer to local families. The workshop helped to understand the gaps in provision and what needs to be done to improve and extend provision locally. The Head of SEND meets with local Special School Heads every 2 weeks as these are crucial partners in this process.
- 6.12 Why is there a target of zero headroom for secondary school capacity given that additional families may move into the borough during the course of the school year? Is the assumption that more children will move out?
- In terms of the secondary surplus, the guidance to maintain a 0% surplus comes through the GLA and where there is a recognition that it is much easier to track children and that this cohort are able to travel more freely and independently across boroughs (and needs may be met more broadly). Generally, primary schools serve a more localised community therefore there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient local capacity.
- 6.13 A new proactive role is planned for New Regents College to provide early education help across local mainstream settings. Can you expand on the vision for this role: Will this role have a focus on the maintenance of school placements and prevention of exclusions? How will this intersect with its role as PRU and commissioner of AP? Will children have shorter placements at NRC before reintegration back into

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mainstream schools?

- NRC were a key partner in the SES given that the College provides support to children with additional needs, including excluded young people under a SLA with Hackney Education. The College does provide a range of services to support local schools and can help broker places for children. Hackney Education would like to work with NRC to develop this expertise across borough to ensure more young people can benefit. The offer of NRC would therefore be wider to include early help placements to prevent exclusion as well as bespoke projects to support other needs groups. Hackney Education also wanted to make sure that it works more closely with NRC in the Commissioning of AP and to develop better and more robust systems of quality assurance for AP. This would be a partnership approach, ensuring that the authority makes use of the skills and experience that NRC have in supporting young people. These changes will hopefully come into effect by the end of 2021/22 and reflected in the new SLA going forward.

6.14 Post 16 provision for young people with SEND has been highlighted as an area of under provision. How will the School Estates Strategy contribute to developing an improved range of options for young people post 16?

- The service intends to map current provision and that will help to identify where the gaps are in this provision. The SEND team was also working with secondary schools to understand how a more inclusive 6th Form option can be supported for more local students. Schools understand there is a need to extend provision and are actively engaging with the authority to see how options can be improved. The SEND team was also working with Stormont House to assess routes into employment and training options to support this (preparing for adulthood).

6.15 A common theme in feedback with parents with SEND is schools not delivering to the specifications set out in their child's EHCP. Will there be any additional safeguards put in place to ensure that schools deliver requirements set out in EHCPs?

- The school census provides detailed data on pupils at the local level including the areas of need. What can happen in school is that resources are diverted to children with an EHCP (statutory provision) at the expense of the children at the SEND support level. In terms of monitoring this, it is important to assess whether children are getting the right support at the right time and that schools have the right level of trained staff to deliver the support needed. The LA has a monitoring and oversight role in this process, and provides training for SENCO and makes sure that children with SEND are making good progress. It was acknowledged however that more can be done, in particular around developing a more graduated response and what schools should do before resorting to statutory support (via EHCP). There will be a period of embedding this practice across the borough to make sure this is consistent and equitable across schools.

6.16 How will the plan help to deliver more around the needs of the child with additional needs rather than what a school can deliver?

- When a child with an EHCP is looking for a placement, it is important that this is matched to the needs of the child set out in the EHCP. If specific support

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cannot be provided, then there is assurance that the school has resources to buy in additional support that might be needed. This is not a perfect system as there will always be children whose needs might not exactly match the 'template' for support which might be expected to be provided and additional support may be required in such cases.

- 6.17 What influence and or controls does the Council have in terms of the environmental sustainability (net-zero targets) of the educational estate? What are the council's ambitions for environmental sustainability for this estate?
- The SEND team was working closely with property services and wider council services to ensure that the education estate is aligned to efforts to reduce to net-zero by 2030. The strategy has been a good way to develop a corporate approach and solution to the education issues it faces, and in this context it was drawing on the expertise of environmental sustainability services.

7. Work Programme

- 7.1 The latest version of the work programme was presented to the Commission. A number of updates were highlighted which included:
- At the next meeting in December it will be Cllr Woodley's Q & A - where the Commission will focus on the following issues(s)
 - The Children & Families Service Annual Report - will now be taken in February 2022.
 - January 2022 will be a safeguarding focused meeting - with an update on unregistered settings, and the City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership will present their annual report - with a focus on adultification.
 - February will also see the Commission reviewing the work of children's services, both Education and Children's Social Care, in implementing Anti-Racist Action plans across their family of services.

- 7.2 The Commission noted and agreed the work programme.

8. Minutes

- 8.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th October were reviewed by members of the Commission.
- 8.2 There was one action arising from the minutes which was a request for further information for Tower Hamlets Youth Justice Service (Number of first time entrants to the YJS, Number of offences committed per reoffender). This data was provided by Officers and was sent around to members of the Commission. This data showed that whilst there was a higher number of first time entrants to the YJS in Tower Hamlets compared to Hackney, both boroughs had a similar reoffending rate.

- 8.3 Members agreed the minutes.

9. Any other business

- 9.1 Ernell Watson noted that she was present at the last meeting on 6th October 2021.
- 9.2 The Chair apologies for any inconvenience for the sound problem in the Council Chamber and agreed to follow this up with IT.

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9.3 The date of the next meeting is at 7pm on 6th December 2021.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm