

**Committee:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date:** 4th July 2013

Agenda item: **11**

Wards: All

**Subject:** Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2013/14

Lead officer: Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Cllr Jeff Hanna, Chair of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Forward Plan reference number: n/a

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### **Recommendations:**

That Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i) Consider their work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion;
  - ii) Consider the methods by which the Panel would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
  - iii) Identify a Member to lead for performance monitoring on behalf of the Panel;
  - iv) Identify a Member to lead for budget scrutiny on behalf of the Panel;
  - v) Agree on an issue for scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the Task Group. Note that the dates set aside for meetings of the task group are 12 Sept, 1 Oct, 14 Nov, 28 Nov, 17 Dec, and 23 Jan. The Task Group may subsequently agree to change these dates;
  - vi) Consider the appointment of co-opted members for the 2013/14 municipal year, to sit on the Panel and/or on the Task Group; and
  - vii) Inform the Scrutiny Officer of their views on their training and support needs.
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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year.

1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:

- a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
- b) The roles and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
- c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with Members, senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;

- d) A summary of discussion by councillors and co-opted members at a topic selection workshop held on insert date; and
- e) Support available to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine, develop and deliver its 2013/14 work programme.

## 2. **Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme for 2013/14**

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have specific roles relating to budget and business plan scrutiny and to performance monitoring that should automatically be built into their work programmes. Members are recommended to appoint a Performance Monitoring Lead Member and a Business Plan/Budget Scrutiny Lead Member on behalf of the Panel.
- 2.3 Overview and Scrutiny Panels may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2013/14, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the Panel's work programme.

### Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

- 2.5 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
  - **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
  - **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the Authority and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
  - **Be ambitious** – Panels should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.

- **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Panel. For example Members may wish to questions officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.
- **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.6 There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Panel can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Panel can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter</li> <li>■ A variation of this model could be a single meeting to scrutinise an issues that, although important, does not merit setting up a ‘task-and-finish’ group.</li> </ul>
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the wider Panel with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council</li> <li>■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews</li> </ul>
Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The Panel may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report to give them more details.</li> </ul>
Meeting with service officer/partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/partners to discuss concerns or raise queries.</li> <li>■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Panel needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Panel for discussion</li> </ul>
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the panel if s/he still has concerns.</li> </ul>

2.7 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the Panel may choose to take some “information only” items outside of Panel meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

- 2.8 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:
- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of each Panel to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;
  - Provide support for scrutiny Members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
  - Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
  - Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.
- 2.9 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to assess how they can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver their work programme for 2013/14.
- 2.10 The Panel is also invited to comment upon any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Team will take the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's views on board in developing the support that is provided.

### **3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme**

- 3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference, with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission taking a coordinating role to ensure that any gaps or overlap in the scrutiny work programme are dealt with in a joined-up way.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has the following remit: -

- Children's social care, including child protection;
- Education, including school standards, special educational needs, the extended schools programme and the healthy schools initiative;
- Youth services and youth engagement including the Youth Parliament, young people 'Not in Education, Employment or Training';
- Youth offending;
- Children's Centres; and
- The Children's Trust

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as Panel agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS Sutton and Merton and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Other issues of public concern have been identified through the Annual Residents Survey. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- 3.2 A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The councillors who attended a “topic selection” workshop on insert date discussed these suggestions.
- 3.4 The suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council’s strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.
- 3.5 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of this Panel is set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.6 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Panel. The Panel is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.
- 3.7 The Panel may also wish to select items for scrutiny from the presentations made by Directors and Cabinet Members (at the Panel’s meeting on insert date) or based on other public priorities of which Members are aware through their ward work.
- 3.8 Items on the Cabinet’s forward plan that relate to the remit of this Panel are listed in Appendix 5. The Panel may wish to include one or more of these issues in its work programme.

#### **4. Task group reviews**

- 4.1 The Panel is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group in order to carry out the review.
- 4.2 A potential area for in-depth scrutiny was identified at the workshop: Leadership Succession Planning in schools.

#### **5. Co-option to the Panel membership**

- 5.1 Scrutiny Panels can consider whether to appoint non-statutory (non-voting) co-optees to the membership, in order to add to the specific knowledge, expertise and understanding of key issues to aid the scrutiny function. Panels may also wish to consider whether it may be helpful to co-opt people from “seldom heard” groups.

#### **6. Public involvement**

- 6.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Panel.

- 6.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if “seldom heard” groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.
- 6.3 This engagement will help the Panel to understand the service user’s perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Panel/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.
- 6.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Panel to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

## **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Panel members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2013/14. Overview and Scrutiny Panels are free to determine their work programme as they see fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.
- 7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

## **8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Panel’s scrutiny work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:
- a. Members of the public have been approached using the following tools: articles in the local press, My Merton and Merton Together, request for suggestions from all councillors and co-opted members, letter to partner organisations and to a range of local voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
  - b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings, via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey 2013, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team direct; and
  - c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings.

## **9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

## **10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.

## **11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.

## **12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.

## **13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.

## **14. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- 14.1 Appendix I – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2013/14
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to this Overview & Scrutiny Panel's remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on insert date

- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop  
insert date
- 14.5 Appendix 5 – Extract from Forward Plan
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None



## Draft work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meetings

Meeting date – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Item/Issue	Format
Member & Departmental Priorities for 2013/14	Main Item
Home Office Peer Review	Secondary Item
Transforming Families	Secondary Item
Performance monitoring	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work Programme Planning	Information
Provision of Secondary School Places Task Group – progress update	Information

Meeting date – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Item/Issue	Format
School Places	Main Item
Provision of Secondary School Places Task Group – final report	Secondary Item
Permanency and Adoption Update	Secondary Item
Performance monitoring	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work Programme table	Information

Meeting date – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Item/Issue	Format
Safeguarding and looked after children	Main Item
Early Intervention and Prevention	Secondary Item
CSF budget proposals	Secondary Item
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Performance monitoring	Information
Work Programme table	Information

**Meeting date 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014 – scrutiny of the budget**

<b>Item/Issue</b>	<b>Format</b>
CSF Budget proposals	Main Item
Children & Families Bill	Secondary Item
TBC	Secondary Item
Performance Report	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work programme table	Information

**Meeting date 11<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

<b>Item/Issue</b>	<b>Format</b>
School Standards	Main Item
Free School Meals report	Secondary Item
School Leadership Succession Planning Task Group – final report	Secondary Item
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Performance Report	Information
Work programme table	Information

**Meeting date – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

<b>Item/Issue</b>	<b>Format</b>
Alternative Education	Main Item
Raising the Participation Age	Secondary Item
Early Years & Children's Centres	Secondary Item
Performance Report	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Planning the work programme 2013/14	Information

## **Description of topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2013/14**

The following topics were suggested by residents, Members and officers, for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for their 2013/14 work programme.

### **1. Topic: Safeguarding**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

It is proposed that the panel receive an annual report on safeguarding children issues. This could be in the form of the annual report and business plan of Merton's Safeguarding Children Board and partner agencies could be invited/called to contribute/address issues raised by panel members.

### **2. Topic: Looked After Children (LAC)**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

The Panel could receive an annual corporate parenting report including a position on key performance indicators and plans for the year ahead, and/or a specific report on the topic of securing permanency.

The Panel could continue to receive updates on progress on the Adoption and Fostering Inspection action plans.

### **3. Topic: School Standards**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

The Panel could continue to receive this report with a stronger emphasis on planned school improvement activity in the year ahead, in addition to the 'backward view' provided.

### **4. Topic: School Places**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

A report on the implementation of the strategy could be provided at a suitable point in the year.

### **5. Topic: Transforming Families**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

An update on progress, in particular focusing on the impact of services so far, could be provided to the Panel.

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#### **6. Topic: Gangs/Serious Youth Crime Peer Review**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

A panel item could be provided which focuses on the review findings and recommendations.

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#### **7. Topic: Early Years and Children's Centres**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

A report could be provided to panel on key developments in our Early Years and children's centres services including, in particular, the development of the children's centres' new 'locality model' and progress made in securing early education places for more disadvantaged/vulnerable 2 year old children.

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#### **8. Topic: Children and Families Bill**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

A report on implications and steps being taken to implement changes in practice required can be provided to Panel at a suitable point in the year.

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#### **9. Topic: Performance Reports**

**Who suggested the topic?** LBM officers

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

These reports can continue to be presented at each panel meeting.

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#### **10. Topic: Best practice & innovation in CYP services in other UK Local Authorities**

**Who suggested the topic?** Panel member

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

The Panel could receive a regular report on outstanding and innovative developments in other LAs' children's services. They could then use this to suggest new and improved ways of working in Merton.

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#### **11. Topic: Free School Meals takeup**

**Who suggested the topic?** Panel members

**How could scrutiny look at it?**

Scrutiny could request regular updates on Merton's uptake of free school meals by eligible pupils.

### Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 22 May 2013

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Scrutiny Panels and the Commission. The final decision on this will then be made by the Panels/Commission at their first meetings.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

## **Note of the Children and Young People Overview & scrutiny Panel topic selection meeting on 22 May 2013**

### **Present:**

Councillors Jeff Hanna (Chair), James Holmes (Vice-chair), Iain Dysart, Karin Forbes, Linda Taylor, Agatha Akyigyina, Laxmi Attawar, Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Education)

Co-opted Members – Peter Connellan (Roman Catholic Diocese)

LBM Officers – Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director, CSF Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Ben Sherlock (Scrutiny Officer & note-taker)

Councillor Jeff Hanna welcomed and thanked all present. He asked whether the Panel wished to continue the meeting format set the previous year. The Panel agreed.

Paul Ballatt offered to discuss the scheduling of any agreed items with Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer) before the next Panel meeting in July. Councillor Jeff Hanna added that the Panel would consider the timing of the items during this topic selection but that nothing would be finalised until July.

### **Post-16 Career Pathways Task Group**

Councillor Linda Taylor asked if there could be a report on the outcome of the Post-16 Career Pathways Task Group given the increase in NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people. The Panel agreed.

Paul Ballatt added that the ongoing project to raise the participation age was being planned. He suggested that CSF could provide an item on the implications of raising the participation age for the Panel. The Panel agreed.

### **Permanency and adoption**

Councillor Karin Forbes suggested that this should not be a major item, given that there had been a recent Ofsted inspection and report on the topic. The Panel agreed that they would like an update this as a secondary item.

### **Transforming Families**

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked if the Panel wanted an item on Transforming Families. Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked if this should be an update or a more detailed examination. Councillor Karin Forbes suggested that it should be looked into in some detail given the Tia Sharp case in 2012.

The Panel agreed this should be a secondary item.

### **School Places**

Councillor Karin Forbes suggested this should be a major item.

Councillor James Holmes suggested that the item be looked at towards the end of the year so that it did not simply repeat recent task group work on the topic.

Paul Ballatt gave his opinion that April would be too late for effective scrutiny to take place. He suggested it as a major item in autumn 2013. Councillor Jeff Hanna asked if the Panel wanted separate reports on primary and secondary places. The Panel agreed that it should be one report on all school places. Paul Ballatt said that SEN places could be included in the report too.

Councillor James Holmes asked if SEN places would then be separate from alternative education, because the two issues combined could be too big to be included in the school places report. Paul Ballatt confirmed that alternative education would be a separate issue.

### **Alternative Education**

The Panel agreed this should be a major item. Councillor James Holmes said it would be useful to look into how the previous task group on alternative education had impacted the service, particularly at the Melrose School.

Councillor James Holmes also noted that Councillors Nick Draper and Martin Whelton (Cabinet Members for Community and Culture, and Education) had been supportive of the task group's report and that this was a success story for the Panel.

### **Gang culture**

Councillor Jeff Hanna pointed out that an item on the gangs peer review was already planned for the July meeting.

### **Post-Munro developments**

Paul Ballatt informed the Panel that this item covered Safeguarding and Looked After Children (LAC) in the previous year. Councillor Jeff Hanna asked if it should be a major item. Paul Ballatt pointed out that the inspection services were separating the two topics, so the Panel may wish to look at them separately from now on.

Councillor Jeff Hanna suggested that the Panel take them as two items with separate reports, but consider them both at the same meeting in place of that meeting's major item.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked if the Panel wished to look at performance and education within LAC. Paul Ballatt said that the Annual standards report included LAC achievement but that narrative on this could be included in the LAC report.

### **Budget proposals**

The Panel agreed this should be a major item.

### **School standards**

The Panel agreed this should be a major item to be discussed in February 2014.

Councillor James Holmes felt that the current process of covering several action plans in a short space of time without direct contact with the schools was not thorough or helpful enough. He suggested that the Panel visit schools and look at how LBM supports their post-inspection action plans instead. Councillor Jeff Hanna added that pre-Ofsted inspection support could be examined too, especially for schools at risk of achieving a non-satisfactory grade.

Councillor Martin Whelton said this was a good idea, though reminded the Panel that the school standards panel was separate to the CYP Overview and Scrutiny panel. Councillor Jeff Hanna said that the CYP O&S Panel could still look at it as part of its remit.

The Panel agreed. Councillor Iain Dysart added that he felt scrutiny would be improved by having the Panel visit the schools, as it would foster a less interrogatory atmosphere. The Panel noted this suggestion.

Paul Ballatt suggested that the Panel talk to Jan Martin and Yvette Stanley before February if they wished to scrutinise the School Standards Panel with a view to recommending changes in its remit. He added that the School Standards report submitted last year had described how school improvement staff proactively identify at-risk schools.

Councillor Jeff Hanna replied that while this strategy of identifying such schools had been explained verbally at that meeting, the Panel might prefer the strategies to be described in the

report, to provide more time for question and answer scrutiny at the meeting itself. Paul Ballatt agreed to ensure more written detail in future School Standards reports.

Councillor Jeff Hanna suggested that the Panel receive a report on the School Standards Panel as part of the School Standards item, and then decide whether further action should be taken. The Panel agreed.

### **Leadership Succession Planning**

This was discussed under the task group item later on.

### **Early Intervention and Prevention**

Councillor Karin Forbes suggested that this be covered as a supplementary item. The Panel agreed. Councillor James Holmes added that it overlapped with Safeguarding, LAC and Transforming Families. He asked whether it should be considered alongside those topics.

Paul Ballatt agreed that they were connected and that “silo reports” would be unhelpful. The Panel agreed that Early Intervention and Prevention would be covered alongside Safeguarding and LAC. However it would be covered in a third report at that same meeting, rather than as a strand in the other two.

### **Early Years and Children’s Centres**

Paul Ballatt explained that there was an emphasis in the department on helping disadvantaged two year olds. He suggested the Panel could look at education provision for vulnerable children as a supplementary item. The Panel agreed.

### **Task Groups**

Councillor James Holmes suggested a report on the impact of the previous three Task Groups. Paul Ballatt suggested that rather than a standalone report, a reference to the task groups could be included in the relevant items already agreed. Councillor James Holmes agreed to this but emphasised that specific reference to the findings of the Task Groups should be made. The Panel agreed to this.

### **Children and Families Bill**

The Panel agreed that this should be discussed as a supplementary item, focusing on changes resulting from the bill.

### **Performance reports**

The Panel agreed to retain this as a standard item.

### **Best practice and innovation in other local authorities**

Councillor Karin Forbes expressed a concern that this was a very broad topic. Councillor James Holmes asked if it should be a task group. Councillor Jeff Hanna felt it was too broad for an effective task group project. He felt that such a project would need to focus on a specific area of Children’s Services.

The Panel agreed that the topic was useful but decided to discuss it at a later date.

### **Free School Meals**

Councillors Jeff Hanna and Karin Forbes both felt that only a small update was needed on this.

Paul Ballatt informed the Panel that CSF now had a FSM project in its service plans following the Panel’s interest in the topic at the April 2013 meeting. He said the project plan would be put together and ready to launch around the end of May. He suggested an update later in the year, to give the project time to have an impact on the service.

Councillor Jeff Hanna suggested the February or April meetings.



Councillor Jeff Hanna asked if there were other suggestions for supplementary items. Councillor Karin Forbes suggested that they leave some slots open in case further issues arose during the year.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked if the best practice discussions should be discussed then or at a later meeting. Councillor Jeff Hanna responded that a specific area would need to be decided on to make the topic focused enough. He suggested waiting for suggestions following the minutes of the topic selection meeting.

### **Task Group 2013-14**

The Panel discussed the year's task group. Councillor Jeff Hanna raised a suggestion from Democracy Services that the Task Group should aim to submit its report at the January/February 2014 panel to avoid clashing with the 2014 elections.

Councillor James Holmes suggested a Task Group on school leadership, including how LBM supports and trains good headteachers, in terms of training, opportunities, funding and best practice from other boroughs. He felt the Task Group could look at making Merton more attractive to new heads.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina felt that BME succession planning could be a part of this. The Panel agreed the BME succession planning work programme item could be incorporated into the Task Group.

Paul Ballatt pointed out that Merton is already an attractive place for some new heads but agreed it was an important issue. Councillor Martin Whelton agreed. Councillor Linda Taylor added that even if Merton is already attractive, it could be made even more so, particularly for younger talented teachers. The Panel agreed that this would be a useful task group.

Councillor Jeff Hanna suggested that Rebecca Redman draft some Terms of Reference for the July meeting. Councillor James Holmes suggested a cross-party joint chairship of the Task Group. The Panel agreed. Councillor Agatha Akyigyina said she would be happy to be one of the co-chairs. The other co-chair would be decided at the July 2013 meeting.

Councillor James Holmes returned to the Best Practice topic and stated that he felt it was a good idea. He suggested that following a report on the impact of the budget proposals, innovation in other authorities could be examined. Councillor Jeff Hanna felt this may still be too broad.

Paul Ballatt added that some of these issues would be covered in July when Yvette Stanley and Cabinet members outline their priorities.

Councillor Jeff Hanna suggested waiting to see if the Panel wished to look in depth at a specific item later in the year, and that national best practice and innovation could be examined at that point.

The Panel agreed.

The meeting was closed.

Forward Plan items relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

None identified where decisions are to be made following the Panel meeting on 4 July 2013.