

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13 January 2016

Agenda item:

Wards: All

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, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel note the contents of the report.

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 November 2015.

2 DETAILS

2.1 There have been a number of school Ofsted inspections since the last report. Of those which have already been published, the rating for Lonesome primary school has moved from requiring improvement to good; Gorrington primary school has been rated as requiring improvement. Raynes Park secondary school has also improved to a good rating and the SMART centre has retained its rating of good. Perseid school has retained a rating of outstanding.

2.2 At the point of writing this report, 89% of Merton pupils are attending primary, secondary or special schools rated good or better – Merton is performing above London and national averages on this aggregated measure. 100% of our special and secondary schools are good or outstanding – Merton's performance is again above London and national averages.

2.3 National Key Stage 2 results for 2015 have now been validated. In Merton schools, 82% of pupils achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and Maths. This is an improvement from 79% in 2014 and is above the national average for this measure.

2.4 Officers are continuing to work with EFA and the Harris Federation to identify a site for the new secondary school in the Wimbledon area which

- has pre-opening approval. Negotiations are ongoing in respect of two specific site options. Officers are also in discussions with EFA on the financial contribution the council will be expected to make to the delivery of the scheme. This will be necessary as the new school will meet some of Merton's 'basic need' for secondary school places for which the council receives grant from central government.
- 2.5 In addition to the new school, pupil place planning projections indicate that further secondary school places are required over the next few years. In January 2016, Cabinet is to be asked to approve the expansion of Harris Merton school by two forms of entry. Officers will also recommend that further expansions of schools in the east of the borough should not be progressed at this stage but should be kept under close review.
- 2.6 Numbers of children with disabilities and SEN are increasing in line with the overall demographic increase in school age children the borough is experiencing. Officers are currently reviewing the approach to be taken to meet the additional SEN places needed. To date, expansions at Perseid and Cricket Green schools have been undertaken. As part of an overall refresh of the council's SEN strategy, officers are now considering wider options for new SEN places.
- 2.7 Higher numbers of children with disabilities and SEN are also resulting in greater demand for the new EHC plans introduced in the Children and Families Act 2014. Pressure on the SENDIS service is exacerbated by the need to 'transfer' old SEN statements into the new EHC model. There is a nationally mandated framework for these transfers over the next few years and additional capacity has been identified, to be funded from national SEN implementation grant received by the council, to meet the current workload demands in the service.
- 2.8 To meet financial targets across the department, and as part of our work to refresh our service Target Operating Models (TOMs) officers are proposing an increase in fees for day care places for children under 5 directly provided by the council as part of our Early Years TOM. The council has been subsidising day care places in our own provision for many years and has not reviewed fees for some time. The level of subsidy in the current financial year is in the region of £160,000. Given the scale of the loss of grant to the council this subsidy is no longer sustainable and the proposed fee increases will both reduce the subsidy to around £50,000 in the first year and bring charges closer into line with privately managed childcare provision. Parents have been advised of the increase which is due to be implemented from April 2016. Our Early Years Service is also working closely with Public Health and the new Community Health provider to further embed health visiting into our children's centres enabling greater service integration and appropriately sharing the administrative and back office costs of centres to shared advantage.
- 2.9 Previous savings proposals have significantly reduced the budgets available to provide universal youth services in Merton. The youth service's TOM has been the shift from a predominantly directly provided service to one which

has built partnerships with the local community and voluntary service partly commissioned by the council and increasingly dependent on accessing alternative funding sources. Supported by the local MP for Mitcham and Morden, negotiations with local housing providers and other potential funders including Lord Harris and the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Association have resulted in financial commitments which will enable two existing youth centres, Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge, to continue operating at least until the end of 2016-17.

- 2.10 Alternative funding models are also being explored for the delivery of other services provided or commissioned by the department. Merton is currently working with GLA and five other London Boroughs on a feasibility study for the provision of a multi-borough 'edge of care' service via a Social Impact Bond (SIB) funding arrangement. This approach involves attracting investment 'up front' from bodies such as charitable trusts to provide services/interventions which prevent children from entering the care system with the council only paying for successful outcomes. Although relatively new, the SIB approach is already in place in the UK and has been shown to produce savings for commissioning authorities.
- 2.11 The paragraphs above outline some of the activity officers are undertaking in respect of our overall departmental TOM. Information on other key TOM projects is provided elsewhere on this meeting's agenda. Some of our thinking on new service models is also being influenced by public policy developments being considered by central government. For example, in line with its longstanding commitment to increase the numbers of LAC adopted from care, central government is currently proposing potential regionalisation of aspects of adoption services. In London, this could result in Merton's adoption services capacity being transferred to a regional or sub-regional adoption agency which might assume responsibility for the recruitment and matching of adopters and children across the region and/or it might provide post adoption support. The London situation is complex given the number of boroughs involved and the scale of any procurement is likely to trigger EU procurement rules. Merton's performance in this area of practice has improved significantly over recent years and as a low spending authority its spend is already significantly lower than many boroughs'. Officers are working actively with colleagues across London to explore what aspects of provision would provide best outcomes and reduce costs. The department will be tracking developments closely.
- 2.12 In response to the greater national focus on child sexual exploitation and radicalisation of young people, which is being reflected in the greater focus of Ofsted on these issues in inspection activity, the department and key partner agencies have strengthened local arrangements to train the workforce, improve intelligence sharing across and between agencies, and intervene more robustly to protect young people and act against perpetrators. Awareness raising has been undertaken across the multi-agency governance arrangements in place and with the council's corporate managers. A programme of compulsory training on Prevent is currently being implemented for CSF department staff.

- 2.13 Members of the panel will be aware of the issues arising from the purchase by Tower Hamlets Council of Vantage House to accommodate a number of their homeless families. Inevitably this action will result in increased pressure on Merton's universal, targeted and specialist services and the DCS is negotiating robustly with colleagues in Tower Hamlets to recognise and provide funding to address these pressures.

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 from this report.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. No specific implications from this report..

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. No specific implications from this report.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. No specific implications from this report.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. No specific implications from this report..

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

- 11.1 N/A

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None