

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
7 NOVEMBER 2018

(7.15 pm - 9.20 pm)

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

Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Jane
McSherry (Assistant Director of Education), Tom Procter (Head
of Contracts & School Organisation) and Rachael Wardell
(Director, Children, Schools & Families Department)

Councillor Kelly Braund, Cabinet Member for Children's Services
and Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, (Cabinet Member for
Education)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Emma Lemon, Co-opted member.

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

4 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2019-2023 (Agenda Item 10)

The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on the Business Plan. A report to Council in February stated the budget gap was £1.3 million rising to £18 million by 2022-23. It is now expected that by end of 2022-23 there will be a budget shortfall £20.2 million as some adult social care grants are not continuing. The Director said she would welcome feedback on the equality impact assessments in order to feedback to Cabinet.

A panel member asked why the majority of savings will be taken in 2020-2021 The Director of Corporate Services said government grants come to end at

this time.

A panel asked the Director of Children Schools and Families to outline her biggest concern given the financial challenges. The Director of Children Schools and Families said there is very little capacity to offer early help or intervention; work with families who are not very vulnerable at present but may become more so in the future.

A panel member asked if additional monies become available for adult social care if this in turn will lead to more funds for children's services. The Director of Children Schools and Families said the Adult Social Care Green Paper will highlight conditions attached to new monies.

A panel member asked if more schools may become academies if funding is reduced. The Director of Children Schools and Families said this is a possibility, but finances are not any more a driving force to become a Academy as the original financial incentives no longer apply.

RESOLVED

The Director of Corporate Services was thanked for her report.

5 MERTON SAFEGUARDING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families and the Director of Quality & Governance, NHS Wandsworth & Merton CCG's gave an overview of the annual report describing it as a good reflection of the work over the year as there had been a strong partnership approach.

The Director of Quality & Governance, said there were on-going concerns about the timeliness of health assessments and there was a vacancy for the named GP role for the whole of the period. However it is hoped that a permanent appointment will be made shortly. Mental health and wellbeing for children is also a concern.

A panel member asked where the areas of concern are within the service when the next Ofsted inspection will take place. The Director of Children Schools and Families said the next inspection is unlikely to be an inspection of safeguarding arrangements. It is more likely to be a Special Educational Needs and Disability inspection. However the safeguarding inspection framework has changed and the next inspection (Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services ILACS) will be different from the recent one.

A panel member asked what work will be undertaken to engage with fathers. The Director of Children Schools and Families said they are providing training, and ensuring fathers are more involved in assessments.

A panel member asked how they are addressing development areas highlighted during the inspection. The Director of Children Schools and Families said it is a Board priority, including early help and working with the wider family to find solutions. There is a need to join up working across children and adults services. Another area of work includes adolescent vulnerability, including youth violence and knife crime.

A panel member asked for clarity on the definition of illegal schools. The Director of Children Schools and Families said establishments of this nature are operating to the definition of a school but without being registered with the Department for Education or inspected so operating illegally. Merton work alongside neighbouring boroughs to identify and report them.

A panel member asked if there have been any prosecutions against illegal schools. The Director of Children, Schools and Families said the Department for Education and Ofsted lead on enforcement, but we have to provide support and evidence for prosecution. The Council's focus is to work with parents to ensure children are in appropriate schools rather than to pursue action through the courts.

RESOLVED

The chair thanked officers for their report.

6 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

The Cabinet member for Education said there had been little change since the last Panel. She provided the following update:

The Cabinet Member expressed concern that West Wimbledon Primary school moved from outstanding to requiring improvement in their latest Ofsted inspection

The Cabinet Member expressed concern about the need to make savings, especially in early years. The Cabinet member commended the hard work of teachers in alternative provision.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services provided the following update:

As a high outcome low cost borough future savings rounds will be challenging. As corporate parents it is important to think about the impact and think we need full and frank conversations about the savings.

The Cabinet Member has made a number of visits including to; the violence against women and girls meeting, a children's home and Acacia Centre. The Cabinet Member also participated in the Start Well planning session for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

A panel member asked for a briefing following the Ofsted inspection at West Wimbledon and expressed concern that Cabinet was not aware of the downgrading of the school. The Director of Children Schools and Families said a briefing can be provided in due course. Details of the inspection remain confidential until a report from Ofsted is released. The Department ensure Ofsted inspections are evaluated. The School Improvement Panel offers support and is aware of the issues.

A panel member asked what lessons were learned from this recent Ofsted inspection. The Director of Children, Schools and Families said support was in place, and a new senior leadership team had recently been appointed. There would very likely have been a better outcome if the inspection had taken place later in the year.

7 DEPARTMENT UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families said since the last meeting of this Panel was only four weeks ago there had not been any significant change.

A panel member expressed concern about high levels air pollution surrounding the Harris Wimbledon School site. It was asked if there will be an air filtration system which will include carbon filters. The Head of Contracts & School Organisation said the proposals for the school will be presented to the Planning Committee and will be considered by experts.

A panel member said there is evidence that filtrations are not effective in tackling air pollution, alternatives included considering ways to reduce idling traffic. Merton Abbey is looking at ways to reduce exposure which will benefit new schools.

The Head of Contracts & School Organisation said air pollution at the Merton Abbey school site had been recorded specifically as part of an audit and were at safe levels. A panel member has asked for details on air quality report for Abbey /Harris school. The Panel agreed to include a report on air quality around schools to the work programme.

RESOLVED

A report on air quality around schools to be considered at a future meeting.

8 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 8)

Performance Monitoring report

It was reported there was no significant change since the last meeting.

9 WORK PROGRAMME 2018-19 (Agenda Item 9)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families said the Knife crime action plan will be presented at a future meeting. The Panel may wish to hold a young people's scrutiny meeting to discuss knife crime. Alternatively young people could be invited to a future panel meeting to discuss this issue.

In response to a request from the Panel, the Assistant Director of Education agreed to provide a report with overview on the Harris academies as context for discussion at the meeting in January.

The Panel also requested a report in the new municipal year on Academies in Merton, including off-rolling.

RESOLVED

The Panel agreed to update the work programme to reflect the discussion.

10 SCHOOL PROVISION REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Head of Contracts & School Organisation introduced the report, stating there had been a significant change in the supply and demand for school places. This began with a huge increase in primary numbers now there is a decline. The increase from primary schools is now moving through to secondary. There is increased demand in special schools for school places.

A panel member asked how housing factored into the forecasts. The Head of Contracts & School Organisation said Greater London Authority population projections take into account housing capacity data and estimated builds that then feed into the pupil forecasts.

A panel member asked for information on the Published Admission Numbers (PANS) in primary school. It was agreed that the information can be provided.

In response to a question about the decreased retention from Merton primary schools to secondary school from 2009-2016, it was reported that the reasons for pupils moving out of borough correlates with expansions over the border including grammar schools.

A panel member raised concern that about the lack of school provision in the north of the borough for those wanting a single sex boys school.

RESOLVED

The Head of Contracts & School Organisation was thanked for the report.