

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
4TH JULY 2013

7.15PM – 9:20PM

PRESENT: Councillor Jeff Hanna (in the chair), Councillors James Holmes, Agatha Akyigyina, Laxmi Attawar, Iain Dysart, Karin Forbes, Oonagh Moulton, Linda Taylor, Phillip Jones (replacing Peter Walker)

Co-opted members –Peter Connellan

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Maxi Martin (Cabinet Member for Children's Services), Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Education)

Paul Angeli (Head of Children's Social Care), Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Jan Martin (Head of Education)

1 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

None

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Peter Walker, Colin Powell, Yvette Stanley and Dr. Jo Sullivan Lyons.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2013

The Minutes were agreed as a true record.

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

4 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Jeff Hanna welcomed Peter Conellan, Roman Catholic Diocesan Representative on the Panel.

The Panel agreed to rearrange the order of the agenda to the following to enable Councillor Martin Whelton to speak on item 5 when he arrived:

Item 6 – Home Office Peer Review and Gang Call In

Item 7 – Update on Transforming Families Initiative and the PRG funded Phipps Bridge Project

Item 5 – Children, Schools and Families Departmental Priorities for 2013/14

Item 8 – Scrutiny Review of the Provision of Secondary School Places – Progress Report

Item 9 – Update on developments in Children, Schools and Families

Item 10 – Performance Monitoring

Item 11 – Work Programme 2013/14

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5 HOME OFFICE PEER REVIEW AND GANG CALL IN (Item 6)

Paul Angeli introduced the report. He informed the Panel that the findings of the review had been a positive reflection of the work in Merton and of the staff that directly work with young people. There is strong partnership working and effective data sharing arrangements in place with the MASH ensuring gang activity can be identified. The review identified a number of improvements which could be made, including developing a shared narrative across the strategic partnership. The next steps now include engaging the voluntary sector and community in the management of youth violence and gang activity. There is more work to be done in protecting women against violence, and a strategic action plan is being developed to address the points for improvement/action from the review.

Councillor James Holmes asked if the action plan could be brought to a future meeting to enable the Panel to scrutinise this and to maintain an overview in terms of performance management. Paul Angeli agreed to this request.

Councillor Maxi Martin added that discussions were being held to develop the action plan with the relevant stakeholders and to ensure a strategic overview which was previously absent. Engagement with other local authorities was also cited as key. Paul Ballatt confirmed that the action plan could be brought to the Panel as part of the standard update report at the September 2013 meeting.

Councillor Laxmi Attawar sought clarification on the role of CAMHS. Paul Angeli confirmed that the review concluded that CAMHS staff couldn't clearly see the links between gang activity and mental health and that more understanding of this by professionals was needed. Paul Ballatt added that a number of young people that engage in gang activity often have low self esteem and a range of measures were being put in place to help them resist/divert from gang activity. The work of CAMHS was central to this.

Councillor Linda Taylor asked for practical, measureable, time bound actions within the action plan and felt that partnership working was central to this. Paul Angeli agreed that this was important, particularly in addressing the serious issues identified in the review regarding violence against women.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked who the interviews had been held with and also what level of police staff were engaged in MASH. Paul Angeli drew the Panel's attention to the list of those interviewed in the report. Paul Angeli also clarified that police officers were involved in the MASH and that they had direct access to police intelligence which was invaluable to the MASH.

Councillor Jeff Hanna sought clarification on the definition of a gang and also the extent of the gang activity in Merton. Paul Angeli confirmed that a definition of gang activity was included in the report. The council and its partners were working with young people identified as being involved, and those on the

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periphery of involvement, in gang activity. Paul Angeli added that gang activity had been disrupted in the borough and that Merton does not experience the level of gang activity in comparison to other inner London boroughs. The nature of gang difficulties in other boroughs was often associated with postcodes and territorial issues. Gangs in Merton often emerged with groups of young people coming together to engage in criminalised activity that may not be territorial in nature. However, the peer review challenged Merton, and our partners, to develop a clear narrative view on the extent of gang activity in the borough and how this risk might be addressed.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked about health partners and when they would be fully engaged. Paul Angeli explained that the council were in the process of trying to engage health partners, not just CAMHS and mental health agencies. Paul Ballatt added that the current Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16 was agreed by the Children's Trust Board and that actions within this plan were based on all agencies working together to address youth violence and gang activity.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton asked about how MASH had been publicised.

Councillor James Holmes asked if the borough had a gang problem.

Councillor Maxi Martin explained that some residents were engaged in gang activity across borough boundaries. Early intervention was therefore key.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina stated that young people must be engaged and interested in education. More time spent in schools will limit opportunities for young people to get involved in gang activity.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and expressed thanks and appreciation to officers for the positive work underway which was reflected in the findings of the review. Panel agreed to consider the action plan at their September 2013 meeting.

6 UPDATE ON TRANSFORMING FAMILIES INITIATIVE AND THE PRG FUNDED PHIPPS BRIDGE PROJECT (Item 7)

Paul Angeli introduced the report and confirmed that a Transforming Families Team were in place and providing direct support to families that have been identified as meeting the DCLG criteria which covers:

- Worklessness;
- Anti social behaviour; and
- Non school attendance

During 2012/13, the team will work with 124 families. Paul Angeli confirmed that DCLG were happy to date with the approach taken by Merton. The impact of the work to date can be established from July 2013 onwards. The team are still on a learning curve and there is no hard data that has been able to be captured so early into the programme. However, anecdotal evidence would suggest that there have been some positive changes to date. In particular

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there have been improvements in getting people back into work and in school attendance.

Councillor Jeff Hanna enquired about how Merton Council would evaluate the success of the programme and also if the information on how the programme would be evaluated could be made available to the Panel to consider. Paul Angeli explained that internal audits of work with families would be undertaken. Further to this, a sample of cases would be taken by DCLG and analysis and feedback would be undertaken. In addition, a longitudinal study over the 3 year programme would demonstrate, at appropriate intervals, that intervention and work with families had been sustained in the long term.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked how progress to date could be compared with the outcomes of the work already undertaken with troubled families by a number of existing teams. Paul Angeli confirmed that a number of different measurement criteria were in place that would support the council in this task. In addition, the Transforming Families Programme had a number of defined outcomes it wished to achieve. It is also driven by a number of financial benefits that can be achieved by the programme and early intervention.

Councillor James Holmes asked about the three key challenges that the team faced in delivering this programme and the Phipps Bridge Project. Paul Angeli outlined the following challenges:

- Engaging partners more widely,
- Engaging adult services substance misuse teams and CAMHS, for sustained change; and
- Ensuring a 6 month turnaround to get people in the position to apply for work and sustained support for families in this

Paul Angeli explained that the nature of the problems the DCLG have focused on are more complex and require a sophisticated approach by the team to work with all different sorts of families. The programme, on a national level, has demonstrated that some families won't make changes and we will need to consider how to address the problems of families that are more intractable

Councillor James Holmes enquired if we had sufficient teams and resources in house to deliver the programme if we were unable to engage partner organisations. Paul Angeli explained that we need partnership engagement to support families with a range of problems. Whilst internal resources are significant, it is important to include other partners such as mental health services.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked about addressing issues beyond the three year programme. Paul Ballatt said that central government often implement short term initiatives and that sustainability is always an issue for local authorities. Central government were looking at the added value of a programme like this and if finances would allow, it may continue beyond the initial three year period. Councillor Oonagh Moulton asked about the number

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of families identified and the targets linked to funding. Paul Angeli confirmed that target figures had been given directly by DCLG. The funding reflects the families the council would be working with within the year. DCLG maintain close contact with the council to ensure funds are being appropriately spent. DCLG have been happy with the work undertaken to date, however, the council needed to demonstrate outcomes as the programme works on payment by results.

Councillor Iain Dysart enquired if school attendance was satisfactory or better since the programme began. Paul Angeli confirmed that some improvements in attendance had been identified and that fuller information about the improvements in educational attainment would be established when validated data became available. In relation to current targets for this group of young people the council are on target on its initial review. The council are hitting their current target of young people being in school 90% of the time.

Councillor Linda Taylor enquired about the number of practitioners and what percentage of their time was spent with families. Paul Angeli confirmed that there are 8 case work practitioners with 6-7 cases each. Councillor Linda Taylor added that there needs to be guidance on how much time is spent working with families in comparison to time spent on paperwork. Paul Angeli added that this could be considered but that accountability measures also needed to be in place.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

7 CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES
2013/14 (Item 5)

Councillor Maxi Martin outlined her priorities for the year ahead and highlighted the importance of

- partnership working;
- delivering the Children and Young People's Plan;
- delivering the Transforming Families Programme; and
- Ensuring a balance between universal, targeted and specialist services, due to the financial climate and resource implications.

Councillor Martin Whelton highlighted his priorities for the following year:

- Primary School Places – no bulge classes and only permanent expansions planned;
- Meet increase in demand for school places, primary and secondary;
- Improve schools and standards;
- Ensure Merton Partnership and schools are working collaboratively, sharing best practice; and
- Skills development and reducing number of NEET's (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

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Paul Ballatt explained that Merton Council was committed to moving from a good to outstanding position in Children, Schools and Families services. The key to this was partnership, collaboration, integrated processes, and building upon existing working relationships. A number of partner organisations need to be re-engaged at a more strategic level following major changes affecting them and the council needs to be more targeted in interventions in a difficult financial climate. The use of data and quality assurance mechanisms would be critical. Furthermore, the recent changes in the organisational structure of CSF have impacted on how services would be delivered in the future and there was an increased focus on reviewing and measuring performance and impact. The council also has to deliver services in a time of major demographic change, in which the number and diversity of the population created certain challenges and would inevitably impact on service delivery.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton commented on the increase in births in Wimbledon Park and asked what the council were doing to increase the number of school places in this area to meet demand, as well as providing a greater range of schools. Councillor Martin Whelton explained that he wanted to ensure that there were sufficient school places that were as local for children and parents as possible. In addition, the types of schools the borough has would be based on an evaluation of what would improve standards. The interests of the child come first and the council would work with schools to ensure improvement.

Councillor James Holmes congratulated the department on the good work they do with schools' to improve school standards. He added that there was a role for scrutiny in supporting the council to achieve its strategic aims and that the Panel should play a role in measurement and impact. Councillor James Holmes went on to question the Cabinet Members on what success would look like against these strategic priorities in 12 months time. Councillor Maxi Martin explained that for her it would be that MASH was embedded, that partnership working was stronger and working effectively, and that the council would gain outstanding status in all of its inspections, although she acknowledged that this was very ambitious, the key was to strive for continuous improvement. The council should also be inspection ready and the Transforming Families Programme would be properly embedded.

Councillor Iain Dysart enquired about the extent of partnership at strategic and operational levels. Paul Ballatt explained that there had been a recent round-table discussion with senior health partners which identified a new agenda for partnership following a period of major organisational change in the health sector. GPs and the Clinical Commissioning Group are key to this, having been less engaged previously in the children's integrated services agenda. Furthermore at an operational level, partner training on the new common and shared assessment model would be built upon.

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Councillor Dysart also asked if there is preference data on a ward basis on which families get choice of school and could this be made available. Paul Ballatt committed to dedicating administrative resource to collating data on this basis and making this information available in due course.

Councillor Maxi Martin explained that the Transforming Families programme was being implemented in a slow and measured way because the programme had to be robust enough to continue after the three years had ended.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina voiced her concerns that in the past multi-agency initiatives, such as MASH, have often lacked communication between agencies. She emphasised that agencies needed to talk both on the front line and at a strategic level. Councillor Agatha Akyigyina also added that she was concerned that Children's Services seemed to be focusing efforts on a higher threshold of need and concentrating less on CYP at a lower level of need but who would benefit from early intervention, tackling their issues before they became significantly worse. Officers recognised this is a risk in times of reduced resources and will be keeping the balance of services under constant review.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

8 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES – PROGRESS REPORT (Item 8)

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

9 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT (Item 9)

Paul Ballatt introduced the report and drew particular attention to the tabled note providing an update on primary school expansion, in particular on Dundonald School.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina enquired about the details of the Academy Sponsorship of Benedict school. Councillor Laxmi Attawar asked about what information we held on Chapel St as an organisation to determine that they were the right organisation for the role.

Councillor James Holmes clarified that Chapel Street were a small organisational charity whose overriding ethos was to put the family and community at the heart of the school. A presentation was received from Harris and from Chapel Street and both sponsors underwent a rigorous application and assessment process before being considered as a potential sponsor.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Item 10)

Paul Ballatt introduced the report and tabled the May performance data that was not available at the time of publication of the agenda. The new table of

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data responded to the Panels request to show deviation and provide a more accurate representation of performance. The basket of indicators the Panel scrutinised had remained from the 2012/13 work programme. Paul Ballatt also highlighted changes to existing measures, for example, the Common and Shared Assessment Framework replaces the Common Assessment Framework.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina wished to note that she was not happy with the number of amber and red status performance indicators. Paul Ballatt noted this comment and responded by explaining that the CSF department had undergone a significant amount of organisational change and that the department would keep moving towards ensuring all targets were green.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

11 WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 (Item 11)

Councillor Jeff Hanna drew the Panels attention to the recommendations within the report and sought agreement to the Panels proposed 2013/14 work programme.

RESOLVED:

Panel agreed their 2013/14 work programme, subject to the inclusions and amendments discussed above;

Panel agreed to not appoint budget and performance monitoring scrutiny lead roles but to undertake these roles collectively;

Panel agreed to forward any identified training needs to the scrutiny team in due course;

Panel agreed to undertake a task group review of school leadership and BME succession planning and appointed a task group. Councillors Dysart, Akyigyina and Holmes will sit on the Task Group.