

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
6 NOVEMBER 2013

(19.15 - 21.20)

PRESENT Councillors Jeff Hanna (in the Chair), James Holmes, Agatha Mary Akyigyina, Laxmi Attawar, Iain Dysart, Karin Forbes, Oonagh Moulton, Linda Taylor, Peter Walker, Peter Connellan and Ray Tindle
Co-opted members –Peter Connellan,

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Maxi Martin (Cabinet Member for Children’s Services)
Paul Angeli (Head of Children’s Social Care), Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Jan Martin (Head of Education), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Rebecca Redman (Scrutiny Officer)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Yvette Stanley (Director of Children, Schools and Families), Councillor Martin Whelton (Cabinet Member for Education), Councillor Ray Tindle, Colin Powell and Dr Jo Sullivan-Lyons.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2013 (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Iain Dysart asked that an amendment be made on page, paragraph to reflect the separate discussion of items. The Minutes were agreed as a true record.

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

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)

The Panel agreed to re-order the agenda and take Item 8 first.

5 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2014-2018 (Agenda Item 8)

Caroline Holland introduced the report.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked about the controlled expenditure. Caroline Holland explained that this is direct expenditure, of which, the schools grant did not form a part. This included salaries and running expenses. CSF has a lower income in comparison to other departments. There is a lower savings weighting for CSF.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton enquired about the savings targets. Caroline Holland explained that the base savings for 2014/15 and 2015/16 in the base budget had been rolled forward and would only come back to the Panel if changes were being proposed.

Councillor Peter Walker asked about gearing in comparison with other departments. Caroline Holland explained that for CSF it stood at 0.5, C&H stood at 0.75, and CS stood at 1.5. This is based on expenditure as CSF needs to find fewer saving than other departments. The weightings are designed around the programmes we would like to protect first.

Councillor Peter Walker stated that this should be clear in the report to emphasise the values of the administration. Councillor Maxi Martin stated her commitment to this and noted that this has always been communicated.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton asked what changes there were in the capital programme in relation to primary school expansion and with regard to secondary schools from 2014 onwards, how realistic these targets are.

Caroline Holland explained that this was based on outturn from 2012/13 and regular monitoring was undertaken. In 2013/14 certain schemes have been re-profiled. Budget managers are being asked to regularly review how they are performing.

Paul Ballatt explained that there had been some slippage in some schemes and that the future projected expansion is indicative at this stage. Regular monitoring is undertaken to challenge assumptions. 21 additional permanent forms of entry are being planned for. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel agreed the direction of travel for secondary school expansion when consulted. However, a programme based on certainty has not yet been established. The council has written to all secondary schools requesting them to agree to expansion and to indicate their preferred timing. The figures on page 73 represent filling up surplus, expansion, academies and the provision of additional forms of entry in community schools. The council are also looking at new provision and also an element of expansion in faith schools, where there is demand particularly from Merton residents. The council may need further new secondary provision hence the uncertainty at this stage.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton asked how the interest and intake for faith school provision had been established. Paul Ballatt explained that work was underway looking at the pattern of demand for faith schools and a matter of affordability.

Councillor Peter Walker asked what percentage of children are at Wimbledon and Ursuline schools now. Paul Ballatt explained that this data could be circulated after it has been analysed.

Councillor Peter Walker asked when the contract for Dundonald was expected to go ahead. Paul Ballatt explained that this was a decision to be taken by Cabinet in December – alongside decision-making about the land appropriation recently consulted on. Officers are also optimistic that the very long-running issues regarding Sport England's position on the Dundonald proposal may be resolved finally shortly. Were there to be a subsequent JR on the decision-making, the council would need to take a view on either pausing plans for the development or proceeding following a risk assessment.

Councillor James Holmes asked if faith schools were oversubscribed. Paul Ballatt explained that Wimbledon and Ursuline were oversubscribed and that Merton will have to make a decision regarding investment in provision that may be used by children living in other authority boundaries.

Councillor James Holmes enquired about further new school provision. Paul Ballatt explained that 2 new schools may be required with 20-30 additional forms of entry required in the secondary sector. Expansion therefore has to be at the core of the strategy.

Councillor James Holmes asked what time scales were in place to determine what provision would be taken forward. Paul Ballatt explained that it was not easy to state at this point and that there were other factors to consider.

Caroline Holland explained that school expansion proposals would need to be considered when further information was available to determine revenue impact and longer term planning could be undertaken.

Councillor Peter Walker added that we should be learning from primary school expansion which was cheaper and consider expansion and split site provision. Paul Ballatt offered reassurance that the core values of the expansion strategy are to build upon the existing estate. There is a commitment not to expand beyond 10 forms of entry and all factors are being considered.

RESOLVED: Councillor Jeff Hanna thanked the officers and agreed with the Panel that these comments be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny

Commission and expressed the Panels desire to see more accurate costs as soon as they can be achieved.

6 SAFEGUARDING - PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

Paul Angeli noted the key challenges the council faced last year and that these were likely to continue with the new inspection framework. There have been a number of changes in service delivery over the last year and the restructuring of the safeguarding service and MASH will lead to improvements. The Safeguarding Board have a role in management and overview of safeguarding. There is excellent practice in the borough and the work on Child sexual exploitation has been put forward for the annual London Safeguarding Children Awards.

Councillor Maxi Martin explained that this work was critical and that partnership working was central to its success.

Councillor Linda Taylor enquired about the timescales for gathering more robust data. Paul Angeli explained that this data was coming through from different agencies but that it was difficult to confirm timescales.

Councillor Linda Taylor asked how this data, when gathered, would support service delivery. Paul Angeli explained that the board were looking at a sub group structure and for a mechanism to draw this information together and use in the process of challenge individual agencies.

Councillor James Holmes asked what agencies and what data and why the process would become more robust as a result. Paul Angeli confirmed that this would include police, Health, Schools, and CAMHS etc. Paul Ballatt added that an example of how this data would support this work would be in the case of inquoracy, where agencies need to meet to discuss the child's needs to be able to complete a care plan. Certain people around the table are key to this. Aligning data addresses issues of quoracy.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked if we should be concerned about the 100% increase of referral to the LADO. Paul Angeli explained that this is because there had been because of awareness raising around the work of LADO and also the work of the quality assurance team which has had a knock on effect on the number of referrals.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked about the outcomes of these referrals. Paul Angeli confirmed that there has not been a major increase in action needing to

be taken following these referrals but that more LADO meetings are being held. This workload is manageable.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked for information on the learning framework developed by the Board, on the influence of MASH on the increase in the rates of referral to assessment and why this is the case, is this because of better recording practices? Councillor Iain Dysart asked what percentage of conferences has been in quorate.

Paul Angeli explained that funding arrangements were secure for the Board and that the partnership is committed to funding this activity. With regard to MASH, the rates of referral to assessment are influenced by a range of factors.

Paul Angeli explained that the data on the number of child protection conferences that were not quorate could be forwarded to the Panel outside of the meeting. The department were focusing on not cancelling child protection conferences and where this is unavoidable the Child Protection Plan is reviewed and updated.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton asked how effective MASH was and if the police had been working collaboratively with the council. Paul Angeli commented that the police had been committed and that their involvement was something to be celebrated and that the presence of MASH has made a difference and that analysis is required but so far the contribution of MASH has been helpful. The department are also looking at good practice.

Councillor Debbie Shears emphasised the need to look at good practice elsewhere and ensure we are learning from others. Paul Angeli added that there is a wide variation in London and that the council were looking at more joint working in MASH with regard to sharing information.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and expressed thanks for the departments work to date.

7 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

Paul Angeli introduced the report and explained that there had been a rise in the number of Looked after Children (LAC) during the course of the last 6 months. There have been particular pressures surrounding 16/17 year olds entering the care system and the council is facing external scrutiny in relation to adoption and permanency. The service is well managed by the Corporate

Parenting Committee and there have not been any increases in other areas of activity in case work or of children needing to be removed.

Councillor James Holmes asked about the challenges the team are facing and if the increase in 16/17 year olds coming into the service was a natural trend or if the council needs to be developing a strategy to tackle this.

Paul Angeli explained that the reasons for this rise were not clear and that young people presenting as homeless have to be seen by the LAC team under current legislation and assessed on this basis. The department are in discussion with housing to address this issue as a proportion of young people coming into the system may not need to be in the care system. 16/17 year olds are treated as children and therefore the Local Authority is expected to accommodate them.

Paul Ballatt added that Merton Action for Single Homeless does not require young people to be identified as LAC and there are proposals to expand this provision. There is a discussion taking place to establish what can be offered to older young people. The challenge over the next 12 months is diverting young people away from children's social services and finding appropriate alternative provision.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked about 14/15 year old children who were not mentioned in the report and what support system was in place for this group. Paul Angel explained that this had been an oversight on his part in the report and that the factors influencing young people coming into the service are familial breakdown, crime and unaccompanied minors. This group of people needs to be brought back in to a safe environment and the range of provision on offer should also include how to support these individuals.

Paul Angeli explained that there was a multi systemic therapy project in place which included parenting work delivered by the Youth Offending Team. Some higher intensity support is required for certain individuals and this is considered on a case by case basis. The department are looking at options for commissioning these services, including some out of hour's services that are required.

Councillor Iain Dysart asked what comparable data was available in relation to other boroughs and the percentage of LAC in higher education and why some children had refused an intervention for substance misuse.

Paul Angeli stated that he could make this data available after the meeting and that there was a range of reasons why young people refuse support and that

there is a belief they hold that they don't have a problem. The children's social care team do not take first refusal only and maintain trying to provide support.

Councillor Peter Walker asked what work was being undertaken in Merton to address mental health issues and well being thinking about the impact on substance misuse. Paul Angeli explained that the potential health problems result from cannabis misuse and further potential misuse. Mental health needs of LAC are monitored and data is submitted to the DfE in line with comparators. There are also psychology services within the LAC service, mental health screening and therapeutic support and CAMHS provide a range of support services.

Councillor Debbie Shears commented that corporate parenting training should be part of the induction process for new and existing councillors.

Councillor Maxi Martin agreed and committed to this provision.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina asked what the trend had been over the last 4 years with regards to rates of teenage pregnancy and how we were doing in comparison to the rest of the country, furthermore with reference to LAC.

Paul Ballatt explained that the baseline figure was set by the previous government and that the data provided is based on that initial figure. Merton is one of the best authorities in London for reducing teenage pregnancies. Paul Ballatt advised that the data would be circulated after the meeting but that it may not be possible to segment this data according to LAC and other groups.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and expressed thanks.

8 EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION - UPDATE (Agenda Item 7)

Paul Ballatt explained that the last report received by the Panel on early intervention in April 2013 outlined that a review of the early intervention and prevention strategy had taken place and that the changes made were noted on page 44 of the report. This report reflects the position now and the services commissioned to support early intervention and prevention, as outlined at Appendix 1.

The Local authority is required to review the decisions taken and the changes in place over the next few months and the review will determine if the measures are fit for purpose and if the correct services have been commissioned.

Councillor Maxi Martin added that early intervention was critical.

Councillor Oonagh Moulton enquired about how performance of the commissioned services was being monitored. Paul Ballatt added that a model was in place for this purpose. Data returns are received and discussed quarterly at meetings with all of the organisations. The council is keen to drive up standards and is undertaking capacity building with the organisations commissioned to deliver services.

Councillor Linda Taylor asked what was being done to prevent FGM (female genital mutilation). Paul Ballatt explained that there had been only one case that was suspected of FGM in Merton which turned out not to be the case. The importance of raising local awareness is key.

Janet Martin explained that a programme was also in place to raise awareness and train teachers and that this was discussed regularly at meetings with representatives that have expertise in this area to ensure schools can identify and report concerns.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina confirmed that this was being discussed at the school where she was a governor and that third sector groups were working very hard to deliver services in this area, including the work of volunteers. Paul Ballatt confirmed that training for partners was also delivered through the London Safeguarding Council Board and confirmed that a number of services were delivered, in part, by volunteers. The importance of up skilling volunteers and building community resistance was therefore key.

Councillor Jeff Hanna proposed that this be discussed further when the Panel consider the school standards item in February 2014.

The Panel asked that action taken to prevent FGM be included next year's early intervention and prevention strategy business plan. Furthermore they wished to add that they welcomed the voluntary work being undertaken in this area.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and expressed thanks.

9 CSF UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor James Holmes asked about Raynes Park Secondary School and the improvement in this school. Jan Martin confirmed that the school had an excellent head teacher and that this was reflected in their Ofsted report. The school had been rated as satisfactory under the old regime and that she was confident that the school was improving. Councillor Jeff Hanna noted that the

'satisfactory' rating previously received should have been included in the report.

Councillor Peter Walker asked if the report on Lonesome and Raynes Park would be going to school standards meeting soon. Jan Martin confirmed that this would be the case.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report and the outcomes of Sherwood, Wimbledon College and Brightwell Schools with pleasure.

10 CSF PERFORMANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 10)

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina expressed her dissatisfaction against targets that had not been met and were currently classified as red or amber, particularly in relation to Line 2 of the performance information provided in relation to single assessments completed within 45 days.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked for clarification on how the review of the timeliness of the completion of single assessments was progressing.

Paul Angeli explained that the performance regime on management of single assessments has changed since September 2013. There was a rise in the number of assessments earlier in the year and changes have taken place and the backlog has been addressed. None of the assessments have gone over the 45 day target and managers are currently looking at how to have a more robust approach across the system. Paul Angeli explained that there needed to be some caution in how performance against this target was read as a number of children are currently not residing in Merton and therefore visits can be attempted but not completed. This then impacts on performance.

Councillor Jeff Hanna asked what proportion of missed visits could be attributed to performance issues in relation to social workers. Paul Angeli confirmed that this was 25% of the 20% of visits missed.

Councillor James Holmes commented on the best way of measuring performance and asked for a discussion on alternative, more robust and appropriate measures.

RESOLVED: Panel noted the report.

11 PLANNING THE PANELS WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14 (Agenda Item 11)

Councillor Jeff Hanna proposed to the Panel that they consider an item on children's health services at the Panels January 2014 meeting. This was agreed.

Councillor James Holmes informed the Panel that he had held discussions with Paul Ballatt, Councillor Jeff Hanna and Rebecca Redman in relation to making scrutiny more effective and the Panel being able to add value. He proposed that the Panel and officers take the following forward to ensure that the Panel could undertake more effective scrutiny:

- Executive summaries – strategic objectives, intended outcomes, what the Panel are being asked to do should be more detailed and clearer;
- Training – as part of induction for new and existing councillors on how to question and interrogate/understand reports following the elections in 2014;
- Benchmarking – to be included as standard in all reports to provide information about how we are performing against comparator authorities;
- Expert advisors/witnesses – to attend Panel meetings to advise Members;
- Lines of enquiry – drawn up by the Scrutiny Officer further to undertaking research in this area to enable a fuller discussion

Paul Ballatt agreed that this could be actioned but asked Panel to note that these actions would need to be considered on an item by item basis and where they are appropriate. The Panel doesn't receive many pre-decision items which also impacts on what the Panel are being asked to do with the items they consider. Paul Ballatt added that he would welcome further training for Members in the work of the CSF department.

RESOLVED: Panel agreed to include an item on health services for children and young people on the work programme for the January 2014 meeting; to request officers to use executive summaries and bench-marking as far as possible in reports for the current work programme, and to leave other suggestions for further consideration for the coming year.