

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

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Agenda item: 9

Wards:

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

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

Lead members: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cllr Martin Whelton

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

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### **Recommendations:**

A. Members of the panel note 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 update report in February 2014.

## **2 DETAILS**

2.1 Two further Ofsted school inspections have taken place since the panel's last meeting – a full inspection at Morden primary school and an HMI monitoring visit at Garden primary school. At the time of writing, reports have not been published.

2.2 Parents have made preferences for primary school admission in September 2014 with the formal 'offer day' being April 16th. Additional reception classes compared to last year are being provided at Poplar and Singlegate primary schools as part of permanent expansion plans of which panel will already be aware and an additional 'bulge' class has been agreed at Garfield primary school. With this additional capacity provided, officers are confident that all parents will receive a reasonable offer for September 2014 admission.

2.3 Offers have already been made to parents of pupils transferring into secondary education in September 2014. All parents have been made a reasonable offer of a school place although a small number have been provided with a central LA offer.

2.4 National consultation has recently been initiated by the DfE on major reforms to the school funding system. Central government has acknowledged unfairness in the current system which the proposed reforms are designed to begin to address and significant additional funding is to be allocated in 2015-16 to support this aim. A guarantee is being given that no local authority's or school's funding level per pupil will fall as a result of the proposed changes. Some 60 local authorities are likely to benefit through additional funding including LB

Merton. Indicative figures show that if the changes are confirmed, the council's DSG funding will increase by some 6% or £6million for 2015-16. This will clearly benefit Merton overall although implications for individual schools has not yet been assessed.

- 2.5 At the time of writing this report, the Children and Families Bill is due to receive Royal Assent. Previous reports to panel have described major changes to be introduced via the new Act in provision for children with SEN and disabilities; looked after children and in adoption and family justice procedures. Key elements of the new Act include:
- A new 0-25yrs education, health and social care service for children with SEN and disabilities. A new SEN statutory code of practice is to be published to support these changes. Significant preparation work has been undertaken and Merton is about to pilot new assessment and planning models required to meet the terms of the Act.
  - New provisions relating to looked after children including a new highly ambitious 26 week time limit for completing care proceedings designed to improve the timeliness of adoption and permanency; new duties enabling young people placed with foster carers to remain in their placements to age 21yrs; and a requirement, already met in Merton, for all authorities to employ a Headteacher of a 'virtual school' for looked after children.
  - Extension of eligibility for Free School Meals to all primary pupils in reception and years one and two classes. Preparation work is currently underway with all primary schools and school meals contractors to ensure necessary works to kitchens are completed and additional equipment provided to enable this requirement to be met from September 2014.
  - A requirement to provide clearer information to carers, including young carers, on support available to them. Merton already commissions bespoke services for young carers and the delivery of our young carers strategy is overseen by the MSCB. The provision in the Act will prompt further raising of the profile of young carers as well as a refresh of our overall strategy.
- 2.6 Following the resignation of the previous postholder, a new independent chair of Merton's Safeguarding Children Board, Keith Makin, has been appointed and has taken up his new role.
- 2.7 CSF has recently refreshed its Target Operating Model (TOM) as part of the corporate work to develop analysis and strategies for the nine components or "layers" that underpin proposals for transformation and ongoing change. CSF's plans further develop and build on the extensive change we have delivered over the past few years before and since the presentation of the initial TOM in 2010, to concurrently improve services for children and families and achieve substantial savings. The most significant issues for CSF under each of the layers are as follows:
- **Customers:** Our current child population of c47,000 is forecast to increase by between 7% and 12% by 2017. Combined with increasing diversity and deprivation, this will place increased pressure on services at the same time as we are required to make further savings and comply with additional legislative and regulatory requirements. Our overall strategy is to focus on statutory duties;

sharpen our preventative approach and focus on CYP at most risk or in most need, working in partnership with schools and other agencies.

- **Channels:** This is about how customers contact us and access services. Whilst the vast majority of CSF services will continue to be delivered face to face, there is scope for us to exploit the capabilities provided by the Customer Contact Programme to provide information, for first point of contact, and for cross-marketing of services. The Children and Families Act requires us to provide web access to care plans and the local offer for families of CYP with SEND, and we will consider extending similar access to other customers.
- **Services:** Key challenges include developing the Locality Model for Children's Centres and increasing the places for 2-year olds; addressing increasing pupil numbers and the raising of the participation age, via the ongoing and very substantial school expansion programme; implementing the additional requirements in the C&F Act, especially in relation to CYP with SEND; developing a viable universal youth offer with minimal funding; responding to changes in the national framework for youth justice; developing an exit strategy for Transforming Families; working with colleagues in C&H Department on consolidated approaches where housing is a primary need factor; and maintaining readiness for inspection with increased information and quality requirements.
- **Organisation:** This is about both our internal structures and the contracts and partnerships we have with outside bodies. CSF Department implemented a major restructure of social care services in 2012/13 with associated changes to assessment and other processes, and we are now embedding and refining where required. Extensive commissioning activity includes mental health, EIP, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy services; a range of approaches to foster carer recruitment; options for older LAC; as well as the ongoing procurement and contract management requirements of the school expansion programme. We are working with colleagues in public health and the local Clinical Commissioning Group to progress the joint commissioning of services and with the voluntary sector on the universal youth offer.
- **Processes and Information:** We keep our processes under regular review to ensure that they are efficient and effective, including in relation to safeguarding and other statutory requirements. We have developed our service metrics and performance reporting information, partly in response to inspection demand and partly to meet internal management need, but we are ambitious to further develop our performance framework, in particular through increasingly robust quality assurance.
- **Technology:** We are currently working on the procurement of a new social care and information system, which will be used to manage all our casework, and is to be implemented during 2015. We are also hoping to enter a sharing agreement with Kingston for the provision of a new school admissions service.

- **Physical Location:** We have released Worsfold and Athena Houses and Wyvern and Farm Rd youth facilities for sale or other use, and we continue to work with colleagues in corporate services on the flexible working programme, and opportunities for further consolidation of accommodation. We are engaging with the asset review, including in relation to options for school expansion.
- **People:** Challenges include recruitment of more childminders; temporary technical and project management resources; the implications of reductions in youth funding for youth workers; recruitment, retention and development of our social workers; and the design and maintenance of a cost effective L&D offering.

2.8 CSF's TOM will be subject to challenge by the council's Corporate Management Team in Spring 2014.

### **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.

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

7.1. No specific implications.

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

8.1. No specific implications.

### **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. No specific implications.

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

10.1. No specific implications.

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

- N/A

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. None

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