

Agenda Item 3

All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the committee/panel. To find out the date of the next meeting please check the calendar of events at your local library or online at www.merton.gov.uk/committee.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

11 JANUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 8.40 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Usaama Kaweesa (in the Chair), Councillor Chessie Flack, Councillor Michael Butcher, Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Jil Hall, Councillor Billy Hayes, Councillor Andrew Howard, Councillor Linda Kirby, Councillor Samantha MacArthur, Councillor James Williscroft, Mansoor Ahmad, Roz Cordner, Cruise and Dr Stannard

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Brenda Fraser (Cabinet Member for Children's Services) and Councillor Sally Kenny (Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning) Councillor Billy Christie (Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services)

Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer), Richard Ellis (Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation), Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Assistant Director for Education and Early Help), Roger Kershaw (Interim Executive Director of Finance and Digital), Jane McSherry (Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families), Dheeraj Chibber (Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion), Maisie Davies (Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships) and Keith Shipman (Social Inclusion Manager)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record

4 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2023-2027 (Agenda Item 4)

The Cabinet Member for Finance said the budget pack contains the reports from October and December cabinet meetings. The cabinet member thanked to officers and said he is confident that growth proposals are robust reasonable and sustainable. However severe financial constraints mean some savings will need to be made.

The Interim Director for Finance and Digital gave an overview of key areas within the report and highlighted there is still a budget gap of £4.3m for 2023-2024. Inflationary pressures are a threat, there are extra resources for providing for inflation, the council has benefitted from prudent pension fund investments. Further savings will be provided to January cabinet,

The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said the budget contains growth proposals for children's social care workforce and around home school transport.

There is a 1% efficiency saving. This will be met by reductions in printing, rise in remote meetings, blended approaches in working with young people. A Panel member asked for clarification on the number of out of borough placements for Children with SEND. This will be provided.

A panel member asked about the impact of the salary uplift on children's social care and what benefit will be seen. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said there will be less reliance on agency staff.

A panel member asked about the impact on services of the 1% efficiency saving. The Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families said this would not have an impact on service users, training will be conducted in different ways and there are savings in printing costs.

A Panel Member asked about the autumn statement, and the additional monies for education. The Interim Assistant Director for Strategy, Commissioning and Transformation said the details are still coming through. It looks like an increase of £5.6million, which is a 4% increase for schools.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the budget preparation
Number of SEND Children in out of Borough placements to be circulated to Panel Members

5 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN SCRUTINY (Agenda Item 5)

The Social Inclusion Manager gave an overview of the report stating that the Residents Survey highlighted that young people do not always feel listened to and scrutiny can play an important role in giving a voice to young people. The report proposes a young inspector is attached to each panel.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked the officer for his report

6 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Departmental update

The Chair thanked officers for the successful SEND inspection which was achieved by collective hard work of staff across children's services.

A Panel member asked how alternative education providers are evaluated. The Social Inclusion Manager said they are all Ofsted registered and inspected. Good practice from around the country is reviewed and there is a Quality Assurance process provided by the School Improvement Team and partners.

A panel member asked how the progress of gifted and talented pupils is measured. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said teachers will use their assessment processes in the classroom.

A panel member asked if the council train and develop maths teachers. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said the recruitment of maths teachers can be challenging but there are no concerns at the moment. There is a maths hub with a strong programme of professional development and the local authority's own advisor provides training and bespoke support for schools across the borough.

A panel member asked if the Black curriculum workshops had been successful. The Assistant Director of Education and Early Help said there had been a mixed response and some found it useful.

A Panel Member asked about how would be available from the Youth justice Turnaround Fund and how to identify the right children who would benefit. The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Justice said he will provide the panel with the detail on the figures.

RESOLVED

The Chair thanked officers for the report

The Assistant Director will provide figures on the turnaround fund

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Head of Performance, Improvement and Partnerships gave an overview of the report.

RESOLVED.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was noted.

