

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
9 OCTOBER 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.25 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Sally Kenny (in the Chair),
Councillor Edward Gretton, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Omar Bush, Helen Forbes, Councillor Natasha Irons,
Councillor Mark Kenny, Councillor Hayley Ormrod,
Councillor Dennis Pearce and Councillor Eleanor Stringer

Paul Angeli (Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Mark Gwynne (Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance, Children, Schools and Families) and Rachael Wardell (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Co-opted Member Emma Lemon, and Councillor Ed Foley.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record

4 REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY (Agenda Item 4)

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion gave an overview of the report which sets out the proposals for adoption team's functions to transfer into a regional adoption agency. He highlighted that Merton received an outstanding rating for their adoption service during the last Ofsted Inspection. Adopt London South will be the largest regional adoption agency in the country, bringing together ten local authorities across South London. It will increase efficiency by bringing resources together, increase the number of potential adopters and adoptions whilst speeding up the process. Southwark will lead service, and a local hub will be delivered from Merton. Delivery will begin by June 2019.

Panel members asked if Merton will receive sufficient resources to meet the needs of local children and sought reassurance that it will not weaken the good work Merton has been doing. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion

reported that Merton has a strong staff team and will build on existing good practice, at least two local authorities within Adopt South London have achieved outstanding Ofsted status. The Director of Children and Families has experience of supporting this process. We need to hold the model to account and scrutiny will retain oversight of how it is performing.

In response to questions it was reported that this process is not likely to result in any redundancies.

Panel members asked to be kept informed as work progresses.

RESOLVED

Progress with the Regional Adoption Agency to be included in the department update report.

5 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

The cabinet member for Education gave an update of her priorities highlighting the following;

Cricket green expansion - Cabinet approval has been granted

Harris academy will go to planning in November – a water main has been identified, which may result in some short delays as the plans for the site need to be re-drawn.

Stanford School has become an Academy - The academy will work closely with the council.

In response to questions the Cabinet member reported that in regards to concerns about air pollution next to Harris Academy, the Mayor of London team is working with the council and taking advice from them. Harris has reported that the entrance of school will have a line of trees and they will use filters in the building to try and mitigate the problem.

A panel member highlighted that A-level results in Merton are only slightly above national average. It was agreed that this could require further scrutiny although it is important not to become fixated on league tables which can disadvantage those who do meet strict criteria to study A- levels. This in turn could impact their chances of gaining a place at university.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave an overview of her priorities highlighting the following;

The department is working on implementing the recommendations from the recent Ofsted inspection including developing health histories which are of practical use to care leavers.

A key priority is to ensure the voice of children and young people is included in a wide range of consultations across the borough, not just those which directly affect their services. For example they will be consulted on the Local Plan.

6 DEPARTMENT UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Children Schools and Families gave an overview of the report. A panel member asked about the implications of the planning application delay at Harris Wimbledon and if there is a contingency plan in place. The Director of Children Schools and Families said they can still deliver the site on time and this is under constant monitoring. As a last resort they will have to look for additional space on another site.

A panel member sought reassurance that the school expansion at Cricket Green will not reduce the quality of the school. The Director of Children Schools and Families said she is absolutely committed to keeping standards.

A panel member asked for the knife crime action plan to be brought to a future meeting.

RESOLVED

Knife crime action plan to be brought to a future panel meeting

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Director of Children Schools and Families said some performance targets need to be understood within a range of expected outcomes rather than a numerical figure as this is not in the interest of young people. For example, children on a child protection plan cannot be determined by a percentage but must be driven by the needs of individual children.

The Panel agreed that the performance leads will play an important role in analysing the data set to ensure we maintain high standards in every area of children's services.

The Chair invited the Performance leads Councillor Hayley Ormrod and Councillor Eleanor Stringer to comment on the current data set.

It was reported that each of the indicators had been considered in fine detail and as a result some changes had been made which are listed in the report.

In response to a question the Director of Children Schools and Families reported that most data issues with Mosaic have been resolved.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the performance leads and officers for their work.

8 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PLAN (Agenda Item 8)

The Director of Children Schools and Families gave an overview of the report, highlighting that young people had identified outcomes which are important to them

A panel member said it is important to identify activities for older teenagers.

RESOLVED

Officers were thanked for their report.

9 CARE LEAVER ACCOMMODATION REFERENCE (Agenda Item 9)

The Director of Children Schools and Families said the report contained an update following the actions that have been put in place.

A panel member asked how antisocial behaviour is being tackled. The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said those who work with vulnerable young people recognise they may have had behaviour issues in the past and need support. In rare cases young people or may have to elsewhere to more supported housing provision.

A panel member asked how the council is encouraging independence, the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said young people are moved towards independence from the age of 14 as from age 21 young people receive a reduced level of service from the local authority.

A panel member asked if Merton owns the SIA's and housing of multiple occupation. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion, said we do not own these properties, they are provided by contractors. Accommodation is a challenging environment given the high property prices in London and the South East, with lowest costs only in other parts of the country.

10 CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES USER VOICE FRAMEWORK - END OF TERM REVIEW. (Agenda Item 10)

The Director of Children Schools and Families said the report contained examples of young people being involved and experiences of children and young people, care leavers from the year 2017-18.

A panel member highlighted that if 94% of children felt safe in their home, what support and provision is available to the others. The Director of Children Schools and Families said some will be known to children's services and will be receiving support and others will not.

A panel member asked if every care leaver has the opportunity to give feedback. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said there is duty upon local authorities to listen to looked after children, and listen to the views of children. There is a six monthly process review for those in care who also have access to advocacy. There is a bright spot report on care leavers which will be shared with this panel in due course.

A panel member asked if there is waiting list for Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion said there is a good offer in Merton as we have our own CAMHS team, however there is diagnosis waiting time for Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

RESOLVED

Officers were thanked for their report

11 SCRUTINY REVIEW: CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH TASK GROUP - UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 11)

The Task Group Chair , Councillor Natasha Irons, gave an overview of the report highlighting they had gathered evidence from speaking to CAMHS and commissioners within the council however they are still to refine the scope of the review and determine their terms of reference.

Panel members suggested the review could look at good practice in schools and how parents are involved within CAMHS services. Councillor Irons reported that speaking to parents will be a priority for the task group.

There needs to be one process for commissioning a whole system approach setting out how it all work together and is joined up, so can children access themselves without going through a professional.

Councillor Ormrod highlighted that the task group could also identify any additional areas that could be included in the performance monitoring data set.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the task group for their work.

12 WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19 (Agenda Item 12)

A panel member asked for a greater focus on schools and education as most of the future agenda items relate to children's services.

Councillor Agatha Akiyigina said she is the chair of the School Standards Panel and they visit schools, and meet with head teachers and they are subject to rigorous scrutiny. This Panel receives the school standards report. It was agreed to provide the panel with details of school standards membership.

RESOLVED

Panel to receive details of the membership of the School Standards Panel.