

London Councils

Minutes of the London Councils Leaders' Committee held on 19 March 2019
Cllr Peter John OBE chaired the meeting

Present:

BARKING AND DAGENHAM	Cllr Darren Rodwell
BARNET	Cllr Richard Cornelius
BRENT	Cllr Muhammed Butt
CAMDEN	Cllr Georgia Gould
CITY OF LONDON	Catherine McGuinness
CROYDON	Cllr Tony Newman
EALING	Cllr Julian Bell
ENFIELD	Cllr Nesil Caliskan
GREENWICH	Cllr David Gardner
HACKNEY	Mayor Philip Glanville
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM	Cllr Ben Coleman
HARINGEY	Cllr Joseph Ejiofor
HARROW	Cllr Graham Henson
HILLINGDON	Cllr Ray Puddifoot MBE
HOUNSLOW	Cllr Steve Curran
ISLINGTON	Cllr Richard Watts
KENSINGTON & CHELSEA	Cllr Elizabeth Campbell
KINGSTON	Cllr Liz Green
LAMBETH	Cllr Jack Hopkins
LEWISHAM	Mayor Damien Egan
MERTON	Cllr Stephen Alambritis
NEWHAM	Mayor Rokshana Fiaz OBE
REDBRIDGE	Cllr Kam Rai
RICHMOND UPON THAMES	Cllr Gareth Roberts
SOUTHWARK	Cllr Peter John OBE
SUTTON	Cllr Jayne McCoy
TOWER HAMLETS	Mayor John Biggs
WALTHAM FOREST	Cllr Claire Coghill
WANDSWORTH	Cllr Ravi Govindia CBE

Apologies:

BEXLEY	Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE
BROMLEY	Cllr Colin Smith
GREENWICH	Cllr Danny Thorpe
HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM	Cllr Stephen Cowan
HAVERING	Cllr Damian White
REDBRIDGE	Cllr Jaz Athwal
SUTTON	Cllr Ruth Dombey
WESTMINSTER	Cllr Nickie Aiken

Officers of London Councils, Lord Alf Dubs, Eleanor Harrison OBE, CEO of Safe Passage, Melissa Caslake, Executive DCS Westminster Council/RB Kensington & Chelsea, and Ian O'Donnell were in attendance.

Before the meeting started, the Chair welcomed Cllr Jack Hopkins, the new Leader of the London Borough of Lambeth.

1. Apologies for absence and announcement of deputies

The apologies and deputies listed above were noted.

2. Declarations of interest

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the Leaders' Committee meeting 5 February 2019

The minutes of the Leaders' Committee meeting on 5 February 2019 were agreed.

4. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Chair welcomed Lord Alf Dubs, Eleanor Harrison OBE, Interim CEO of Safe Passage and Melissa Caslake, Bi-Borough Executive Director of Children's Services, Westminster City Council/RB Kensington & Chelsea, and asked Cllr Muhammed Butt to introduce the item. Cllr Butt informed the Committee that:

- He had recently met with Lord Dubs to look at ways of supporting asylum-seeking children recognising the need for councils to work together
- There was a need to re-energise the National Transfer Scheme to reach the commitment of 10,000 refugees by 2020
- It was important to look at ways in which councils can support the work of Lord Dubs, acknowledging the pressures they face in areas such as funding and housing
- There had been a positive meeting with the Minister, the Rt Hon Caroline Noakes MP, where there had been recognition of the issues and which had emphasised the need for boroughs to work together

Lord Alf Dubs then addressed the Committee:

- He acknowledged the work done by London boroughs to date
- Help was still required because of the position of children within camps

- There were two legal paths to allow refugee children to join their families; the section 67 (Dubs) amendment to the 2016 Immigration Act and the Dublin III Regulation
- He was keen to seek a commitment for accommodating 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees over 10 years
- Lord Dubs was also working in other parts of the country, for example Scotland, Northern Ireland and Jersey
- He recognised that local authorities' financial positions were difficult, and their concerns regarding mental health issues. He was keen to develop a best practice model in respect of mental health issues and invited Members to submit information that could help its development

Eleanor Harrison OBE, Interim CEO of Safe Passage, added:

- Safe Passage exists to open safe legal routes to sanctuary, not just to the UK
- A number of boroughs had already made contact with Safe Passage but Ms Harrison was keen to work with more
- Safe Passage was concentrating on moving around 400 children still in Calais, Greece and Italy
- Ms Harrison was keen to work with boroughs to lobby Government for an announcement on future resettlement schemes
- Safe Passage was also considering judicial review in relation to support for people with mental health issues
- Interest was being expressed from foster parents in relation to asylum seeking children and Safe Passage would be talking to boroughs about this
- While the constraints of local authorities were noted, it was important for boroughs to keep delivering in terms of numbers of children assisted
- Ms Harrison advocated sending a collective letter to Ministers lobbying for a steer in relation to the issue of future resettlement schemes

In response to an invitation from the Chair, a number of comments were made by members:

- Several Members had visited camps, had signed up to the *Our Turn* campaign and had committed to receiving asylum seeking children; it was important for all boroughs to participate

- Some children received were at the point where they were or would soon be of care leaver age, which placed additional financial pressures on local authorities, and funding was needed for care leaver support packages
- Issues of mental health support had been recognised and some boroughs had been providing support services
- Numbers of good quality foster parents should be grown to address the specific needs of asylum-seeking children
- There was a recognition that the requirements to accommodate children placed considerable strain on resources, although boroughs were willing to assist and continued to apply pressure to Government on this issue

The Chair invited Melissa Caslake from Westminster City Council/RB Kensington & Chelsea to respond to the comments. She informed Members that:

- Some work was being undertaken to help understand the impact on care leavers budgets, in that each asylum-seeking child costs approximately £30,000 a year over and above care leaver income
- She recognised the concerns about the lack of foster carers and the ability of boroughs to provide the services that asylum-seeking children need
- The ability to engage the whole country in the issue of supporting asylum-seeking children, and the impact on the National Transfer Scheme, has not been fully explored, in that one in three children are in London and most boroughs are over their 0.07% threshold
- The issue of full participation in the London rota, set up to support the pressure on Croydon by dispersing children across the Capital, needed to be addressed at a political level

In summary, the Chair noted:

- The willingness to help children was clear, although Members had shared real concerns about adequate funding and the need for fair and proportionate distribution of children throughout the rest of the country
- The need to find ways of working effectively with Lord Dubs and Safe Passage to lobby Government
- Support for a lobbying letter to Ministers jointly authored by London Boroughs, Safe Passage and Lord Dubs on the issue of future resettlement funding

Lord Dubs concluded that:

- The impact of the National Transfer Scheme was acutely felt in Kent as well as Croydon
- He would continue to push for the issues of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be embraced nationally
- The issues of care leavers and mental health considerations were noted and would be taken on board in his work, particularly the subtle requirements of mental health support in this area

Leaders' Committee endorsed the comments in the report and the continuing work of Lord Dubs and Safe Passage.

5. Children's Services Finance Pressures

In the absence of Cllr Nickie Aiken, the Chair introduced the report, noting:

- London is experiencing unprecedented financial pressure in children's services, particularly in children's social care and high needs
- a collective £112 m overspend on children's social care budgets in 2017/18 and a shortfall of £78 m in high needs budgets
- variation in spend across London, ranging from 4 per cent underspend to 35 per cent overspend
- there are examples of good practice in London that could be replicated elsewhere
- the number of pupils with Educational and Care Plans has increased by 16% since 2013/14
- ISOS has recently been commissioned to carry out a survey on behalf of London Councils and it's hoped that boroughs will engage with the policy recommendations arising from the results

Cllr Liz Green felt that focus should be on SEND services, as there was a clear picture of overspends in this area. Cllr Ray Puddifoot felt it important not to forget expenditure on Children's services in general.

Cllr Jayne McCoy wanted the report to explore the pressures of children being placed in more expensive independent placements and the impact on overall costs.

Cllr Ravi Govindia raised the issue of needing to work collectively in line with the Children's Social Work MoU and also felt that more publicity should be developed focusing on attracting people into social work.

Cllr Nesil Caliskan emphasised that in Enfield, a contributor to high SEND expenditure was transport costs. She wanted to ensure that, as well as focusing on overspends, the report looked at adequate in-borough provision.

Mayor Phillip Glanville felt that the report overly emphasised the issue as being one for boroughs to solve and take action on. There should be a clearer recognition of the problems caused by baseline assumptions about funding being incorrect, and the need to highlight that and lobby on it.

Subject to the inclusion of the points above, Members agreed to note the findings of London Councils' survey into Children's Services funding pressures and receive a further report on policy recommendations.

6. NHS Long Term Plan

Cllr Ray Puddifoot introduced the report, noting the key ambitions of the plan, and he:

- drew Members' attention to the evolving nature of NHS structures at sub regional, borough and sub-borough levels
- felt that the five London Councils nominees to the London Health Board members, each representing one of the STP footprints, had the potential to act as a conduit for localities
- updated Leaders on progress of the PrEP trial and noted the achievements boroughs had made on HIV protection rates
- mentioned new trials where drugs could be used to prevent the onset of HIV infection, although no money has specifically been allocated, and felt that some work could be done on this.

Members made the following responses:

- There were risks for boroughs in terms of the new NHS model; the rationalization of management structures and the need for the NHS to achieve savings indicated that

decision making may happen more centrally. It was preferable to see NHS leaders facilitating local decisions with boroughs

- A united funding approach to PrEP needed to be taken based on the success of the trials
- The coterminous nature of CCGs in the past has been successful
- The comments in the Long Term Plan about the potential changes in public health commissioning responsibility were unhelpful and should be revisited
- Any response to the proposals should be in a strong enough form that allows it to be visible to the NHS
- Members should consider attendance at CCG Boards, as a good platform for influence
- Responses should emphasise the importance of local authority involvement in the London Estates strategy

The Chair noted the general support from members on lobbying for funding for PrEP trials, and it was agreed that Cllr Puddifoot would write to the Secretary of State on this matter. It was also agreed that a response to Long Term NHS Plan should be made based on the discussion at this Committee.

7. Exiting the EU – Update on Local Engagement

The Chief Executive outlined the ongoing preparatory arrangements for exit from the EU via three areas: regional information sharing hub; the resilience contingency arrangements via the London Resilience Forum; and Ministerial engagement.

The Chair confirmed that he along with Cllr Coghill continued to attend the MHLG Exit Delivery Board.

Leaders' Committee noted the report.

8. Feedback from Joint Boards – Homes for Londoners Board (HfL)

Cllr Darren Rodwell fed back on the key outcomes of the most recent meeting of the HfL Board, namely:

- Spending review

- The potential impact of Brexit on housing supply

9. London Councils Priorities to 2022 and Business Plan 2019/20

The Chair confirmed that the priorities, comprising 46 different pledges, had been the result of discussions dating back to June 2018.

Members agreed London Councils' priorities to 2022, subject to periodic review, and the outline Business Plan for 2019/20.

Members agreed on the proposition to feature one group of pledges at each Leaders' Committee from June 2019.

10. Urgency report

Members noted the decision taken under the urgency procedure regarding the appointment of a new Deputy Chair for Leaders' Committee and a new Member of the Executive.

11. Minutes and summaries

Leader's Committee agreed to note the minutes and summaries of:

- TEC – 6 December 2018
- Grants Executive – 7 February 2019
- CAB – 13 February 2019
- Executive – 26 February 2019

The meeting agreed to exclude the press and public.

The meeting ended at 13:05.

Item		Action	Progress
4.	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to be sent to Ministers authored by London boroughs, Safe Passage and Lord 	PaPA Health and Adult Social Care	In hand

	Dubs regarding future resettlement funding		
5.	Children's Services Finance Pressures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members to receive further report on the policy recommendations for Children's Services 	PAPA Children's Services	To go to Executive in June
6.	NHS Long Term Plan Cllr Puddifoot to write to the Secretary of State regarding funding for the PrEP trials.	PaPA Health and Adult Social Care	In hand