

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

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

Agenda item:

Wards: All

## **Subject: Update on Developments Affecting Children, Schools and Families Department**

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director of Children, Schools and Families Dept

Lead members: Cllr Katy Neep, Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

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### **Recommendations:**

A. Members of the panel discuss and comment on the contents of the report.

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1. The report provides members of the panel with information on key developments affecting Children, Schools and Families Department since the panel's last meeting in October 2016.

## **2 DETAILS**

2.1 Members of the Panel will be aware of the council's transformation agenda driven by our medium term financial strategy and our ambition to become 'London's Best Council'. Departments have reviewed and refreshed their Target Operating Models (TOMs) for delivery over the coming years. CSF Department has already made significant savings and has implemented a wide range of service developments in line with our evolving TOM and key information has been provided to the panel in a range of reports to date.

2.2 In the next phase of our TOM delivery, there will be significant organisational change across the department. In order to deliver savings noted in the Business Plan Update report elsewhere on this agenda (CSF2016-01) the posts of Assistant Director Commissioning, Strategy and Performance and Head of Family and Adolescent Services will be deleted with their current work portfolios transferred to other managers in the department.

2.3 In respect of the current Commissioning, Strategy and Performance Division, the Contracts and School Organisation service will be transferred to the Assistant Director for Education. At the same time, the procurement and contract management of non-fleet SEN passenger transport will be transferred to this service area from the Environment and Regeneration department. The CSF department's Access to Resources service will be transferred to the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion. As part of our TOM implementation, the current Joint Commissioning and Partnerships service

will become part of an integrated commissioning unit (possibly incorporating CCG children's services commissioning) under the line management of the Director of Public Health. The Policy Planning and Performance service in CSF will be directly managed by the Director of Children, Schools and Families department.

- 2.4 Temporary arrangements are already in place for the management of the department's Family and Adolescent services with other Heads of Service taking on interim management of specific FAS functions including Transforming Families and Youth Offender services. Longer term organisational change will be considered over the next few months in order to prepare for significant additional staffing savings required across the department in 2018-19 and 2019-20 (CSF2015-09).
- 2.5 A draft top-level structure chart for the department from April 2017 is contained in **Appendix One**.
- 2.6 Merton has been active, with Croydon, in co-ordinating the London response to the arrival of children brought to the UK from Calais under the Dublin III Treaty. About 200 children were brought to the UK between 15th and 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. These were children identified as having a possible family connection in the UK. At the time of writing this report over a dozen children had identified a family connection with Merton and, following our assessments of receiving families' ability to care for those children, have been supported to join those families.
- 2.7 The next phase of the process is for children identified under what is now referred to as the Dubs amendment in the House of Lords to be supported in this country. This will see several hundred unaccompanied children, with no pre-existing connection to this country but considered to be most vulnerable, arrive in Britain who, following assessment under Children Act 1989 duties, will become looked after children to local authorities.
- 2.8 London has a long established regional system for distributing unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) over 16. Under that scheme Merton is part of a 'rota' of London councils which receive young people arriving in this country on a monthly basis. The Government has been attempting to put in place a national dispersal scheme for under and over 16s affected by the Calais camp closure and has asked all local authorities to take the equivalent of 0.07% of their child populations. London authorities collectively are already significantly over this 'cap' although Merton is not and would need to be allocated an additional 18 young people before it reached that threshold. With a care population of usually somewhere between 150 and 160 young people this would have a significant impact on our numbers of LAC and care leavers, with challenges in seeking appropriate placements for these young people and significant budget pressures arising. Merton's DCS is co-ordinating London's response to the emerging need and further information will be provided to members on the specific implications for Merton as they become clearer.
- 2.9 The Home office, NHS England and the Mayor of London have been working together to establish two 'Child Houses' in London to improve the multi-agency response to children subject to child sexual abuse and exploitation. This provision will offer child friendly accommodation in which police, social care and health practitioners can conduct investigations and assessments and provide support to children. Although precise locations of the 'child houses' are currently

embargoed, one will be established in the south west sector of the capital and will be readily accessible for Merton children and agencies.

- 2.10 As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we have recently commissioned an external audit of the work of our Youth Justice Service. We will use the audit findings to further improve, in particular, our casework with young offenders. We are also preparing for a monitoring visit from DCLG to our Transforming Families Service and expect a positive evaluation of the local programme. The service has continued to be effective in 'turning around' families with multiple challenges and this should enable our 'payment by results' claim to be in the region of £100-£150,000 in 2016-17.
- 2.11 Ofsted has recently commenced a new inspection programme examining the effectiveness of local agencies' implementation of the SEN and Disabilities elements/duties of the Children and Families Act 2014. In particular, the inspection will examine progress in the implementation of Education, Health and Care Plans; the 'local offer' of services provided or available to this group; arrangements for the preparation for adulthood of young people with SEND and transitions arrangements with adults' services. In preparation for this inspection, officers are preparing a self-evaluation and are engaging with key partner agencies in this process.
- 2.12 Wimbledon Park, the Priory and Links primary schools have been inspected by Ofsted since the last update report. To date, inspection reports have not been published and ratings will be provided in a future report to panel.
- 2.13 Merton's Adventure Playground based at the Acacia Children's Centre has been nominated and shortlisted for the national Aviva Playground of the Year Award. Richard Brown, Head of Performing Arts at Cricket Green School, has won the 'Excellence in Special Needs Education' category in the coveted national Pearson Teaching Awards.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### **4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### **5. TIMETABLE**

- 5.1 N/A

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

- 6.1 No specific implications from this report.

### **7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 No specific implications from this report..

**8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 No specific implications from this report.

**9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 No specific implications from this report.

**10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 No specific implications from this report..

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

1.1. High Level Structure Chart from April 2017

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 None