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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 26 MARCH 2014

(19.15 - 21.10)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Jeff Hanna (in the Chair),
Councillor James Holmes, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Laxmi Attawar, Councillor Karin Forbes,
Councillor Oonagh Moulton, Councillor Peter Walker,
Councillor Mary-Jane Jeanes, Councillor Simon Withey.

Co-opted members Peter Connellan and Denis Popovs.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Maxi Martin and Martin Whelton

Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, CSF), Janet Martin (Head of Education, CSF), Keith Shipman (Education Inclusion Manager), Allison Jones (Service Manager - Early Years) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

None.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

The Chair welcomed Denis Popovs, the newly appointed Primary School Parent Governor Representative, to his first meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Iain Dysart (substituted by Councillor Mary-Jane Jeanes) and Councillor Linda Taylor (substituted by Councillor Debbie Shears). Apologies were also received from Simon Bennett (Secondary and Special School Sector Parent Governor), and from Yvette Stanley (Director for Children, Schools and Families) and Paul Angeli (Head of Children's Social Care)

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2014 (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 4)

None.

5. EDUCATION INCLUSION UPDATE (Agenda Item 5)

Keith Shipman, Education Inclusion Manager, summarised the contents of the report and introduced Paula Jewes from Kids First who has worked in partnership with the Council on a number of projects including the preparation for implementation of the Children and Families Bill.

Raising of the participation age

Keith Shipman circulated a table (attached to these minutes) that set out data provided by the Department for Education showing the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds in education or training, apprenticeships and employment. The data showed that Merton is above the London and England average for the proportion in employment or training. Keith Shipman said that the proportions in apprenticeships is lower than average so officers will be exploring ways of identifying more apprenticeship opportunities.

In response to questions about the data, Keith Shipman explained that:

- the Department for Education data relates to Merton residents and the data in sections 2.6-2.10 of the report relate to Year 11 pupils in Merton schools
- the distinction between apprenticeships and employment combined with training is that the latter relates to young people in employment who are accessing training independently
- data to track the progress of young people through higher education is less than complete due to difficulties obtaining information from UCAS

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed to record its appreciation of the work done by Keith Shipman and his team as demonstrated by above average performance in the participation data

Alternative education

In response to a question, Keith Shipman said that the a newly appointed Alternative Education Commissioner would carry out a needs analysis to ensure that Merton has the right provision for young people who require alternative education provision. The aim is to move in consultation with headteachers from spot purchasing to commissioning services, possibly via block contract arrangements, in bulk with a stronger contracting and contract compliance process and improved value for money. Newly arrived Year 11 pupils have already been identified as a group in need of particular support.

Preparation for adulthood

Paula Jewes outlined the work that has been carried out on the preparation for adulthood workstream of the Children and Families Bill, in respect of young people/adults with SEN and disabilities.

In response to a question, Janet Martin, Head of Education, said that although the scrutiny task group reports on alternative education and post-16 provision had not

been given to Paula Jewes, the information and recommendations from the reports had been shared with her.

RESOLVED: the panel agreed to note the report and to thank Keith Shipman and Paula Jewes for their work.

6. EARLY YEARS, CHILDCARE AND CHILDREN'S CENTRES UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Allison Jones, Service Manager – Early Years, introduced the report and made some additional points in response to questions:

- There is a national definition of vulnerable two year olds. The criteria for phase 1 is those 2 year olds living in workless households claiming income support. The criteria for phase 2 is for those living low income working households, households in receipt of disability living allowance, looked after children and children who are being adopted. This will include about one third of all two year olds living in Merton.
- There is a national framework that sets out criteria and qualification requirements for independent early years providers
- Indices of deprivation are used to identify the 30% of children who live in the most deprived areas of the borough, mapped by postcode. ACTION: Head of Education to provide map showing levels of deprivation
- Measuring outcome is challenging and will be tracked through assessment done at age two plus development checks carried out by health visitors. The Standards report that the Panel received at its last meeting provided information on outcome at the end of the reception phase which is an indication of successful early years work.
- “hard to reach” families have been targeted through door knocking and other outreach work in specific localities as well as through community and voluntary sector providers.

A panel member commented that he thought the wording was rather obscure on the early years poster and that he hadn't seen it displayed in his ward.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed to note the report and to thank Allison Jones for her work.

7. DRAFT FINAL REPORT - SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING TASK GROUP (Agenda Item 7)

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina, as co-chair of the task group, thanked her fellow task group members plus Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer, for their support. She said

that the task group's motivation had been to encourage more black and minority ethnic teachers into senior management. The task group had discussed their work with headteachers and the Head of Education as well as hearing from various speakers.

Councillor Akyigyina acknowledged that Merton is doing a lot of good work already, for example on training and mentoring. She highlighted recommendation 7 as a way of encouraging outstanding teachers to apply for headship sooner. She stressed the need for action given the need for role models for the 52% of pupils who are black and ethnic minority.

Councillor James Holmes, as co-chair of the task group, added that powers to address these issues lie with schools rather than the local authority. He agreed with Councillor Akyigyina regarding the need for more black and ethnic minority headteachers, adding that the task group also considered wider issues to encourage good succession planning. Councillor Holmes stressed the importance of attracting good teachers, including black and ethnic minority teachers, in the first place and then retaining them.

Panel members welcomed the report and agreed that it is also important to encourage a more representative membership on school governing bodies too and therefore welcomed recommendation 10. Peter Connellan, parent governor representative, said that this had been discussed by the Merton Governors' Association.

A panel member said it would have been helpful to have had comparative data for other London boroughs.

Panel members discussed whether it would be desirable to have quotas relating to the composition of interviewees. The majority of the Panel were not in favour of this.

RESOLVED: the Panel agreed to endorse the report and forward to Cabinet, with the addition of a sentence relating to teachers with disabilities.

8. SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES TASK GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 8)

Paul Ballatt, Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, circulated the action plan (appended to these minutes) for the implementation of the task group's recommendations. He explained that the task group had operated in parallel with the development by officers and Cabinet of a school places strategy, which had been helpful and had resulted in a number of the task group's recommendations forming part of the strategy.

Panel members expressed disappointment with progress on recommendations 2, 3 and 6.

In relation to recommendation 2, regarding discussion with other boroughs, panel members suggested that officers could push harder to ensure such discussions took place at the appropriate level. Councillor Martin Whelton, the Cabinet Member for Education, said that he had spoken to his counterparts in other boroughs and that some were more willing to work together than others. He added that planning for the provision of school places is a very complex area. He undertook to raise these issues at the next meeting with counterparts, which would be after the election.

In relation to recommendation 3, regarding exploring the potential for additional faith school provision to meet demand, Paul Ballatt said that this was included in the strategy and there are on-going discussions with the Diocesan Boards.

RESOLVED: the Panel noted the update and requested that a further progress update (particularly on recommendations 2,3 and 6) be provided as part of its 2014/15 work programme

9. CSF UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 9)

The Chair announced that he, Councillor Linda Taylor and Councillor Iain Dysart had attended a meeting of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 17 March 2014 to participate in the scrutiny of childhood immunisation services.

ACTION: Head of Democracy Services to circulate the minutes of that meeting to all Panel members

In response to a question about the update report, Paul Ballatt explained that parents of pupils transferring to secondary schools can identify up to six preferences. A “central LA offer” is an offer made when none of those six preferences can be met.

The Chair asked how the Department for Education’s consultation on the school funding system would affect outer London boroughs, such as Merton who pay inner London salaries to staff whilst only receiving funding based on outer London salaries. Paul Ballatt said that the current consultation was on a separate funding issue relating to pupil need, however the Director could lobby government again on this issue. He suggested that this would be best done in conjunction with other boroughs in the same situation.

RESOLVED. The Panel agreed to note the report and to recommend further lobbying on the London allowance funding issue.

10. PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 10)

A Panel member pointed out that a number of the indicators are still red and said that there needed to be an improvement in performance on these. Paul Ballatt drew the panel’s attention to the chart on page 60 of the agenda, which demonstrates that there have been improvements in recent months in one of the indicators which panel members have been particularly concerned about in past meetings.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed to note the report

11. TOPIC SUGGESTIONS 2014/15 (Agenda Item 11)

Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, laid round a list of topic suggestions received to date and asked whether Panel members had any additional suggestions. She added that Rebecca Redman, Scrutiny Officer, had spoken to the Youth Parliament on Monday and received the following suggestions:

- Parks landscape and provision of exercise and play equipment;
- Access to child care for young Mums on low income or benefits;
- 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 (referring to in some wards in the East of the borough);
- Career pathways – apprenticeships; and
- After school/college activities

The Youth Parliament also said that they would like to get involved in the next scrutiny task group. Members of the Panel agreed that they would welcome this involvement.

RESOLVED: The Panel agreed to:

- 1) include the suggestions made by the Youth Parliament in the list to be considered for inclusion in the Panel's 2014/15 work programme,
- 2) to edit the officer suggestions so that that the wording is more appropriate, and
- 3) to welcome the offer made by the Youth Parliament to get involved in the next scrutiny task group.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair thanked his fellow panel members, departmental officers and scrutiny officers for their support over the last four years. Panel members thanked Councillor Jeff Hanna for his excellent chairing of the meetings.