

Education and Business Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Education and Business Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 20 July 2020 at 6.00 pm (Online/Virtual meeting)

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Babudu (Chair)
Councillor William Hougbo
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Renata Hamvas
Councillor Eleanor Kerlake
Councillor Eliza Mann
Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer
Martin Brecknell

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Jasmine Ali
Councillor Stephanie Cryan

OFFICER SUPPORT: Everton Roberts, Head of Overview and Scrutiny (Acting)

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT.

The chair gave notice of the following late reports:

Item 6 - Resilience for the Business Community – Council Activity

Item 9 - Work Programme 2020/21

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor William Hougbo declared that he was a school governor at Tower Bridge School.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL - COUNCIL ACTIVITY, INTERVIEW WITH CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND ADULT CARE

The commission heard from Councillor Jasmine Ali, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Adult Care and Nina Dohel, Director of Education regarding council activity in respect of children returning to school, post lockdown.

Councillor Ali provided the commission with a brief overview of the key issues and challenges in connection with the Covid-19 outbreak. The cabinet member reported/touched upon the following:

- Majority of schools in Southwark remained open for vulnerable children, children with a social worker with an EHDP Plan or with key worker parents.
- Increased up take of free school meals
- Lessons plans for pupils not in school were sent out from many of the schools
- For secondary school pupils, the Government issued the council with 1000 laptops which were delivered by social work staff to children in local authority care.
- Government guidance on young people attending school
- Government schools plan and actions she took
- Current plans for pupil return for both primary and secondary schools.
- Issues around catchup and government financial commitment (650m to schools and 350m to tutoring).
- Widening gap between disadvantaged pupils and their better off counterparts during lockdown.
- Attendance and welfare
- Response to Black Lives Matter (education strand)
- The refreshed council plan / and performance plan focused on how students will catch up during the next school term period and how to get them back to school, narrowing attainment gap, identifying vulnerable pupils.
- Year eleven and school leavers.

Questions and discussions were held around the following:

- Covid outbreaks at school and contingency plans
- Affordability of resits – concern over low income families being able to afford this.
- Estimated grades
- Non completion of syllabus work
- Home learning and local authority support to schools
- Mental health – support for children and staff
- Children with special educational needs returning to educational environment, particularly where they have been receiving one to one support during lockdown.
- Physical differences on returning to schools and school environment
- Reluctance of some parents sending their children back to school in September.

- Educating children on the spread of infection
- Ensuring children are fed properly via school meals to bolster immune system.
- Affordability of bus fares
- Black Lives Matter - Resources for schools to make appropriate curriculum changes and monitoring in respect of teaching BAME related subjects. Also consideration of a structure that could possibly report back to the commission.

RESOLVED:

That the cabinet member come back in the Autumn to provide an update on Children returning to schools.

6. RESILIENCE FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY - COUNCIL ACTIVITY, INTERVIEW WITH CABINET MEMBER FOR JOBS, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

The commission heard from Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Innovation and Danny Edwards, Strategy and Partnership Manager regarding council activity in respect of resilience for the business community.

The cabinet member outlined the issues contained in the report and touched upon the following issues:

- Impact of Covid on business, local and national economy
- The government's small business grants scheme
- Business hardship fund created to help small business not eligible for government scheme.
- Disproportionate affect on young people
- 120% rise in Universal Credit claimants across the borough since March 2020 (the majority under 29 years of age)
- Impact on school leavers and those who have newly graduated
- Impact of withdrawal of the furlough scheme
- Impact on apprenticeships in the construction industry (anticipated apprenticeships revised from 22,000 down to 7,000)
- Activity of the Council Business Help Desk
- Development of the economic renewal plan – due to be submitted to cabinet in the Autumn, following consultation with business forums and skills strategy partnership
- Revitalising high streets and town centres
- Impact of covid and Brexit merging together at the same time.
- Review of Southwark Works (the council's employment support service) to make sure resources will be available to support residents

Members asked questions of the cabinet member around the following:

- Quantifying the risk of impact of the withdrawal of the furlough scheme at local Southwark level
- Southwark approach to secure companies such as supermarkets, to ensure they are accountable to Black Lives Matters and apprenticeships.
- Disproportionate affect on women and young people
- Work being undertaken with expanding companies that are doing well, to help individuals move into different career paths (where become unemployed)

- Measures in place to reduce economic challenge if there is a second wave
- Impact on refugees with no recourse to public funds
- Inclusion/reference specifically to community businesses and social enterprises in the economic renewal plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7. EDUCATION: EXCLUSIONS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION - REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Peter Babudu reported on the presentation of the Exclusions and alternative provision report to cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the final version of the report submitted to cabinet (14 July meeting) be noted.

8. PROCUREMENT: ACCESSIBILITY AND SOCIAL VALUE - REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Peter Babudu reported on the presentation of the Accessibility and Social Value report to cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the final version of the report submitted to cabinet (14 July meeting) be noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The commission discussed potential additional items for the scrutiny commission going forward.

Suggestions:

- School attendance be added as a continuing theme (in light of parents fears in sending their children back to school).
- How the council is responding to Brexit Challenges
- Council's relationship with new big tech companies, such as Air BnB, Google (google maps)
- Invitation to someone from City Hall to come and talk to the Commission
- Youth Provision in the borough

RESOLVED:

That the work programme as at 20 July 2020 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm

CHAIR:

DATED: