

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
13 JANUARY 2015

(19.15 - 20.51)

PRESENT

Councillors Councillor Jeff Hanna (in the Chair),  
Councillor Linda Taylor, Councillor Charlie Chirico,  
Councillor David Chung, Councillor Edward Foley,  
Councillor Fidelis Gadzama, Councillor Joan Henry,  
Councillor James Holmes, Councillor Sally Kenny  
Councillor Katy Neep and Denis Popovs

Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and  
Performance, CSF), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate  
Services) and Yvette Stanley (Director, Children, Schools &  
Families Department) Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Marsie Skeete (substituted by  
Councillor Sally Kenny)

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2014 (Agenda Item  
3)

Resolved: The Panel agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair clarified that the report on the recruitment and retention of BME teachers  
will now be circulated at the end of January rather than last November as previously  
planned.

The Chair asked for confirmation that the monitoring of six weekly visits are being  
undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Board? Yvette Stanley confirmed that a  
Corporate Parenting meeting had taken place that day and performance had be  
reported to be 90% in audited cases. There were still issues regarding extracting data  
from Carefirst so sample audits were also taking place.

## 5 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2019 (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Corporate Services gave an overview of the current budget position.

Councillor Taylor queried in the increase in cost for taxi's cars and concessionary fares.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that expenses for these services are increasing and London Councils who administer the scheme are conducting a review.

Councillor Holmes asked what strategies are in place to source different funding streams such as European funding, especially as parts of the borough will meet the eligibility criteria. And should this be a future skill set for council officers?

Paul Ballat reported that this issue is going to be the focus of a meeting taking place later this month between the Cabinet Member, council officers and CVS providers in connection with the proposed commissioning savings where the commissioning team will look at how to provide practical assistance to voluntary sector organisations for grant funding. People do need to think about how to grasp future opportunities and this is something for the council to consider.

Councillor Neep asked what we are doing to support families who will lose services under the Transforming Families Programme and will undergo serious change, and what can we learn from the Transforming Families Programme?

Paul Ballat reported that the families who are receiving support will have an exit strategy and will be re-directed to other services if necessary.

Yvette Stanley reported that there is a department overspend of £3 million partly to ensure we maintain safe caseloads in the children's social care team. Special Educational Needs Transport is a demand led service although there are stringent criteria. Placements for looked after children is also a high spend area. This provides us with additional challenges in delivering the savings which are having to be made from areas which are not overspending.

This means we cannot take on more families with need at the lower levels of our Wellbeing model. We can signpost to the voluntary sector but their resources are diminishing as well. Some families need six months intensive input, working with a high level of need very intensively, if people trickle up we will not be able to absorb them. We will need to use increasingly focussed interventions in the future, using only tried and tested evidenced based interventions.

The Chair thanked officers for their reports and confirmed with the Panel that there was a reluctant acceptance of the need to make the savings.

## **Youth Service (CSF2014-06)**

Yvette Stanley said we spend a third of our budget on youth commissioning in each of the three localities. In 2015/16 we had reviewed one service which provides housing advice, mainly to the over 19s and 74% of the users are not Merton residents. We are exploring if that service could be funded by others. We are trying to create a youth service that is not dependent on local authority funding. A third of the savings for 2015/16 will be achieved through cutting a development fund.

Councillor Holmes said the volunteering task group sought to develop a Merton volunteer core, the offer to volunteers included reduced swimming costs and assistance with C.V's and references, can we develop long term volunteers for the youth service? This would provide cost savings for the council rewarding those who need to get back into work.

Paul Ballat said the Children Schools and Families Department and Schools already use volunteers in a number of functions. We recognise the opportunities and value that volunteers can bring, however it is not a free route to provision as they require significant council capacity in terms of recruitment, retention, and support.

Yvette Stanley also pointed out that people would come and volunteer in the youth service as a step to employment however given the changes in service provision, these opportunities do not exist anymore so we need to ensure that volunteering opportunities lead to sustainable employment.

Councillor Kenny said young people need support at this time in their lives. If they have time on their hands some may get into mischief leading to crime and imprisonment. Are we tapping into every grant available to support young people?

Yvette Stanley said we are keeping the detached element of the youth provision; this is a specialist service that supports young people who are a visible presence on the streets. It also targets those who are in trouble or at risk, such as young people with poor school attendance. However we cannot have open access as there will be no provision within the youth service. We will still have youth partnership membership with the voluntary sector which we can signpost people to.

Councillor Chirico asked how we will meet our duty to provide positive activity services?

Paul Ballat said we will need to signpost people to services including non commissioned youth activities, leisure centres and libraries.

Councillor Chung said he is concerned that a vulnerable sector is being cut drastically. Is there a way to spread it across the system as every aspect of the service is being affected?

Yvette Stanley said the council has protected the Children, Schools and Families Department as other areas had higher targets. As a volunteer youth worker she had seen lives change and the impact that the service has had. However with the level of savings to be found, we have used the Children and Young People's model and looked at the hierarchy of need to prioritise spend. We need to balance risk and vulnerability with the budget.

The Director of Corporate Services said we look at minimising risk to the area. We have to look at different working and different solutions such as increasing commercialisation. We constantly ask people if there is funding available, if there is, it has an impact and we can delay savings.

With regards to the Public Health savings Yvette Stanley said it is appropriate for Public Health to invest in early years as evidence shows that support at this time leads to better outcomes later in life.

The Director of Corporate Services said some of the underspend came about during the transition from the CCG. We have inherited a number of contracts from the CCG and some of this money can be utilised in Children's Services.

The Chair confirmed with the Panel that it is with great regret that the Panel reluctantly accept the savings.

#### **Education savings (CSF2014-08)**

Yvette Stanley said there has been increasing monies for schools from government grant, at a time when budgets for other services have been reducing. Merton schools are expected to receive further increases in overall budget in 2015-16. Our approach is going to need to be that the local authority provides the statutory minimum support services with schools paying for additional services they wish to receive from the local authority. There is a risk that schools will not buy our services in which case we will need to cease these functions, but this is not anticipated.

The Chair Confirmed with the Panel that the proposed saving was accepted.

#### **Savings for Early Years (CSF2014-09)**

Yvette Stanley described the implications of these savings proposals which are to maintain our statutory functions; continue the locality based model; target early years

services to the most vulnerable; maintain a limited quality assurance role with early years providers and rationalise back office functions.

Councillor Taylor said she is concerned that we are making savings in services for the most vulnerable residents when we have an expensive pilot for wheelie bins this should be put on hold and monies put into services for the most vulnerable.

Councillor Hanna said this is a pilot scheme which is being met from a specific grant for waste purposes, with no assumptions that wheelie bins could be provided across the borough.

### **Capital Programme/Department Estimates/Service Plans**

The Panel noted the Capital programme given that there are no changes.

The Panel noted the Department estimates and service plans.

The Panel recognise the overall financial position and reluctantly accept the proposed savings, as above.

### **RESOLVED**

The Panel agreed to note the report and expressed thanks to officers for their work in this area.

## **6 TRANSFORMING FAMILIES (Agenda Item 6)**

Yvette Stanley said it took time to recruit people with the right skills mix given the flexibility required for the role. We are delivering sustained outcomes and have an opportunity to sustain a version of the programme. We are working in partnership with the Transforming Families and Central Social Work Team and between forty and eighty young people are being supported.

Councillor Kenny said it was amazing work which she wished could be extended. She expressed her thanks to the team for all their hard work.

Councillor Maxi Martin encouraged Panel members to meet the Transforming Families Team as they have some good examples of the impact that their work has had for local families.

Councillor Neep said £800 funding per family is quite low and is quite concerned about the shortfall of funding to sustain future outcomes.

Yvette Stanley said the Transforming Family reserve is able to enhance the funding.

## RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to note the report and expressed thanks to officers for their work in this area.

### 7 MERTON YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE (Agenda Item 7)

Yvette Stanley gave an overview of the report.

Councillor Holmes asked if maintaining three extra government targets will be a burden for officers.

Yvette Stanley said the way to help young people is through education. The three targets will effect change. Accommodation is a critical issue, inappropriate accommodation leads to crime. It is not an extra burden to monitor and it helps the prevention strategy.

## RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to note the report.

### 8 UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

The Chair thanked officers for their work on free school meals pupil premium and asked if there is an estimate on what still may be achieved.

Paul Ballat said the original under-registration rate was 27% which equated to some 1200 pupils. As a result of the project some 800 additional eligible pupils have been identified. He estimated that between 400-500 eligible pupils remain unidentified and that the project would continue.

Officers were thanked for their work in achieving additional funding and Paul Ballat expressed his appreciation to the Chair for his input.

## RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to note the report and expressed thanks to officers for their work in this area.

### 9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 9)

The Chair thanked officers for their time in meeting with Councillor Linda Taylor and himself to discuss the potential revisions for the basket of indicators and for providing the proposed new set of indicators intended to start from April 2015. He also referred the Panel to the principle in the Update Report by which officers would inform the Panel of any other indicators where performance is causing a concern, as and when this might occur.

RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to note the report and expressed thanks to officers for their work in this area.

10 DRAFT SCOPING REPORT - EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 10)

The Panel considered a possible review on emotional well-being. It was agreed not to proceed with this idea and to consider a new task group review in the new municipal year. The Chair thanked Rebecca Redman for her work.

RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to note the report and expressed thanks to officers for their work in this area.

11 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 11)

The Panel noted the work programme.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed to note the report.