

Minutes of the Meeting of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group held on 12 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present:	Councillors Tony Fish, Srikanth Panjala and Elizabeth Rigby (Chair)
Apologies:	Co-Optee Georgina Bonsu and Roy Jones, and Sharon Stoltz
In attendance:	Claire Dixon- Overview and Scrutiny Officer Sareena Gill- Senior Public Health Programme Manager Gemma Louth- Business Support Officer- Public Health Team Carly Parker- Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones, Georgina Bonsu, and Sharon Stoltz.

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their time.

3. Nomination of Vice-Chair

Councillor Tony Fish was nominated for Vice-Chair position. This was seconded by Councillor Panjala.

It was noted that Councillor Jones will be moving across to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. Review of Scoping Document

There was no discussion on the Review of Scoping Document. Members proceeded to discuss potential outcomes and stakeholder meetings.

The Business Support Officer advised that there are three meetings in place, and one is in progress for the key stakeholders. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager advised she will be giving an overview during these sessions with a presentation that will take 45 minutes. The hyperlink before the meeting will be provided prior to the meeting on the 18 September 2024.

Members were advised that NHS colleagues may not be able to attend the meetings and may send comments instead or will consider a hybrid option to attend.

Members will have the opportunity to hear the youth cabinets thoughts on obesity.

Members questioned whether they would get the opportunity to speak to younger children. It was confirmed this was an option that would primarily be done via hubs and GP forums.

The Business Support Officer added that youth charities that empower young people to improve how children eat will also be attending a session. They are also aiming to invite maternity, neonatal and health visiting teams to participate.

Members discussed the usefulness of being able to talk to schools. Stating that children are usually having what's convenient and quick due to a limited amount of time to eat. Food like pizza, chips are convenient and cheaper.

The Senior Public Health Programme Manager added that different people are affected in various ways. Genetics can be a factor along with wealth and accessibility to healthy foods. The psychology of eating is another factor to consider, for example comfort eating.

Members questioned how we influence the food industry and hold them accountable. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager agreed and stated that a policy is needed from government, however we can run schemes locally.

Members stated that Tilbury is a socially deprived area, and you can see whole families are overweight, therefore the children develop health issues later in life. This is mostly due to eating highly calorific foods that tend to be cheaper and more accessible. Members were advised that the 'HENRY' programme works with small children to shape those behaviours.

Members questioned whether we could contact secondary schools to get them to focus on providing children with more time to eat. With the intentions that this would reduce the amount of time they eat what is easily accessible, quick, and cheap. Members were informed that they were meeting with colleagues from planning who will be attending sessions to discuss restrictions. In terms of schools, they can assess the difference between the times children have to eat in each school, however they are only allowed to provide suggestions. Currently there is more pressure on schools to help children to catch-up with curriculum, following COVID.

The Overview and Scrutiny officer added that most of the activities related to the task and finish group will take during the day, and some people may not be able to attend.

5. Final Report to the People O&S Committee in January/ March 2025

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised members that the final report will be written by her and the Director of Public Health. The wider final report will then go to People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report is due to be finalised in November 2024 and go to the committee in January 2025. They will check with the chair if he is of with this being pushed to March 2025.

6. Date of next Task and Finish Group Meeting

The next meeting was confirmed to take place the week commencing 23rd of September 2024. An invitation will be sent out and it will take place on teams.

The meeting ended at 6.57pm.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting finished at 6.57pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group held on 25 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair) and Tony Fish (Vice-Chair)

Georgina Bonsu, Thurrock Coalition

Apologies: Councillors Srikanth Panjala, Gemma Louth

In attendance: Sharon Stoltz- Director of Public Health
Sareena Gill -Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Claire Dixon- Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Carly Parker- Senior Democratic Services Officer

8. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received for Gemma Louth and Councillor Panjala.

9. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting advising the stakeholder meeting that took place last week was very informative. Members agreed with this sentiment and advised it would be useful to discuss what direction the task and finish group can focus on.

10. Reflections and potential recommendations from the 'Health in all Policies' session on 18 September

Members discussed the 'Food Grow' programme advising they had received funding from the private sector and wondered if this could be explored for other initiatives.

The Director of Public Health stated that some local authorities have developed a food strategy and network. Across Thurrock there are pockets of good working practices, however some are not coordinated well. Things that the group may want to consider is helping people to grow their food and prepare it. There is scope to learn in a coordinated way like a food network to capture good practice, build on it and identify gaps.

The Senior Public Health Programme Manager reminded members that they don't have to propose a solution for everything. They can put forward recommendations and include it in the strategy. Examples of other local authority strategies can be provided.

The Chair questioned whether Thurrock could build better relationships with supermarkets.

The Interim Director of Public Health advised that local authorities that have developed a food strategy have included this in their approach. Including increasing access to affordable healthy food.

The Senior Public Health Programme Manager added that supermarkets were previously providing healthy food vouchers and added that access to free drinking water is also important. Along with providing young children with reusable bottles.

Members added that they should consider small businesses as well. Small business often throw away food, this can be passed on to local families. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager added that the Communities Team try to distribute food that will be thrown out to the public, however it needs better coordination. Strong infrastructure will support this.

The Chair added that lighting for walking home in the evenings in the colder months needs to be addressed also. If the street lighting is better more people will be encouraged to walk home where possible.

Members discussed encouraging young people to engage in more activity. Advising that costs of activities are a barrier. The Director of Public Health added that physical activity is being reviewed as part of the strategy. They are working with Active Essex and Impulse Leisure, who have been invited to the next activity session on 17 October 2024. They can also provide a briefing on this. In addition to this they are establishing links with a football scheme. The Chair added that it was nice to see outdoor gyms in parks, making it easier to access. In addition to this there are community park runs available in Orsett, however it is adult only and requires coordination. There are plans for a junior park run.

11. Preparations for next activity session

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded members that the next activity session is on 17 October 2024. Advising that questions related to this must be submitted by 3 October. These two weeks will provide enough time to collate key lines of enquiry.

12. Proposed joint meeting with School Parking Task & Finish Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised that the Parking Task and Finish Group are keen to join us. Advising members to discuss what they want to get out of it, and what recommendations they want to make. Whilst reviewing the key activities and being mindful of the deadlines.

13. Date of next Task and Finish Group meeting

The 23 October was agreed for the next meeting.

14. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting finished at

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group and Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group held on 10 October at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Fraser Massey (Co-Chair), Elizabeth Rigby (Co-Chair), Tony Fish, Aaron Green, Sue Shinnick, Cathy Sisterson
Georgina Bonsu, Thurrock Coalition

Apologies: Councillor Paul Arnold

In attendance: Helen Horrocks – Head of Public Health
Sareena Gill -Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Navtej Tung - Strategic Transport Manager
Claire Dixon- Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Carly Parker- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Emma Trencher – Senior Democratic Services Officer

15. Welcome

Councillors Massey and Rigby as Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

16. Overview of each Task and Finish Groups aims and objectives

Councillor Massey gave an overview of the work to date of the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group. He advised that members had carried out individual visits to schools, looking at not only bad parking but also looked at schools with good parking history and statistics. He advised that a well-publicised survey had been sent out and the group were awaiting feedback. The members were advised that a meeting had taken place with the Thurrock Road Safety Team who provided an overview of School Travel Plans and parking at schools in the borough. It was advised that a meeting was being arranged with the Youth Cabinet to seek their views. It was acknowledged that within the 10 week timeframe the Group were not going to be able to solve all the parking problems at schools and the hope was to draft a policy that would allow improvement to school parking and reduce the dangerous parking.

Councillor Rigby gave an overview of the work to date of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group. It was advised the Group were looking at a timeline from pre-conception – onwards to tackle the underlying causes and what interventions could be recommended to try to reduce the incidents of Childhood Obesity. It was advised meetings had taken place with the Public Health Team, maternity services and health visitors. Further meetings have been arranged with Primary Care, schools, youth groups and at a Family Hub. Realistic recommendations would then be made but it was acknowledged not everything would be feasible.

It was further advised, one of the main objectives was to achieve linking up with all the different agencies and Council departments as it was acknowledged there were many different initiatives, but it needed to be joined up.

The link between the two Task and Finish Groups was acknowledged, if children walked to school this would alleviate parking concerns and would also have health benefits for children by increasing physical activity.

It was questioned what good looked like in terms of school parking. Councillor Massey advised smaller schools produce less cars and this made a big difference. He had visited Horndon-on-the-Hill Primary and felt that given the village setting lots of people did walk to school. Councillor Massey's view was larger schools on main roads, who generally had one way in and one way out, had the biggest parking problems.

17. Synergies between the School Parking and Childhood Obesity Task & Finish Groups

Councillor Massey advised in his ward, East Tilbury Primary School had the use of a car park which was a short walk from the school, and this had improved parking outside the school, he acknowledged however, this took investment to implement. Councillor Fish said this idea would link the two Task and Finish Groups as children would have to walk from the car park to school and would therefore be getting some physical exercise.

It was advised the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group had been looking at contacting local supermarkets, gyms, private car parks etc to ascertain if they could be used for school parking and this would give parents somewhere to park and would encourage children to walk together.

It was advised Brentwood and Braintree had set up walking to school policies however, it was acknowledged a lot of work had to be done to improve routes and pavements and this would have cost implications.

The Road Safety Manager advised to enable and reduce the need for parking outside of schools, it is more than just what we do immediately outside the school, it is the need to provide enhanced provisions on the way into school. It was advised, there are lots of barriers as to why parents do not walk and part of that is improving infrastructure around schools. He further advised there are opportunities to seek funding for those enhancements. It was felt if enhancements were made to the infrastructure this would not only benefit schools but the wider community and this would help change the culture of parents driving to school.

It was acknowledged to benefit both Groups, it was not to provide drop off zones or onsite car parks at the schools for parents to use as this would not encourage walking to school and walking to school should be the focus. It was thought residents are now open to the possibility of School Streets and the time had come to think in those terms.

18. Opportunities for collaboration

The Head of Public Health gave a presentation highlighting the health challenges, health and equality, lifestyle and increasing trends in obesity. It was acknowledged this was highly complex with several factors attributing to the increased trend, including:

- Where we live;
- Lifestyle;
- Employment and income;
- Built and natural environments.

Members noted the opportunities to collaborate included:

- Increasing daily physical activity;
- Reducing traffic and congestion;
- Improve air quality.

Examples of how to achieve this included:

- School streets;
- Road safety training;
- Active travel infrastructure;
- Park and stride;
- Modeshift Stars;
- Walking Buses;
- Bikeability.

It was acknowledged that each initiative on its own would not have a significant impact, however, if a number of the initiatives were embedded it could have a significant impact in changing current trends.

Action Point – Scrutiny Officer/Democratic Services to update Head of Public Health on results of Parking at Schools survey.

The Chair of Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group clarified that the policy they were working on would not be a “one size fits all”. They were looking at a toolbox of initiatives that could be presented to schools to improve the parking as due to infrastructure and engagement different approaches would work at different schools.

It was acknowledged that the survey should go to children as well as parents and residents as quite often they have some good ideas.

It was acknowledged, even when there are initiatives in place, for example using public car parks and walking a short distance to school, parents still do not engage.

The Chair of the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group advised that it had been agreed enforcement was not the sole solution and the policy would not be designed to penalise parents, but to come up with some solutions to benefit all.

It was questioned how could walking to school be made more attractive to children and parents.

It was advised trials were being rolled out in South Ockendon to “gamify” walking to school with challenges for children to engage in. It was further advised Sport England were being approached for securing funding to fully implement throughout the Borough.

Action Point Public Health to share information on the Scheme once approvals and funding has been granted. However, it was agreed some generic information could be shared in the interim regarding Beat the Streets.

19. AOB

It was agreed the two Groups would meet again after the Parking at Schools Policy had been drafted to discuss and refine it before it goes to Full Council.

It was agreed, the results of the parking at schools consultation/survey would be shared with both Task and Finish Groups and relevant officers.

The meeting closed at 18.52

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group held on 23 October 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair) and Tony Fish

Apologies: Councillors Srikanth Panjala

In attendance: Sareena Gill, Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Gemma Louth, Business Support Officer
Sharon Stoltz, Interim Director Public Health
Claire Dixon, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Carly Parker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

20. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

21. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

22. Reflections and review of potential recommendations from recent activity sessions (All)

Members discussed the meeting with Youth Cabinet representatives advising they gave some key insights into their school experiences. Making it clear the schools are a key stakeholder that can help to tackle these issues.

The Chair states that some of the common themes that have come out of the sessions include lack of awareness around healthy food. Technology is also a huge distraction. In addition to this there are concerns around safety in some areas that discourages young people from leaving their home.

The Chair added that another key theme was perceived finance. There is a need for signposting where available to support residents to prepare food and provide recipes. Impulse Leisure and Active Essex are actively attempting to get young people involved in sports and are providing after school clubs.

The Interim Director of Public Health agreed with the summary of the themes and the need for consistent messages. Adding that there may be some difficulty engaging with schools that are academies and the Council has little influence. In addition to this they may lack funding and the Council is unable to provide incentives or funding to these schools. There is a need to organise better and utilise the resources that exist.

The Chair added that Active Essex commented that schools have facilities that aren't used outside of school. Therefore, there may be opportunities to use estates to encourage movement in young people.

Members discussed that food has become even more unhealthy as food companies are adding more fat and sugar into processed foods. Members queried whether the national government could influence the pricing of healthy food to make it more affordable. The Chair added that it's not all price related and some of it is adjusting taste buds and transitioning to the taste of healthier foods. Particularly as the cost-of-living crisis has made takeaways more expensive. People will need skills, awareness, and confidence to prepare food.

The Chair supported the roll out of community projects across the borough like cooking classes and initiatives that Active Essex are participating in.

In addition to this getting the information out there such as leaflets that include information on where to buy food and how to prepare simple meals.

The Senior Public Health Programme Manager added there are many resources that people can be signposted to. Change4life campaign has plenty of recipes and there are various options through the 'HENRY' programme. This does need to be streamlined and a central point for signposting is required.

The Interim Director for Public Health added that some primary schools have demonstrated great work to address healthy eating and this learning can be shared across Thurrock. Adding that having a focus on preconception, pregnancy and early years may be the way forward. There is evidence that shows children attitudes towards food is laid down in the first few years of life. If this is embedded correctly this will continue towards adulthood. The Chair agreed that it's a good approach, however they should still attempt to encourage change in older children.

The Senior Public Health Programme Manager added the council website can be utilised more for a coordinated approach. Members added that libraries and GP surgeries are good opportunities to capture engagement.

23. Preparations for final activity session on 30 October - Family Hub visit (All)

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised members to prepare questions ahead of the site visit and review the 'HENRY' programme online.

24. Date of next Task and Finish Group meeting and final meeting to sign off the report (All)

The next meeting will be held on 11 November, with a provisional meeting to sign off the final report scheduled for 4 December 2024 (dependent on the Senior Leadership Team deadline).

25. Any Other Business

A meeting has been scheduled for the 7 November for 11–25-year-old Strategy Meeting with Headteachers in schools. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer has requested a timeslot; however, they have asked for further information.

The Interim Director of Public Health added there have been discussions within the Council that the recommendations contained within the final report will go through Cabinet. This is required to get cross council engagement and buy-in for the refreshed Whole System Obesity Strategy. Some councils have healthy weight steering groups who help to deliver the action plan. It would be helpful if scrutiny committee would make that recommendation. Overview and Scrutiny should consider the recommendations they want to make to potentially be reviewed by Cabinet.

The Chair questioned whether the report would go to the Health and Well-being Board. The Interim Director of Public Health confirmed the refreshed Whole Systems Obesity Strategy, and the delivery plan will go to the Health and Well-Being Board. Recommendations will form part of the strategy and future overview and scrutiny have a role to hold the Health and Well-Being Board accountable.

The meeting finished at 6.45 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group held on 11 November 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Elizabeth Rigby (Chair), Tony Fish and Srikanth Panjala

Apologies: Sharon Stoltz, Interim Director of Public Health

In attendance: Claire Dixon, Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Sareena Gill, Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Carly Parker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received for The Interim Director of Public Health.

27. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Seeking clarification that members were pleased with the suggested recommendations advising they were looking forward to the final report.

All members agreed with the suggestions looked forward to the finalised report.

28. Reflections and review of potential recommendations from recent activity sessions

The Chair agreed she would send her final list of recommendations to the group. Members reflected on the activity sessions stating that they were very useful and brought out a lot of key themes. This includes the stark difference between primary and secondary school in terms of lunches and physical education (PE). Members stated that it does appear to be more of an issue with Secondary Schools and half of schools are meeting the PE levels. In addition to this there appears to be a lack of opportunities to exercise outside of school.

The Chair sought clarification on whether Impulse Leisure would be involved with Northeast London Foundation Trust (NELFT)/ Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY) arrangement. The Senior Public Health Programme Manager advised that the Child Weight Management Service now sits within the 0-19 Healthy Families Contract. This service is commissioned by Public Health to NELFT. NELFT are currently developing a new Weight Management Service offer. They will deliver HENRY 'Healthy Families Growing Up Programme' for 5–12-year-olds. The programme is 8-10 weeks in duration and is a holistic approach designed to support families with young children (aged 0–5 years) in leading healthier lifestyles.

The programme focuses on preventing obesity and promoting overall well-being by encouraging healthy habits in nutrition, physical activity, and emotional health during early childhood. It also includes age-appropriate relevant topics such as body image, the influence of peers and family negotiations.

The Task and Finish Group were advised that a weight management programme for 13–18-year-olds is currently being developed and will include input and support to co-design with relevant local stakeholders.

29. Final meeting on 4th December to sign off the report

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer advised the report will be split into sections. Consisting of an introduction and key statistics that will be referenced to provide history. It was confirmed that it will be broken down into the five themed sessions that were completed and include the joint task and finish group meeting, along with the key stakeholder meetings. In addition to this it will include research and the site visits that were carried out to places such as Purfleet Pantry. It was confirmed that the draft report will be sent on 4 December and submitted to the Senior Leadership Team to be ready for People Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in January 2025. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer will discuss the final report with the Chair in January.

30. Any Other Business

The Chair queried the progress of the school parking task and finish group. It was confirmed that they have produced a policy as an outcome, and this can be shared once it's complete.

The Chair queried whether the report would be shared with the public. It was confirmed that the report will be made public when it's published with the agenda. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer agreed to work with other colleagues to get the report published on Thurrock Council Website as well.

The meeting finished at 6.30 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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