

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 24th March 2015

Agenda item: 8

Wards:

Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Dept

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Reason for Urgency: The Chair has agreed the late circulation of this report.

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in February 2015.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 On 9 March 2015 the Department for Education confirmed that the Harris Wimbledon Free School application has received 'pre-opening' approval from the DfE. There are a number of steps to be taken before an opening date can be confirmed – including identification of a site; DfE approval of the school's proposed curriculum; a statutory consultation to be undertaken by the proposed provider – and officers will be working with the Federation and DfE/EFA to seek to ensure the delivery of the school meets our basic need school places requirement.
- 2.2 With regard to secondary school places demand, the council received an additional 161 applications this year and was able to offer every resident a secondary school place, with three schools receiving 'central offers' (where a preference place cannot be offered) slightly above their published numbers. As part of our overall secondary places strategy, officers will be progressing design work shortly at Harris Morden, Harris Merton and St. Mark's CE Academy to prepare for possible expansion when it is required – as indicated in previous reports officers will be keeping demand under constant review to determine if all these schemes will be required but it is considered prudent to undertake preliminary work at this stage to enable confirmed schemes to be progressed speedily .
- 2.3 The primary school expansion programme continues to progress well, with a major phase at Hillcross completed earlier this month, and the classrooms at Poplar Primary School due to be handed over at around the date of this meeting. The first phase of the Dundonald Primary School/Recreation Ground

has now been completed with the children's public playground now open. The school extension phase will commence next month.

- 2.4 There has been one Ofsted school inspection report published since the last panel update with Bond Primary School improving its rating from requiring improvement to good. 87% of Merton pupils are now attending schools rated as good or outstanding which is above national and London averages.
- 2.5 Brightwell Children's Home has recently been inspected – although the report of the inspection has not yet been published, inspector feedback was positive and we expect the home to retain its current rating of good.
- 2.6 Members of the panel will be aware of the current national concerns relating to the radicalisation of young people. Staff working with young people in all settings – eg in schools and youth provision; social care staff – are in key positions to identify those vulnerable to radicalisation, deter and discourage and, ultimately, to advise the police of concerns. Merton's LSCB is developing a local strategic response to this agenda and, as an initial step, key staff in CSF department are to be provided with 'Prevent' training delivered by the metropolitan police.
- 2.7 CSF department has recently been designated an outstanding employer for our work with Kingston University to enhance learning and development opportunities for social workers. This is a particularly pleasing award as the quality and range of training is a critical factor in both improving the quality of social work practice and in the recruitment and retention of social work staff.
- 2.8 The department is also part of the south London consortium of local authorities which recently received an Excellence in Public Procurement award for an innovation or initiative. The award relates to a cross borough initiative to improve procurement of placements for pupils with SEN from the private and independent sectors with a focus on quality and cost.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. None for the purposes of this report.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. N/A

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. No specific implications.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. No specific implications.

- 8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. No specific implications.
- 9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. No specific implications.
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. No specific implications.
- 11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- N/A
- 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. None

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