

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
10 FEBRUARY 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.45 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Sally Kenny (in the Chair),
Councillor Hayley Ormrod, Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina,
Councillor Omar Bush, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Jenifer Gould, Councillor Joan Henry,
Councillor James Holmes, Councillor Russell Makin,
Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor Dave Ward, Emma Lemon,
Colin Powell and Councillor Owen Pritchard

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (Head of School Improvement), Caroline
Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Karl Mittelstadt (Head
of Policy, Performance and Partnerships) and Rachael Wardell
(Director, Children, Schools & Families Department)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Marsie Skeete (with Cllr Owen Pritchard as substitute), Keith Makin (Chair of MSCB) and Jane McSherry (Head of Education)

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4 DEPARTMENTAL UPDATE (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Children, Schools and Families summarised the report and answered Panel Member's questions as below;

- ACTION Director of Children, Schools and Families to provide percentage with regards to the increase in care proceedings (para 2.15).
- An announcement will be made soon with regards to the Benedict School re-brokering.
- We are looking for alternative sources of funding in order to reduce knife crime and continue the rise in engagement.

5 BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2020-24 (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Corporate Services introduced the report.

In response to Panel Members questions the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Children, Schools and Families clarified;

- With regards to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit, we are setting monies aside to offset this while we await the outcome of the consultation. CIPFA will be issuing guidance about the changes.
- Merton did contribute to the Government consultation as part of the Society of London Treasurers response.
- Corporately the Directorate are considering the whole SEN transport offer. The initial report has been received and there are a series of proposals we could look at including personal budgets and increasing independent travel training
- We propose to reduce the foster carer allowance, not the fee. This would move us to a position in which our allowance is the same as the National Statutory Minimum. Carers will not see a reduction. We know that good support and training are also factors for recruitment.

6 BUSINESS PLAN 2020-24 - SAVINGS INFORMATION PACK (Agenda Item 6)

7 CABINET MEMBER PRIORITIES (Agenda Item 7)

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Adult Education is working on; DSG recovery plan, written statement of action for Ofsted, Education Endowment Programme and addressing the need to improve A-Level results with the Attain Partnership.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services is prioritising; Youth voice and participation, corporate parenting, the young commissioner's pilot, reinstalling the Children in Care Council and has volunteered to be a champion of participation and engagement for the Children's Trust.

8 MERTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD (Agenda Item 8)

9 REPORT ON IN HOUSE/INDEPENDENT FOSTER CARERS (Agenda Item 9)

The report was presented by the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care & Youth Inclusion.

We advertise all year round for the recruitment of foster carers via posters, word of mouth and the annual foster carer celebration.

At the suggestion of a Panel Member, The Director of Children, Schools and Families committed to undertaking a review of fees for foster carers in order to potentially encourage foster carers away

from agency work. It was mentioned that we currently invite independent foster carers to attend our training so they witness first-hand the support and fostering community Merton that has to offer. It was also clarified that no matter how well Merton recruits, you can not completely eradicate the need for agencies in some cases. This could be due to complex needs or safety if a child needs to be placed outside of the borough.

10 SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS TO BECOME GOOD OR OUTSTANDING (Agenda Item 10)

The Head of School Improvement gave an overview of the report.

A Panel Member commented that this subject had already been discussed at length at the School Standards Panel which is attended by many of the CYP Panel present.

In response to a Panel Members concern of the exclusions figures, the Head of School Improvement explained that the School Standards report, which is scheduled for presentation at this Panel in March, will comment and expand on exclusions.

11 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 11)

The Head of Performance, Policy and Partnerships drew the Panel's attention to the indicators with significant changes and data caveats.

Endorsement was sought to remove indicator 6 and invert indicator 21, to which the Panel agreed.

12 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 12)

The work programme was agreed.