

Agenda Item 3

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 16 JANUARY 2019

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

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

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Kelly Braund - Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah - Cabinet Member for Education

Caroline Holland - Director of Corporate Services

Rachael Wardell - Director, Children, Schools & Families Department

Jane McSherry - Assistant Director of Education

Paul Angeli – Head of Social Care and Inclusion

Sharon Buckby – Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance

Tom Procter - Head of Contracts & School Organisation and
Elise McQueen – Head of Looked after Children

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Colin Powell, Co-opted Representative, sent his apologies

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The Panel reminded officers that the air quality report for the Merton Abbey/Harris Wimbledon new site area had not been forwarded to them.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

4 HARRIS ACADEMY WIMBLEDON (Agenda Item 4)

The Panel welcomed Sir Daniel Moynihan, CEO of Harris Federation, Tom Webster - Commercial Director Harris Federation and Joanne Larizadeh – Principal of Harris Academy Wimbledon to the meeting

The panel noted the briefing report in the agenda.

Sir Daniel addressed the Panel and spoke about the achievements made by the Harris Federation, including:

- Harris Federation has 47 academy schools, all in London, with 30,000 students and 4,000 teachers
- Harris Schools are generally in disadvantaged areas, many were previously in Special Measures. The national average is for 20% of Schools to achieve OFSTED outstanding . 78% of Harris Schools are outstanding and the rest are good – including all in Merton
- Harris Federation is highly effective in generating social mobility, with high performance by children who receive free school meals and by children from ethnic minorities.
- The Harris model is that of a central team which ensures consistency and is strong on systems and data.
- Harris Merton has just expanded to 8 forms
- Harris Morden was judged Outstanding by OFSTED last year, with GCSEs well above average, it was 2nd in borough this year
- Harris Primary – outstanding last year, 86% met expectations in KS2 SATs and was 5th in borough
- Harris Wimbledon – new build finished in 2020 will have 1150 pupils with 250 in the sixth Form

Sir Daniel answered Panel Member Questions and made points including:

- Harris Federation is not focussed on growth, we are most concerned about standards
- We are a Federation not a chain – we don't want every school to be the same, we want Heads to adapt to the local needs. A good education looks different in different areas
- We do have counsellors in all schools but our evidence suggests that there is greatest need in 6th form, and so we have put money into a new scheme across our sixth forms
- Our Exclusions are relatively low, but they are sometimes necessary. We do have our own Pupil Referral Unit that has achieved good results. For pupils who are permanently excluded the local Authority must arrange suitable full-time education to begin no later than the 6th day.
- Performance of SEN pupils is one of the excellent areas across Harris Schools – our performance by SEN pupils is above average and one of our best performing groups – we invest a great deal

- We have always had a good relationship with Merton. We could do more work with Merton – we have large teacher training and teacher development program – happy to do more work with Merton in these areas.
- Harris Federation does manage School funding monies, some Schools get more money than others, and if a school has a need we can fund this e.g. when we opened Harris Morden we invested £½ million in new IT.
- We are good at managing our budget and ensure tight financial controls. We employ high quality business managers who centrally manage the budget. We are externally audited
- We are very successful at external fundraising and use this extra money for special projects such as 1:1 work at key stage 4, for bursaries for children from low income families to go to university, and extra teachers in year 6. Money raised by direct approaches to charitable trusts and City organisations who are interested in supporting us
- We have huge focus on social mobility as many children are capable of going to university but don't believe that they can. We also send children on to higher apprenticeships
- 90% of our schools operate with a surplus – but it may not be a large surplus.

The Panel thanked Sir Daniel for attending the meeting and Jo Larizadeh, Principal, for the visit to Harris Wimbledon the previous day.

5 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2019-2023 (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Corporate Services presented her report on the Business Plan Update 2019-23. The Panel noted that this included both items 5 and 6. The Panel noted that the budget for the Children, Schools and Families Department was balanced for 2019-20 but that there was a large budget gap of £1.8 million of savings still to find for 20-21, with a further £740k to find by 2022/23. The Children Schools and Families department has a lower ratio of savings than other departments. The Director of Children, Schools and Families explained that work was ongoing to consider savings in all areas of the department but she did not believe that any easy savings would be found.

The Panel noted that three (CSF 2018-11, CSF 2018-12 and CSF 2018-07) of the savings had an equality impact assessment of 3, (meaning that they would have a high impact but mitigation may be possible.) Regarding CSF 2018-07 the panel noted that work with young people who were not in education or training (NEET) would continue and there would be a focus on the most vulnerable young people. The Director of Corporate services said she would circulate the information regarding the categories of result for Equality Impact Assessments.

The Head of Social Care and Youth Inclusion asked the Panel to consider the high level of complexity when making savings across the department. Savings made in

one service area can then create additional pressure in other services, it is important that system is considered as a whole. He also reminded members of the need to consider sensitivities regarding existing post holders. He reminded Members that the department does benchmark against other authorities and look at different balances.

The Panel noted the work already done regarding saving costs on School Transport and that ideas will be shared with neighbouring boroughs. Officers were asked if they could bring forward any savings, but replied that they would rather carry out cost cutting in a careful and planned way and not make cuts before they were needed.

Councillor Ed Gretton proposed a Motion, this was seconded by Councillor Omar Bush. The motion was:

CYP & Schools Funding Motion – that the Panel approve a recommendation that CYP carry out assessments as soon as possible in advance of and for the purposes of identifying and generating potential savings and support within the 2019/20 Budget and beyond:

- *Shared Services in CYP, to identify which services are not yet shared with other local authorities and recommend which services could potentially be shared, either generally, or in the context of other local authorities already sharing similar types of Children’s Services*
- *Education Services sold to schools, to identify Services available for sale to schools but which are not fully taken up and bought in by Merton Schools and establish a plan to further promote the provision of such services both across schools in Merton and also potentially to other local authorities*
- *Extra Revenue for Schools, to identify ways in which local schools generate extra revenues (e.g. from community use, rent from weekend farmers markets) and circulate a summary guide of best practice examples that all our local schools can consider to support them with their own budgets and financial planning*

The panel discussed the Motion and noted that much of this work had been covered by two previous Scrutiny task groups; Shared and Outsourced Services and Commercialisation and Income Generation both completed in 2016.

A vote was taken and the Motion was lost. The Chair asked the Director of Corporate Services to circulate the previous task group reports, and following panel member suggestions agreed that at the appropriate time a further Task Group on these issues could be considered for inclusion in the work programme.

Members asked the Director of Corporate Finance about the figures regarding depreciation of School buildings. She explained that the figures were based on the CIPFA formula.

Councillor Ed Gretton proposed a further Motion, this was seconded by Councillor Omar Bush. The motion was:

Merton Music Foundation Motion – That the Panel approve a recommendation that CYP find an additional equivalent saving to allow CYP to continue to fund Merton Music Foundation to £25k for 2019/20 in view of the resulting beneficial match funding it would generate, the support by MMF in teaching music to disadvantaged children, and in view of the strong preventive support that music provides as means of combatting mental health problems in young persons

Both the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of CSF asked the Panel to note that there was no money available to continue this funding. A vote was taken and the motion was lost.

The Chair thanked Officers for their work on this item.

6 BUSINESS PLAN 2019-23 SAVINGS PROPOSALS INFORMATION PACK (Agenda Item 6)

See Item 5

7 CORPORATE PARENTING - ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Looked After Children, Elise McQueen presented the Annual Corporate Parenting Report.

A member asked about the 'staying put' initiative, where young people are encouraged to stay with their current foster carer beyond the age of 18. This has many benefits for the young person but reduces the number of foster carers for new placements. Officers explained that this was linked to the recruitment drive to find more local Foster Careers, as local foster care enables children and young people to stay close to family, friends and school, and it will save money. The Panel noted that the recruitment drive for foster carers was being targeted using knowledge of what does and doesn't work.

A question was asked about care leavers' accommodation and the panel noted that each care leaver has a pathway plan that includes a housing pathway that will meet their need.

The Panel asked about current adoption figures and heard that there are currently two children waiting to be adopted, and that 9 children were adopted in the year 2017-18. Officers reported that National adoption figures are going down.

The Panel noted that immunisation figures will include young people up to 18 who may choose not to give their consent, and unaccompanied asylum seekers whose immunisation history is uncertain.

The Panel asked about support for carers and noted that all foster carers receive training and ongoing support

The Panel thanked Elise for her work and the report.

RESOLVED

The Panel noted the Annual Corporate Parenting Report

8 PREVENT TASK GROUP - ACTION PLAN REVIEW (Agenda Item 8)

The Panel noted the report on the Implementation of the Prevent Action Plan. Following a discussion on how Prevent work could be supported going forward, The Director of Children, Schools and Families suggested that she include Prevent as a heading in her Departmental Update. As there are few prevent referrals coming through this would ensure that any significant change in local circumstance would be reported to the panel

RESOLVED

The Panel noted the Prevent Action Plan and asked the Director of CSF to use the departmental update to report them.

9 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 9)

Councillor Caroline Cooper-Marbiah Cabinet Member for Education gave an update:

- Visited the new Harris Wimbledon School and spoken with the Head Teacher, she was pleased to see that the pupils have settled well
- The initial reports of Merton Results are very good and Merton children are making very good progress
- Schools are working together, the School Effectiveness Partnership, and are focused on teacher retention, training and sharing good practice

Councillor Kelly Braund – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services gave an update:

- On Monday 14 January Cabinet approved both the Council Tax reduction for Care Leavers up to the age of 25, and the joint reference from the Youth

Parliament and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission regarding Keeping Young People safe in Merton

- The Youth Parliament carried out its own consultation on Safety in Merton and how it affects them. It is important to have their voices heard and thank for those who helped
- The OFSTED focussed visit is in progress

10 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 10)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families presented her departmental update report. She asked Members to note the following:

- That the MSCB Partnership Agreement (paragraph 2.3 in the report) has now been approved by the MSCB and will be presented to Stakeholders
- The bid to participate in the Contextual Safeguarding project (paragraph 2.14) has been successful.
- The OFSTED 'focused' visit is currently underway. This is a focused visit not an inspection and we will get a letter with a narrative account of the quality of our progress (rather than a report containing a judgement) in middle of February

In reply to Members questions, The Assistant Director – Education answered that she was aware of the difference in primary results, with reading and maths being ahead of writing, and that these assessments rely on Teacher Assessment and are currently an area of focus. She also confirmed that the Harris Schools are not part of the 'Attain' program

RESOLVED

The Panel noted the departmental update

11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 11)

The Interim Head of Policy, Planning and Performance presented her report on Performance Monitoring November 2018. The Panel noted that she had discussed the performance data with the lead Members for performance monitoring, Councillors Eleanor Stringer and Hayley Ormrod prior to meeting. The panel noted the areas requiring ongoing work, as highlighted in the report. The Assistant Director for Education thanked Sharon Buckby for her work on improving the performance data.

RESOLVED

The Panel noted the Performance Report.

12 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 12)

The Panel noted the Work Programme 2018-19

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