

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

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Agenda item: 8

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 meeting in January 2015.

#### **2 DETAILS**

2.1 There have been no full Ofsted school inspections since the panel's last meeting. However, a section 8 monitoring visit to Liberty primary school, judged as requiring improvement in its last full inspection, was reported in December 2014. This concluded that insufficient progress was being made in addressing issues preventing the school from achieving a judgement of 'good' at its next full inspection. Two experienced Merton headteachers are currently working with the school to deliver a more robust improvement plan to accelerate the pace of the school's progress.

2.2 Merton schools' GCSE performance continues to improve with 64.5% students achieving 5+ good GCSEs including English and maths. In the recently published national league-table, Merton is ranked 16<sup>th</sup> of over 150 local authorities.

2.3 Four Merton primary schools have received letters of congratulation from the Secretary of State for Education for the key stage 2 performance of their pupils receiving Pupil Premium. The schools - St Mark's; West Wimbledon; Cranmer and St Theresa's – have been praised for their focus and impact on improving educational attainment of more disadvantaged pupils.

2.4 The council has received official notification that the Chapel Street Community Schools Trust, which had received 'pre-opening' approval from DfE in September 2014 to open a secondary Free School in Merton, has decided to withdraw its application at this stage to concentrate attention on its existing schools. It is still expected that the application of the Harris Federation will be decided before the end of March 2015.

- 2.5 With regard to school planning and capital, officers are confident that the primary school expansion programme is ensuring that we are continuing to meet the rising numbers in primary school, which are forecast to plateau in reception year from 2016. Following the completion of the Cranmer Primary School expansion in August, phases of projects for Merton Abbey, St. Mary's RC and Poplar Schools were completed in the autumn, and works are also making good progress at Hillcross, Pelham and Singlegate. Works commenced at Dundonald in September and the main works were recently contracted to budget. With regard to secondary schools, we received an additional 161 admissions applications for year 7 this year, which was in line with our expectations, and should ensure that for this September schools are largely full in year 7 with a minimal surplus.
- 2.6 Although no longer required to produce a Children and Young People Plan, the partners in Merton's Children's Trust have agreed that such a plan enables joint priorities to be set and agencies to be held to account for their input and contributions. Good progress has been made in delivering the key actions outlined in the current 2013-16 plan, and at its last meeting in December 2014, the Children's Trust Board agreed that a refresh of the plan should be undertaken, enabling partners to consider new priorities in light of progress made to date, new drivers and the shared commitment to continuous improvement of children's services. This refresh will be undertaken over the coming months with sign off planned for summer 2015.
- 2.7 Over recent months, the partnership has been focused on a number of key areas for continuous improvement. In response to the national concerns about child sexual exploitation, Merton services have undertaken a self-assessment and been subject to a peer review process. An improvement action plan has been established and progress will be closely monitored by the MSCB. As an action identified in Merton's Serious Case Review of 2013, we have issued new guidance and procedures in respect of children missing education and a new 'chronic' absence project has been established, strengthening risk assessment and pupil re-introduction for children who have reached a threshold of non-attendance. Merton's Family Nurse Partnership, an evidence based approach working with young parents in the borough, has become fully operational. Work has also been undertaken within Merton's SENDIS service and with schools and health service partners to establish the new integrated Education, Health and Care Plans assessment and planning framework as required in the 2014 Children and Families Act.
- 2.8 Council and CCG commissioners are working closely on the major re-commissioning of community health services for children currently provided by the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust. Following the transfer of commissioning responsibilities for health visiting and school nursing services to local authorities, we are using the recommissioning process to enhance integrated working eg in safeguarding activity and work in children's centres and schools; to focus resources more than previously on need and to seek to secure efficiencies in working practices eg via mobile working.
- 2.9 As a result of planned savings from commissioned services in CSF Department's element of the council's overall Medium Term Financial Strategy,

officers and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services have engaged with current providers of early intervention and youth services, largely local CVS organisations, and with MVSC, to ensure clear communication and to enable the council to understand implications of planned savings on the sustainability of these organisations. Council commissioning staff and MVSC have committed to support actions including identification of alternative funding sources, bid preparation and network support during 2015-16 prior to the majority of relevant savings being taken.

### **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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