

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
15 JANUARY 2013

7.15PM – 9:15PM

PRESENT: Councillor Jeff Hanna (in the chair), Councillors Agatha Akyigyina, Laxmi Attawar, Iain Dysart, Karin Forbes, James Holmes, Oonagh Moulton, Linda Scott, Peter Walker, Simon Withey

Co-opted members –Dr Jo Sullivan Lyons (Parent Governor Representative – Secondary School), Alison Jerrard (Secondary Headteacher Representative)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Maxi Martin (Cabinet Member for Children’s Services), Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Education), Mark Allison (Cabinet Member for Finance), Councillor Peter Southgate, Councillor Suzanne Grocott

Yvette Stanley (Director of Children Schools and Families), Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Teresa Levy (Interim Head of Children’s Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Jan Martin (Head of Education), Tom Procter (Service Manager – School Contracts and Organisation), Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer)

1 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda item 1)

Dr Jo Sullivan Lyons raised her membership of the Home Office Task Force for Youth Violence and Gang Offending.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Amanda Stuart Fisher (Parent Governor Representative – Primary School) and Wendy Veazey (Primary Headteacher Representative)

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2012

Councillor Jeff Hanna noted that, on page 3 of the Minute, under Matters Arising, the words, ‘if appropriate’ should be added to the resolution.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked that on page 7 of the Minutes the word sufficient be changed to realistic in relation to his query about caseloads.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting, subject to the amendments outlined above.

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Oonagh Moulton enquired about the status of the glossary that was requested at the Panels meeting in November. Paul Ballatt informed the Panel that this was a large document to compile and that the task had been delegated to a member of his team.

Cllr Jeff Hanna informed the Panel that a note of the meeting held with Yvette

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Stanley and Paul Ballatt in relation to the concerns raised by the Panel at their November meeting on the format and content of reports, had been tabled for information.

RESOLVED: That the Panel receive the Glossary for their next meeting.

5 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2013-17

Caroline Holland introduced the report explaining that the proposals included had been considered by Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> December and were set in relation to the targets set in October 2012. Caroline Holland welcomed Members comments on the risk levels identified. Members heard that the grant settlements had not been received when this report was produced which is why there were still some gaps. There was also no indication of the schools capital funding.

CSF01 – Members heard that income generation would be achieved through Buy back of services and some possible restructuring dependent on school budgets.

Dr Jo Sullivan-Lyons asked what the impact might be on vulnerable groups if not offering a borough wide service to schools. Jan Martin explained that the council does not have a large service at present but that staff are experienced in working with these groups and providing support to schools.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton added that she would not want to see a decline in school standards given that schools have improved. It is important to have valuable expertise that schools want to buy in.

Councillor James Holmes asked how realistic it was to seek additional income in light of resources available.

Councillor Martin Whelton explained that it is realistic and that the savings proposed are justified.

Councillor Maxi Martin added that she had confidence in teams that working more innovatively would enable the council to make savings whilst still providing a quality service.

Dr Jo Sullivan Lyons asked how far a small team is able to work effectively with academies. If it is possible, why does the council not move to an entirely buy back scheme.

Yvette Stanley explained that the council has to meet statutory duties and that funds have been removed from LA for working with Academies. A steady approach to trading the service is the best option, building the service over time. If schools could not afford the service then the council would need to consider the proposals further, but the service costs are competitive compared to alternative providers. A service funded 100% through schools buy back would not allow the council's statutory core duties to be fulfilled.

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CSF02 – Are the council confident that savings can be made without making cuts to staff? Should this be a medium and high risk if the department are confident?

Jan Martin confirmed that this saving would not impact on front line service delivery. Risk levels associated could therefore be reconsidered. At the time of producing this saving the council had only seen a Green Paper and did not have details of the proposed changes hence the level of risk identified was high..

Recommendation – that the reputational risk level for this saving be reconsidered

CSF03 – Are the investments targeted at particular services? What form of monitoring will be undertaken of the contracts?

Paul Ballatt explained that as the commissioning process was ongoing it was not possible to provide a list of services and prioritise what should be lost/kept. The overall investment in early intervention and prevention services is not being reduced; the new in house enhanced level services being established will be more effective and result in a more robust strategy. Contracts with external providers ensure accountability and evidence is demanded of organisations to demonstrate how they are providing equity of access and services appropriate to meet the needs of key groups. The council will also be commissioning certain services for certain equality groups.

Members heard that monitoring would also be undertaken jointly through a risk based approach by commissioners and service specialists.

CSF04 – What is the level of risk if the council is unable to access placements outside the independent sector? How deliverable is this saving proposal?

Paul Ballatt informed Members that the risk is identified as high because the council cannot control the number of LAC or SEN children requiring placements. Economic circumstances also change and the council cannot have absolute confidence in the projections for the number of LAC and SEN children. The council are already negotiating with providers which are resulting in decreased costs. However, a child will not be placed or moved as a result of cost and a child that is settled will not be moved from an independent sector placement unless it is in the child's interests. New carers will be matched to new children. Foster Carers will continue be recruited through a proactive campaign It was noted new carers often make enquiries based on word of mouth recommendations..

CSF05 – Is the council confident about the savings that can be made as they are not 100% defined.

Councillor Mark Allison explained that the council could be confident due to the financial monitoring process being more transparent and planning earlier and in advance for savings that need to be made. Caroline Holland added that she was confident that if the savings were accepted and built into the plan that

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they would be kept under review to check that they were still on track to deliver savings.

CSF06 – Concerns expressed regarding the scheme being cut and if schools may be willing to take on the scheme to ensure it is still in operation. In addition, if this scheme was taken up in certain areas of the borough and at certain schools and in what volume.

Theresa Leavy informed Members that it was mostly schools in less deprived areas of the borough that had pupils enrolling on the scheme. She also confirmed that the proposed savings were deliverable.

Councillor Iain Dysart commended officer's work in this area to date and expressed concerns about the scheme not continuing in its current form.

Councillor Jeff Hanna noted the advice that the proposed savings were deliverable, but also the majority of comments expressing concern, and proposed that these were passed on to Cabinet.

Recommendation – That the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme continues to operate and that ways to deliver, jointly with schools building on existing arrangements, should be explored.

CSF07 – Panel expressed concerns regarding the high risk attached to the proposal. Dr Jo Sullivan Lyons expressed about the relative size of the proposed saving in relation to the baseline budget.

Recommendation – That the high risk associated with the saving be reconsidered and monitored.

The Panel agreed to make the following recommendations to Cabinet via the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

- 1) That the high risk associated with the saving CSF02 be reconsidered and monitored;
- 2) That the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme CSF06 continues to operate and that ways to deliver, jointly with schools building on existing arrangements, should be explored; and
- 3) That the reputational risk level for saving CSF07 be reconsidered.

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the report.

6 PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES – NEW SCHOOL SITE SEARCH

Councillor Jeff Hanna informed the Panel that the letter received regarding Dundonald School and the concerns of the Protect Dundonald Rep Campaign Group, had been tabled for Members information.

Councillor Jeff Hanna formally welcomed those members of the Overview and

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Scrutiny Commission who were attending for this item.

Paul Ballatt introduced the report noting that the review had been undertaken in response to the challenges Merton faces in delivering school places. This review focuses on primary provision and a strategy will be brought to the Panel at a later date with regard to secondary and special education provision. Members were informed that 21 additional forms of entry have already been delivered. This document updated the council's position, including updated projections of need. This document updated the council's position, including the projected need.

Paul Ballatt explained that Cabinet took a view in July 2012 with regard to the particular challenges the Wimbledon area was facing in meeting additional need. Cabinet requested an options appraisal of the situation in Wimbledon which is contained within this report. This work was undertaken by Capita.

With regard to the Dundonald Scheme, Paul Ballatt commented that there were no easy options for the provision of school places in the Wimbledon area and that a significant number of expansions had already been undertaken.

Members heard that the Capita report involved reviewing sites subject to previous site searches, both owned by the council and by third parties; considering further expansion potential of existing schools in the area and looking more broadly at potential sites.. A shortlist has been developed; however, no decisions on any possible site have been made..The capital allocation from central government has also yet to be received.

Paul Ballatt informed Members that additional 3 or 4 forms of entry would be required in the Wimbledon area over the next few years over and above existing plans.

Councillor Iain Dysart queried which landowners the Council had made initial contact with.

Dr Jo Sullivan-Lyons asked if this report told the Council anything they didn't know and what does it recommend in terms of meeting demand?

Tom Procter explained that preliminary discussions had been held but that engagement with landowners had proved difficult. These sites included Dairy Crest and Manuplastics.

Paul Ballatt informed Members that there is sufficient surplus currently which means that additional expansions would not need to be announced this year over and above those already planned.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton commented on the dilemma between new schools and expansion.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked that an update be brought to the Panel once proposals had been firmed up that could be scrutinised, and that this be done

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as soon as possible.

Yvette Stanley added that being able to bring proposals back to the Panel to scrutinise would depend on notification from DfE on resources available as a major review of capital allocation is underway.

RESOLVED: Panel recommended that proposals for further places be brought forward as soon as possible.

7 YOUTH VIOLENCE AND GANG RELATED OFFENDING

Keith Shipman introduced the report and discussed the interventions that had been made to address these issues working collaboratively with partner agencies, Cllr Jeff Hanna expressed thanks to Keith Shipman and to all those that had been involved in this work and commended the efforts and good work to date.

Dr Jo Sullivan-Lyons questioned how well youth violence was being tackled on the basis of just police data. How far had Accident and Emergency and health information been monitored? In addition, what information had been accessed from hospitals in close proximity to the borough?

Dr Jo Sullivan –Lyons also queried the governance arrangements outlined in the report and who was holding the OMP to account.

Councillor Peter Walker added that it was important not to simply rely on crime data.

Councillor James Holmes expressed thanks for the report and asked about Safer Schools Officers and how schools could be supported more and police encouraged to get more involved than they currently are.

Keith Shipman explained that a workshop had been held previously to look at a range of data but only included St Georges and St Helier Hospitals. The Council could also access data from housing providers on other softer measures. Keith informed the Panel that the Youth Crime Prevention Board was the overall governance board. The OMP reports to Safer and Stronger Merton Partnership and consists of senior officers from across the partnership.

With regard to Safer Schools Officers, Members heard that papers went to the Secondary Heads meetings to start discussions on how best to evolve the model.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

8 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING CSF DEPARTMENT

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

10 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 10)

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The Panel agreed to consider the action plan resulting from the OFSTED report of the fostering service to be considered at their April 2013 meeting.

RESOLVED: Panel agreed the work programme subject to the inclusion of the Action Plan in response to the OFSTED report of the fostering service which would be considered at the April 2013 meeting.