

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY, 2024** 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, Nanouche Umeadi

Co-opted Members Margaret Harvey and Dr Rachel Wrangham

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillor Shiva Tiwari

Co-opted Members Sarah Jafri, Reverend Guy Pope, Samir Qurashi and Aya Elgool

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families  
Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Young People and 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 for absence were received from Councillor Shiva Tiwari and Co-opted Members Aya Elgool, Sarah Jafri 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**

There were no declarations.

### **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.”

#### **Camden Schools Music Festival – Grant Funding Bid Opportunity**

The Camden Schools Music Festival was held biennially at the Royal Albert Hall and was sponsored jointly by the Camden Music Service and the Camden Music Trust. The Councillor Headlam-Wells and Tim Aldridge were in discussions Clothworkers Company, who had a foundation and a large amount of money available for grants for children and young people and particularly disadvantaged children. As a result from the discussions, Camden had been invited to apply for grant funding. There would be a further update in due course.

#### **New Council Officer Appointment - Director of Relational Practice**

Tim Aldridge announced the appointment of Nana Bonsou as the new Director of Relational Practice in the Children and Learning Department starting in June 2024. The role would oversee a new centre of relational practice focusing on how Camden wanted to work with families and residents, the workforce development programme, the formation of an academy for learning, and the quality assurance and safeguarding partnership.

### **4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no deputations.

### **5. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 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. SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT & STANDARDS 2022-23 SUMMARY & UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION STRATEGY 'BUILDING BACK STRONGER'**

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

Stephen Hall (Chief Executive Officer of Camden Learning), accompanied by DAME Christine Gilbert (Chair of Camden Learning), outlined the report and presentation slides which covered the following areas: Outcomes by Key Stage (KS) [Early Years, Phonics, KS1, KS2 Attainment, KS2 Progress, KS4 Attainment, KS4 Progress, Post-16]; Key groups [Disadvantaged Pupils, Ethnic Groups Summary, Bangladeshi Pupils, Caribbean Pupils, Somali Pupils, Gender, Pupils with SEND, Mobile pupils]; Attendance and Exclusions; Children Missing Education; Elective Home Education; and the draft Building Back Stronger Annual Report. In addition, it was stated that data should be understood in the current context of falling rolls, which affected some schools more than others. Other pressures on schools included increasing additional needs, reduced budgets, and lasting impacts from the pandemic such as lost learning. In relation to Appendix 3 (year one of the implementation of Building Back Stronger), it was stated that Camden Learning was working with the Education Strategy Board to assess and track activities implemented to review if they were having the desired affect and impact.

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

- A Member noted the worrying trend of children missing in education, acknowledging that in many cases there were unique circumstances and complex needs, which had also been made more challenging by the pandemic.
- A Member noted the elective home education (EHE) trends were concerning when observing the rising trend, despite the currently low numbers. The Council and Camden Learning had to support families who were considering the EHE option and were dissatisfied with their school offer. In response, it was confirmed that whilst concerning, rising EHE was a national trend and impact of the pandemic. Camden had a broad and inclusive offer and waned parents to feel welcomed. Local authorities were restricted by legislation and did not have many legal powers to enforce attendance.
- A Member asked for data on the child population of refugees in Camden. In response officers confirmed it was difficult to extrapolate that data because there was not census data, nationally or in Camden. It was noted individual schools would have information of how many refugees pupils they had on roll. It was also noted that Camden did have the statistics for the number of unaccompanied

asylum-seeking children (UASC) who were looked after children in Camden. Officers confirmed they would investigate how to gather data on the number of child refugees in Camden.

**Action By – Executive Director for Children and Learning**

- A Member asked what was Camden’s response to the Mayor of London’s Inclusion Charter for schools. It was confirmed that the content of the charter resonated and synchronised with the ongoing work of Camden Learning and Building Back Stronger (Camden’s Education Strategy). Camden was already working with the Mayor of London’s Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) prevention work. There had been opportunities for Camden through the Charter, including the Right Respecting Schools Award and having an ambassador from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) allocated to work with Camden to form a steering group. Camden schools shared the good practice and Camden Learning undertook a research report being presented to schools. This work would be embedded into the curriculum which would empower young people, ensure young people understood they had a voice and rights, and ensure they understood a sense of equity and inclusion.
- In relation to the ethnic groups summaries, a Member stated that the data should be understood with caution because the African heritage group combined many different regions and countries. Officers agreed that caution should be made when comparing the DfE groupings. Camden wanted to focus more on the school level differences and ensuring the curriculum, teaching and learning was relevant and appropriate for the demographics of a school and was delivering for pupils. As a system they wanted to raise awareness of racism, anti-racism, bias, racial literacy, and effective pedagogy.
- A Co-opted Member asked if every child who was attending a Camden school was represented in the report, including disapplying children, children with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan), and children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) needs. It was confirmed that disapplying students were not included in the validated data. Special school pupils were included if they were not disapplying.
- A Member suggested that it would be helpful to see the school level data accompanying future iterations of the report.
- Officers acknowledged the gender attainment gap and explained that it was a national issue which had been notable for many years. To tackle this issue there had to be work carried out to ensure the curriculum pathways were appropriate.
- In relation to the KS4 Summary Next Steps, a Member asked how schools were comparing their results if not to the previous two years, and if that was using the pupil progress scores, they asked what processes challenged those comparisons, who advised them, and what was the training offer for those advisors. In response, it was confirmed that all advisors were either current or ex-headteachers or current or ex-Ofsted inspectors. The relationship between advisors and schools was critically important and there was ongoing quality assurance and training to support the process.

- A Member asked how Project Boards supported schools who were not succeeding to the expected level. In response, it was confirmed that Project Boards were 6-weekly focussed meetings with 3-4 key aims a school was struggling with - usually related to leadership, curriculum management, or standards. At the meetings it was discussed what the schools were doing, how other schools could potentially help, how Camden Learning could help, and then the next review would take place 6 weeks later with the advisors and Camden Learning.
- In relation to the Post-16 Summary Next Steps, a Member asked how the actions listed would impact low results. In response, it was confirmed there were a number of steps in the post-16 action plan and Building Back Stronger. Currently there was low data and measuring of outcomes for this age group; however, the action plan initiatives would address this and going forward the impact measures would improve using hard measurable outcomes, one example was the T-Levels. It was stated that post-16 institutions across the borough were working together in a way they had not done before, despite the competition.
- A Member noted there were no impact measures of the 'Every Child Reading by 7' initiative, and there was no data on children who were readers before and after, which meant it was not possible to confirm the impact the initiative had on SEND children. The Member acknowledged that officers said Camden Learning was working on measuring impacts following implementation work. In response, it was confirmed that the large majority of children were exceeding the standard, but 28% of children were not and a proportion of those would be SEND. As part of the activities being undertaken to support children there was a focus on what provision was available for individual pupils. Some of the primary schools the number of children not reaching the expected standard was 3-5 children at the age of 7, and it was a case of reviewing what could be put in place for the individual children to gain those basic skills and build a love of reading and a sense of literature. There were also author visits and activities at the British Library build excitement for the children about reading and build aspiration once confidence was nurtured. Officers stated there was more work to be done with the initiative in what individual schools and children needed.  
A Member stated that having a focus on training would not be sufficient that to improve the SEND interventions, in the environment of decreased budgets, significant changes in criteria and assessments, and teachers already struggling to deliver for a widening range of needs with the same resources. In response, it was confirmed that SEND needs had increased, with class sizes staying the same size. It was confirmed there had not been changes to assessments apart from those during the pandemic. The training for teachers was to focus on managing high needs children. A part of the broader conversation was looking at what curriculum was offered to those pupils and how teaching assistants were utilised and deployed to the highest need.
- In response to a Member, officers acknowledged that it would be interesting to find the statistics of how the level of EHE varied between across geographic areas of the borough.
- A Member noted the stronger outcomes of the lower key stages which declined through each transition, and ask what transitional work took place between KS4-5

to support that significant independence jump for a young person, because there appeared to be more of a focus for young stages. In response, in this cohort impacted from the pandemic, there were a number of students were channelled on A-Level pathways at a higher level they would have before, which resulted in worse grades on average. The future life plans work and focus on all transitional phases were important. Camden Learning had worked with and produced guidance for primary and secondary transitions, and there was more work taking place focusing on mid-year admission transitions.

- In response to a Member, officers confirmed there was no indication T-Levels would be scrapped; T-Levels were included in plans for the new Advanced British standard qualification and were resourced with investment and commitment.
- A Member asked if the university offers data was available at this time of year. They also asked for information about sixth form attendance and if Camden Learning was doing anything in that area. In response, it was stated that at this time of year there was interim data available, not hard data. However, it was noted there was an opportunity to look at measurables until that data was validated. There was attendance score data which helped informed quick responses, and persistent absence was improving in the age group. There was new guidance on school avoidance and Camden Learning was working with schools to support vulnerable children.
- A Co-opted Member asked how and who would be measuring outcomes of the Building Back Stronger ambitions. They stated that the analysis needed to be wider than the officer and teacher voice and should include parents and a wider range of voices. In response, it was confirmed that one of the priorities and initiatives in the Building Back Stronger to 2030, different to the Camden Learning Review, was more work on impact. The accountability framework included 15 developer schools which involved small groups of parents to discuss what information they wanted to know about their child's school. There were conversations with all Camden schools at the Camden Learning Conference 2024 about expanding the offer. A key part of Building Back Stronger was to hear the voices of parents, teachers and pupils and to hear perspectives that could not be truly captured by officers, such as simpler points of interest, for example how a school would be driving more opportunities in music or sport.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee note the content of the report and actions outlined within it in the context of the ambition and aims of the Camden Education Strategy.

## **8. SCHOOL FUTURE OPTIONS WORK**

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

Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education and Inclusion, summarised the report which outlined Camden's school future options work and the range of support available for Camden Schools to explore partnership and collaborative arrangements.

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

- It was confirmed that the threat of academisation had reduced, and the scope of the school future options work had evolved into structural education partnerships across Camden and facilitating engagement between schools. Schools were targeted through a number of metrics, including falling rolls, finances, staff changes. There was learning for Camden from the already federated schools.
- In response to a Co-opted Member noting there was not a strong focus on SEND in the report, it was confirmed that SEND provision was a standing item on the School Place Planning Group, which also linked to the High Needs Subgroup. The Council was working with school leaders to see what provisions were specifically needed for Camden. Work was focussing on how to measure what success looked like for children with additional needs and what a nuanced model would look like. The Council would be commissioning a review of the High Needs Block with Peter Grey (independent expert) to explore the models and outcomes of high needs provision, and how to strengthen the mainstream school offer for children with EHCPs.
- Following the deputation from Netley School at a previous Committee meeting which related to their current challenges in increasing SEND demand and falling rolls, it was confirmed that conversations were taking place directly between the Council and the school. It was confirmed that at this time of year the Council was speaking to schools about the needs and profile of children they were anticipating for September admission and how the school would meet those needs. Currently there was wider and strategic work taking place looking into the parity of the offer across the borough.
- It was confirmed the diocese schools had a good relationship with Camden Learning, however the future options of their schools and if they were to academise was a diocese decision.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee note the content of the School Future Options Report and range of support available for Camden Schools to explore partnership and collaborative arrangements.

## **9. UPDATE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE**

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

The Cabinet Member updated the Committee on the following areas relating to their portfolio: Youth Mission, Youth Justice Plan, and the Holiday Activity Fund.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for their update paper.

The Committee noted the update.

## **10. CAMDEN ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT 2023 - ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director for Health and Wellbeing.

Manuj Sharma, Public Health Consultant, summarised the Annual Public Health Report (APHR) and presentation slides which covered the following areas: key findings, young people's voices, key statistics, co-production, graphic novel, Step into Our Shoes event launch, Event evaluation, Programme evaluation by *Camden Youth: Tell Them*, Next steps for APHR 2023, and Next steps for *Camden Youth: Tell Them*.

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

- A Member noted that the report stated the prevalence of asthma in white British children was higher than ethnic minority groups. The Member also noted that Camden had a lower prevalence of asthma than average comparisons pan-London and national. The Member asked if these trends were due to underreporting. In response, it was stated that in Camden there was a lot of work taking place in the asthma space and there were a few factors to consider such as greater awareness and early years engagement, however there may be an element of children not getting diagnosed. The Member noted that a number of political decisions that were good for asthmatic people and prevention were unpopular, such as ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zones), LTNs (Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) and parking fees.
- A Member noted that poor mental health presented differently in different demographics, and a resulting trend of this saw a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities being admitted into psyche wards due to them experiencing barriers in seeking help early enough. Officers stated that initiatives to tackle outreach issues in the mental health space were co-production and ensuring messaging was amplified in the right spaces.
- A co-opted Member stated that the report did not mention self-harm or suicide. In response, officers acknowledged that there were parts of the wide-ranging report that could have had more focus and detail. Officers confirmed there was a separate stream of work in the suicide prevention space which sat with the Health and Wellbeing Team. The Team could bring a report on adolescent suicide prevention, or any other specific area in greater detail, at request of the Committee.
- A Co-opted Member stated that it was unclear who would be following up and who was accountable for the vast number of recommendations within the APHR. In response, it was confirmed that the work intended to produce



recommendations for the whole system, because services responsible for the health and wellbeing of adolescents was cross-departmental and multiagency. It was confirmed that the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goal framework had not been used because there were a host of different actions that could be adopted and there should be flexibility in the system to address them.

- It was confirmed by officers that the paper was aimed at a wider audience. The recommendations had been worked and were owned by departments across the Council and the report was an opportunity to open up the agenda for more collaborative work going forward. In response to a request from Committee Members, officers confirmed they would prepare a document which demonstrated the mapping of ownership of the actions in the APHR.

**Action By – Director of Public Health**

- In response to a Co-opted Member's query about how Camden was responding to young people feeling unsafe in Camden, it was confirmed that this work stream was discussed at the Youth Safety Steering Group and the Council also helped schools engage in the youth safety space. The Council ensured work was trauma informed and focussed on rehabilitation and education.
- In response to a Co-opted Member request, officers confirmed they would provide more detailed data on adolescent self-harm, vaping, and smoking for the Committee.

**Action By – Director of Public Health**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee

- a) consider and note the content of the Annual Public Health Report and proposed dissemination plan; and
- b) consider and support the wider recommendations of the Annual Public Health Report 2023

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

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The final meeting date of the 2023/24 municipal year would be on 13 March 2024.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**