

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET

23 APRIL 2009

REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 12 APRIL 2009

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

1. In accordance with the Local Government Act (Access to Information) Act 1985, the Committee received a report of the Corporate Director of Children's Services on the statutory Children and Young People's Plan 2009-11, which was admitted late to the agenda to allow the Committee to comment on the Plan prior to its consideration by Cabinet and Council. The report had not been available at the time the agenda was printed and circulated in order to ensure that an up to date Plan was presented to the Committee.
2. The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holders for Children's Services and Schools and Children's Development to the meeting together with the Corporate Director of Children's Services.
3. The report set out the draft Children and Young People's Plan, which was a requirement of the Children Act 2004. The Plan represented an agreed list of priorities for children and young people, and provided a vision for what the Council and its Partners wanted to achieve by 2011.
4. The Corporate Director of Children's Services described the contents of the Plan, and circulated a timeline and a poster which set out the vision for children and young people in Harrow. Members were informed that the Plan would be submitted to Cabinet on 23 April 2009 and thereafter to Council for approval. The Plan would be launched in May 2009.
5. It was noted that the Plan would be published electronically on both the Council and the Harrow Youth websites. Printed copies of the poster and the young people's version of the Plan would be distributed throughout Harrow.
6. In welcoming the Plan, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a co-opted member serving on the Committee asked questions about the consultations that had taken place, the age range of children and young people to whom the Plan applied, the types of assessments that would be carried out and by whom, and how some of the more challenging actions, for example, under the 'Be Healthy' agenda would be addressed in the light of staff shortages, particularly in the midwifery service.
7. In response, the Corporate Director stated that the Plan had been agreed with the Council's Partners and various stakeholders had been consulted. Children and young people within the age range of 6-23 had also been consulted. The Council would 'own' the Plan and ensure that it was delivered on. The delivery of actions set out in the Plan would have to be debated by a Children's Trust, a body that was in the process of being set up to enable and ensure joint working amongst Partners for the benefit of children and families. The government would assess the Council and its Partner, including schools, on the delivery of the Plan.

8. A Member stated that he was encouraged by the support available to children in Harrow, which he considered to be robust. It was important that children's rights were defended and that the best possible protection was available for children in the 21st Century to ensure healthy adulthood. Another Member suggested that further changes to the Plan should only be made provided they were in the interest of children and young people. A co-opted member stated that the Plan did not address the needs of the most able pupils and that the support provided to those children ought to be reflected in the Plan under the 'Enjoy and Achieve' priority.
9. In response to these concerns, the Portfolio Holders and the Corporate Director assured the Committee that:
 - the Council's Achievement and Inclusion Team addressed and supported the needs of gifted children, including those pupils with special needs. The Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development undertook to provide details of the programme that underpinned this area. She acknowledged the observation made by the co-opted member in relation to the inclusion of support provided to gifted children in the Plan;
 - changes to the Plan would be made on the basis that they were in the interest of children and young people.
10. The Corporate Director highlighted the role of the Council and its Partners in ensuring collective responsibility and accountability towards children and young people from conception up to the age of 25 years.

RESOLVED: That (1) the report be noted;

(2) the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out above, be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Report considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 April 2009.

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