

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 3rd July 2014

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

Subject: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2014/15

Lead officer: Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Cllr Jeff Hanna, Chair of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Contact officer: Rebecca Redman: Rebecca.redman@merton.gov.uk 020 8545 4035

Recommendations:

That Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i) Consider their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion;
 - ii) Consider the methods by which the Panel would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
 - iii) Identify a Member to lead for performance monitoring on behalf of the Panel;
 - iv) Identify a Member to lead for budget scrutiny on behalf of the Panel;
 - v) Agree on an issue for scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the Task Group.
 - vi) Consider the appointment of co-opted members for the 2014/15 municipal year, to sit on the Panel and/or on the Task Group; and
 - vii) Inform the Scrutiny Officer of their views on their training and support needs.
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year.

1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:

- a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
- b) The roles and responsibilities of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
- c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with Members, senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;

- d) A summary of discussion by councillors and co-opted members at a topic selection workshop held on 11 June 2014; and
- e) Support available to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine, develop and deliver its 2014/15 work programme.

2. **Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme for 2014/15**

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2014/15 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have specific roles relating to budget and business plan scrutiny and to performance monitoring that should automatically be built into their work programmes. Members are recommended to appoint a Performance Monitoring Lead Member and a Business Plan/Budget Scrutiny Lead Member on behalf of the Panel.
- 2.3 Overview and Scrutiny Panels may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2014/15, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the Panel's work programme.

Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

- 2.5 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
 - **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the Authority and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
 - **Be ambitious** – Panels should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.

- **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Panel. For example Members may wish to questions officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.
- **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.6 There are a number of means by which the Overview and Scrutiny Panel can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Panel can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter ■ A variation of this model could be a single meeting to scrutinise an issues that, although important, does not merit setting up a ‘task-and-finish’ group.
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the wider Panel with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council ■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Panel may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report to give them more details.
Meeting with service officer/partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. ■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Panel needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Panel for discussion
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the panel if s/he still has concerns.

2.7 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the Panel may choose to take some “information only” items outside of Panel meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

- 2.8 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:
- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of each Panel to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;
 - Provide support for scrutiny Members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
 - Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
 - Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.
- 2.9 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to assess how they can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver their work programme for 2014/15.
- 2.10 The Panel is also invited to comment upon any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Team will take the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's views on board in developing the support that is provided.

3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme

- 3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference, with the Overview and Scrutiny Commission taking a coordinating role to ensure that any gaps or overlap in the scrutiny work programme are dealt with in a joined-up way.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has the following remit: -

- Children's social care, including child protection;
- Education, including school standards, special educational needs, the extended schools programme and the healthy schools initiative;
- Youth services and youth engagement including the Youth Parliament, young people 'Not in Education, Employment or Training';
- Youth offending;
- Children's Centres; and
- The Children's Trust

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as Panel agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS Sutton and Merton and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Other issues of public concern have been identified through the Annual Residents Survey. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- 3.2 A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.3 The councillors who attended a “topic selection” workshop on insert date discussed these suggestions.
- 3.4 The suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council’s strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.
- 3.5 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of this Panel is set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.6 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Panel. The Panel is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.
- 3.7 The Panel may also wish to select items for scrutiny from the presentations made by Directors and Cabinet Members (at the Panel’s meeting on insert date) or based on other public priorities of which Members are aware through their ward work.
- 3.8 Items on the Cabinet’s forward plan that relate to the remit of this Panel are listed in Appendix 5. The Panel may wish to include one or more of these issues in its work programme.
- 4. Task group reviews**
- 4.1 The Panel is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group in order to carry out the review.
- 4.2 A potential area for in-depth scrutiny was identified at the workshop: Leadership Succession Planning in schools.
- 5. Co-option to the Panel membership**
- 5.1 Scrutiny Panels can consider whether to appoint non-statutory (non-voting) co-optees to the membership, in order to add to the specific knowledge, expertise and understanding of key issues to aid the scrutiny function. Panels may also wish to consider whether it may be helpful to co-opt people from “seldom heard” groups.
- 6. Public involvement**
- 6.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Panel.

- 6.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if “seldom heard” groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.
- 6.3 This engagement will help the Panel to understand the service user’s perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Panel/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.
- 6.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Panel to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Panel members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2013/14. Overview and Scrutiny Panels are free to determine their work programme as they see fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.
- 7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Panel’s scrutiny work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:
- a. Members of the public have been approached using the following tools: articles in the local press, My Merton and Merton Together, request for suggestions from all councillors and co-opted members, letter to partner organisations and to a range of local voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
 - b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings, via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey 2014, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team direct; and
 - c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings.

9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.

11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.

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

- 14.1 Appendix I – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2014/15
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to this Overview & Scrutiny Panel's remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 11 June 2014

- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop
11 June 2014
- 14.5 Appendix 5 – Extract from Forward Plan
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None

Draft work programme for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meetings

Meeting date – 3rd July 2014

Item/Issue	Format
Departmental Overview and Member & Departmental Priorities for 2013/14	Main Item
Performance monitoring	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work Programme Planning	Information

Meeting date – 15th October 2014

Item/Issue	Format
Secondary School Places Strategy - Update	Main Item
Marketing Merton's Schools	Secondary Item
Executive Response and Action Plan – School Leadership Succession Planning	Secondary Item
Performance monitoring	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work Programme table	Information

Meeting date – 4th November 2014

Item/Issue	Format
Looked After Children – Annual Corporate Parenting Report	Main Item
Safeguarding Children – Annual Report of Merton's Safeguarding Children Board	Secondary Item
Local Authority role on reducing particular vulnerabilities faced by girls inc. gang activity, child sexual exploitation, FGM	Secondary Item
CSF budget proposals	Secondary Item
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Performance monitoring	Information
Work Programme table	Information

Meeting date 13th January 2015 – scrutiny of the budget

Item/Issue	Format
CSF Budget proposals	Main Item
Update on Transforming Families Initiative	Secondary Item
Update on Youth Offending Service inc. Preventative Approaches	Secondary Item
Performance Report	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Work programme table	Information

Meeting date 10th February 2015

Item/Issue	Format
School Standards	Main Item
The Role of Schools in Promoting the Broader Wellbeing of Children and Families	Secondary Item
Raising the Participation Age and Career Pathways for Young People	Secondary Item
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Performance Report	Information
Work programme table	Information

Meeting date – 24th March 2015

Item/Issue	Format
Children and Families Act 2014	Main Item
The Local Authority Role in promoting Access to Child Care and Early Education for Families	Secondary Item
Update on Public Health Services for children and families	Secondary Item
Performance Report	Information
Update on developments in the CSF department	Information
Planning the work programme 2013/14	Information

Description of topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2014/15

The following topics were suggested by residents, Members and officers, for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for their 2014/15 work programme.

Complaints relating to the remit of this Panel in 2012/13:

The council received 66 complaints in relation to services provided by the Children, Schools and Families Department. One of which related to the council's policy on education grants and 39 complaints related to social care and youth inclusion services, for which the council has a customer base of 50,000.

Annual Residents Survey 2013:

The council's Annual Residents Survey undertaken in 2013 found the following, which relates to the remit of this Panel and may be of interest in prioritising the issues the Panel wishes to scrutinise:

- Concern over the standard of education remains higher in the 35-49 age group of residents – these are likely to be the respondents who have children of school age;
- 14% of residents stressed concerns that not enough was being done for young people;
- In terms of resident satisfaction, whilst Secondary education is rated significantly higher than in 2012, it remains significantly below the London-wide average;
- 43% of residents feel that primary education is good, compared with 5% that feel that it is poor;
- 33% of residents surveyed think that nursery education is good, compared with 4% that think it's poor;
- 27% of residents think that services and activities for young people are good, compared with 19% that feel that they are poor

1. Topic: School Places

Who suggested it?

Topic suggestion received from local schools regarding the need to ensure that all schools have sufficient places. A resident also suggested that scrutiny look at the shortage of school places and proposal to utilise the Trinitarian Bible Society building located in Tyndale House on Dorset Road SW19. A councillor suggested that the Panel look at how the council is meeting the needs of the secondary school population over the next 5-10 years.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel receive regular progress updates on delivery of the action plan resulting from the task group review of secondary school places and also performance monitor delivery of the councils school places strategies for primary and secondary schools.

2. Topic: School Standards

Who suggested the topic?

Officers within the CSF department.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could continue to receive this report with a stronger emphasis on planned school improvement activity in the year ahead, in addition to the 'retrospective view' provided.

3. Topic: Wellbeing and emotional support to families and young people

Who suggested it?

Local schools suggested that the Panel review pupil, parent and staff wellbeing in the light of economic and social change, and longer working hours. Also local schools suggested that the Panel review what emotional support is available for children in schools.

How could scrutiny look at it?

Therefore it is suggested that the Panel receive a briefing report on this matter in order to identify if there is scope to undertake further scrutiny.

4. Topic: Looked after children

Who suggested it?

Local schools suggested that the Panel look at services across the borough to support looked after children (LAC) pre and post-adoption.

5. Topic: Safeguarding

Who suggested it?

A local councillor suggested that the Panel consider safeguarding. Officers in the CSF department also suggested that the Panel look at this area of work.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is proposed that the panel receive an annual report on safeguarding children issues. This could be in the form of the annual report and business plan of Merton's Safeguarding Children Board and partner agencies could be invited/called to contribute/address issues raised by panel members.

6. Topic: Public health

Who suggested it?

Councillors on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel suggested that the Panel should look at the public health agenda in relation to children's services. This could include a review of services related to early years, children's centres, breastfeeding rates, childhood immunisations, healthy weight services and school nurses.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is proposed that the Panel nominate a member of the Panel to act as its representative on the Healthier Communities Scrutiny Panel working group on immunisations. The scrutiny team have successfully bid for five days of expert support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny to look at the provision and take up of immunisations across the life course with a focus on HPV and influenza. The review will use the return on investment model developed by the CfPS which will help councillors gain a holistic understanding of the issues under review and identify potential savings. The review will also use an appreciative enquiry approach to look at how to improve take up.

It is also suggested that the Panel receive a performance report from the public health team covering work undertaken to date and planned work streams in relation to preventative health services for children and young people.

7. Topic: Free school meals

Who suggested it?

Councillors on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel suggested that the Panel should look at how the council could encourage uptake of free school meals for those that are eligible.

means around 1400 pupils not receiving FSMs despite being eligible (i.e. £840,000 that could be paid to Merton schools on top of the financial relief it would offer to their families). This is an under-registration rate of 27%, which is significantly higher than outer London (17%), inner London (9%) and the national (14%) baselines.

Due to confidentiality issues it is not always possible to identify specific families who are eligible, which can make it difficult to know how to target information at families who are eligible but not registered.

There is also an issue around a stigma being attached to take up of FSMs, whether through fear of nutritional deficiencies in the food or as a label of deprivation (often, eligibility for FSMs is used as a measure of child poverty). This may mean that families are aware that their children are eligible for FSMs but do not wish to register.

The under-registration rate has been increasing since 2009 (although the take up rate is also increasing) and Merton has committed to increasing registration of eligible pupils by 5% year on year for the next two years, to match the outer London level.

These efforts are likely to take the form of a two-pronged approach, providing information about FSM eligibility to families who are not aware that they can register, and working to remove the stigma associated with FSM registration for those who are aware but choose not to.

How could scrutiny look at it?

Scrutiny could request regular updates on Merton's uptake of free school meals by eligible pupils and comment on the council's approach to increasing uptake by 2014.

8. Topic: Update on implementation of Children and Families Bill

Officers within the CSF department proposed that the Panel look at how the council is implementing the Children and Families Bill.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel request a briefing report on the implications of the Bill and the steps being taken to prepare to implement statutory provisions, including risk and resource implications and how these are to be managed/addressed.

9. Topic: Youth transformation project

Who suggested it?

Officers within the CSF department proposed that the Panel consider the council's youth services transformation project and progress to date, including any proposals for changes to how youth services are commissioned and delivered.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel receive a progress report on the work of the Youth Transformation Board and its success in commissioning preventative youth services, in line with the established geographical model of provision.

10. Topic: Corporate Parenting Report – review impact of this on the borough

Who suggested it?

Officers within the CSF department.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel receive the annual Corporate Parenting Report to undertake performance monitoring of the key services the council provides to looked after children and to identify any areas of concern. The Panel may wish to request any follow up items on how the council will address any issues identified in the annual report and what remedial action will be taken and how associated strategies for service delivery and partnership working will be developed.

11. Topic: Adoption services

Who suggested it?

Officers within the CSF department.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel continue to receive regular updates on the adoption service as part of their regular performance report and request a progress report, at appropriate intervals, on delivery of action plans resulting from inspections of the service. This may assist the Panel to determine how the service is meeting national standards and improving the process by which children and young people can be placed with appropriate foster carers, for example, improvements being made to the assessment process for prospective foster carers.

12. Topic: Transforming Families

Who suggested it?

An officer suggested that the Panel undertake performance monitoring of delivery of the councils Transforming Families Programme.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could continue to receive regular updates on delivery of the programme.

13. Topic: Performance Reports

Who suggested the topic?

Officers within the CSF department.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel continue to receive their regular performance reports at each Panel meeting to maintain an overview on the department's performance.

14. Topic: Executive Response and Action Plan - School Leadership Succession Planning Task group

Who suggested the topic?

Scrutiny Team.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel receive the Executive Response and Action Plan at their October 2014 meeting and agree on what basis they wish to undertake performance monitoring of the action plan until it is fully delivered.

15. Topic: Access to child care for young Mums on low income or benefits

Who suggested the topic?

The Youth Parliament and a local community organisation proposed that the Panel look at support for low paid working families and young single mothers with children who are not employed or on a low income and are unable to afford the combination of childcare costs and of private rental in the area.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel consider asking for a specific report on the use of the Family Information Service and if it is being accessed by young mothers. Also what referral mechanisms are in place to other welfare and support functions provided by the council and partners to enable young mothers, in particular teenage mothers, to access services that will enable them to pay for childcare, for example, welfare payments or access to education and employment advice. Housing issues should be referred to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel for consideration.

16. Topic: After school/college activities

Who suggested the topic?

Youth Parliament

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is suggested that the Panel receive a briefing report on this if they feel it is necessary. The Panel may also wish to revisit the outcomes of the task group review of gang culture and how the recommendations made have had an impact since the review was completed.

Topics suggested by the youth parliament that fall outside the remit of the Panel are as follows:

Parks landscape and provision of exercise and play equipment

The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel undertook a task group review of Parks and open spaces as part of their 2010 work programme and have subsequently received progress updates on implementation of the task group's recommendations. It has been suggested by the Panel that they continue to receive updates on the parks and open spaces service at appropriate intervals.

Fear of crime and safety issues – in particular the absence of lighting or poorly lit areas young people must pass to get to their estates

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission maintain an overview of issues relating to crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour. This item has been referred to the commission to consider for their 2014/15 work programme. The Commission also undertook a task group review of the fear of crime in 2009 and a task group review of gang culture in Merton in 2008. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel have also received updates on the home office review of gang culture as part of its 2013/14 work programme.

Career pathways – apprenticeships

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel have previously undertaken a task group review of post 16 career pathways, including apprenticeships, as part of its 2012 work programme. In addition, the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel undertook a review of adult skills and employability, from age 18 onwards, and looked at apprenticeships as part of this review. Both Panels have received updates on progress with implementation of their recommendations.

Appendix 3

Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 11th June 2014

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Scrutiny Panels and the Commission. The final decision on this will then be made by the Panels/Commission at their first meetings.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

Note of the Children and Young People Overview & scrutiny Panel topic selection meeting on 11th June 2014

Present:

Attendees:

Councillors Jeff Hanna (Chair), Linda Taylor (Vice Chair), Adam Bush, Charlie Chirico, Edward Foley, Fidelis Gadzama, Joan Henry, James Holmes, Katy Neep, Dennis Pearce and Marsie Skeete.

Co-opted members Denis Popovs and Peter Connellan

Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Education

Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director, CSF Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services (note taker)

Meeting arrangements

Councillor Jeff Hanna welcomed all present. He described the meeting arrangements that the Panel had followed for the past two years whereby meetings last two hours with one major agenda item (lasting 60 minutes) and two shorter items (lasting 20 minutes each) plus twenty minutes for the minutes, performance data and the Director's update report.

All present AGREED that they wished to continue to adopt those arrangements for 2014/15.

The 2013/14 work programme was circulated for information. Paul Ballatt drew the meeting's attention to the expectations of the various regulators that a core set of issues would be scrutinised each year.

Additional topic suggestions made by Councillor Katy Neep were tabled for discussion and are appended to this note.

Agenda items for Panel meeting on 3 July

Councillor Hanna said that the CSF Department would provide a briefing to the first Panel meeting (3 July) that would include an overview of what the department does, the regulatory framework, and its relationship with schools and other agencies. Attendees requested that this briefing also include information on the work done in partnership with public health.

Annual residents survey 2013

Noted the results in relation to the remit of the Panel.

A number of attendees expressed interest in following up on the concern that "not enough was being done for young people". It was suggested that this might be addressed as apart of scrutiny of the youth transformation project .Also suggested that the Panel may wish to explore the gap between perception and reality regarding access to youth programmes and to encourage a wider range of young people to participate.

Attendees were also interested in exploring why resident satisfaction with secondary education is below the London average – again suggested that there may be a gap between perception and reality and could scrutinise how schools are "marketed". There was a suggestion that this could be linked to Councillor Neep's suggestion on extended school hours as a potential task group review.

School places

AGREED that this is an important issue and should be scrutinised through a main agenda item at one of the Panel's meetings.

Also AGREED that the Director's update report should include information on school places as and when there are new developments or progress to report.

School standards

AGREED that this should be scrutinised through a main agenda item (as it has in previous years).

Also AGREED that this report should include detail of the work of council officers in seeking to improve standards as well as providing information about the results.

Wellbeing and emotional support to families and young people

Discussed the impact that emotional wellbeing has on teaching and learning.

AGREED that this should be scrutinised through a 20 minute agenda item. The report should focus on the support that is provided to schools by the Council. Information should be provided to enable the Panel to assess whether it wishes to carry out further scrutiny of wellbeing and emotional support to families and young people, possibly through a short task group review (1-3 meetings).

Looked after children

Safeguarding

AGREED to scrutinise both issues together as a whole meeting agenda item , similar to the approach adopted for the November 2013 meeting.

Public health

AGREED to scrutinise through a 20 minute agenda item. Also requested that some information on the department's work with public health be included in the briefing to the Panel's July meeting

Noted the successful bid to the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the subsequent establishment of an immunisation task group. Attendees will contact Julia Regan or Stella Akintan if they are interested in taking part in this task group.

Free school meals

Councillor Hanna explained that the Panel had previously scrutinised this and had been disappointed with the low take-up of free school meals. He had therefore requested that an update be provided to the Panel's 3 July meeting.

AGREED that the latest data and information about work being done to improve take-up should be included in the Director's update report at the July meeting.

Children and Families Bill

Noted that this Act will result in significant changes for special educational need, children with disabilities and for council, school and health service procedures.

AGREED to scrutinise through a main agenda item.

Youth transformation project

Career pathways

Attendees expressed interest in these issues and AGREED to scrutinise through a main agenda item that would include access to 16+ education, raised participation age, informal curriculum in youth services, help into employment and responsibilities in relation to tracking young people not in education, employment or training.

Adoption services

AGREED to scrutinise through a 20 minute agenda item so that data can be reviewed and a decision taken on whether to scrutinise further..

Noted that information about adoption services will also be included in the report on looked after children.

Transforming families

AGREED to scrutinise through a 20 minute agenda item that will provide data and an implementation progress update so that a decision can be taken on whether to allocate more time to this at a future Panel meeting.

Also AGREED to have a 20 minute agenda item on **youth offending** (data and service description plus how work with young people to prevent re-offending).

Performance reports

AGREED to continue to receive regular performance reports at each Panel meeting to maintain an overview on the department's performance.

School leadership task group – update

AGREED that the Panel should receive the Executive Response and Action Plan at its October 2014 meeting.

Access to child care for young mums on low income or benefits

AGREED to scrutinise this through a 20 minute agenda item.

Parks and the provision of exercise and play equipment

REFERRED to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

AGREED that the Director's update report should include information on the action taken by the Sustainable Communities Panel in relation to this issue. (ACTION - Rebecca Redman).

Fear of crime and safety issues

REFERRED to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Online strategies in schools

RECOMMENDED that this issue be addressed through a short task group review (1-3 meetings) to enable schools to share best practice on supporting pupils to be ready for the wider online world (eg. Impact of social media profile on job search) and to address online bullying. AGREED to invite the Youth Parliament to participate in the work of the task group.

Girls and gangs

AGREED to have a 20 minute agenda item on girls and gangs and other ways on which girls are vulnerable (eg female genital mutilation) and to use scrutiny as an opportunity to publicise

these issues and to influence children and families. Also to include information on boys and gangs and support for young offenders.

Budget scrutiny

NOTED that this will be the main agenda item at the Panel's meeting on 13 January 2015.

Next steps

Paul Ballatt and Rebecca Redman will draft a work programme in consultation with Councillor Jeff Hanna and Councillor Linda Taylor. This will be tabled for discussion at the Panel meeting on 3 July.

Forward Plan items relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

None identified where decisions are to be made following the Panel meeting on 3 July 2014.