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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 13 JANUARY 2016

(19.15 - 21.05)

PRESENT: Councillor Charlie Chirico, Councillor Edward Foley,
Councillor Joan Henry, Councillor James Holmes,
Councillor Marsie Skeete, Councillor Sally Kenny,
Councillor Dennis Pearce, Councillor Jeff Hanna,
Councillor Agatha Mary Akyigyina and Councillor Najeeb Latif
Co-opted member Denis Popovs

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mark Allison and Martin Whelton

Jane McSherry (Head of Education, CSF), Paul Angeli (Head of Childrens' Social Care), Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance, CSF), Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), Yvette Stanley (Director, Children, Schools & Families Department) and Julia Regan (Head of Democracy Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from the Chair, Councillor Katy Neep, and the Vice Chair, Councillor Linda Taylor.

Members of the Panel therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Jeff Hanna as Chair for this meeting.

Apologies were also received from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Councillor Maxi Martin and from co-opted member Peter Connellan.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Charlie Chirico.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

None.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN 2016-2020 (Agenda Item 4)

The Panel agreed to take agenda item 10 (impact of savings proposals on specific vulnerable residents) and item 9 (business plan savings proposals consultation pack) with this item.

The Director of Corporate Services, Caroline Holland, provided a brief introduction to outline the main features of the updated medium term financial strategy and to draw the Panel's attention to the draft service plans.

In response to Panel members' questions about the medium term financial strategy, Caroline Holland explained that the shortfall for departments who had not met their savings targets was carried forward to ensure that other departments who had met targets were not unfairly penalised.

RESOLVED:

- The Panel noted the additional information in item 10 on the approach that had been taken to services for children, including disabled children
- Panel noted that recommendation 1 of the report had been dealt with at the Panel's meeting on 3 November 2015

The Panel considered the draft capital programme 2016-20 as set out in the report. In response to a question about the indicative costs of the secondary school expansion, Caroline Holland said that these were based on in-house provision and that costs would be adjusted if the Harris Academy option was chosen. In response to a question about the contingency for inflation, Caroline Holland said that adjustments had been made to individual schemes and that this would be lower risk in future.

The Director of Children Schools and Families, Yvette Stanley, and the Assistant Director of Education, Jane McSherry, provided more information on SEN provision in response to questions. The SEN population aged 0-18 has grown by 13% between 2012 and 2015 compared to growth of 4% in the overall child population. SEN provision has been expanded in mainstream schools as well as at Cricket Green and Perseid special schools. Officers are currently reviewing the specific and diverse needs of SEN children and young people in Merton and the mix of service delivery that will be required.

RESOLVED: to note the draft capital programme 2016-20.

The Chair directed the Panel's attention to the draft savings proposal CSF2015-07 "review of CSF staffing structure beneath management level" set out on page 61 of the consultation pack and the associated equality impact assessment on page 145.

Yvette Stanley explained that, because the proposal relates to 2017/18 and 2018/19, the description is high level at present. The proposal provides the financial envelope for service redesign but may be re-profiled between the two years once detailed planning work and discussion, including with schools and other partners, has taken place. Alternative proposals would be drawn up if required once the impact of service redesign had been fully assessed. Panel members requested that updates be provided to the Panel during the course of the service transformation work.

In response to questions about income generation, Yvette Stanley said that careful management was required to ensure that schools would want to buy services from the local authority rather than other providers.

RESOLVED: that the Panel accept the savings proposal CSF2015-07 “review of CSF staffing structure beneath management level” in principle, subject to receiving progress reports at appropriate points setting out the proposed mechanism and predicted impact for delivery of this saving.

Panel members commented that the performance targets set out in the draft service plan for Education did not seem to be sufficiently challenging. Jane McSherry undertook to review these and to provide the most up-to-date national comparative data as part of the school standards report to the Panel meeting on 10 February 2016. The Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Martin Whelton, agreed that he would be involved in this review.

ACTION: Assistant Director of Education

RESOLVED: that the Panel note the draft service plans

5 UPDATE REPORT (Agenda Item 6)

The Panel welcomed the good news on school performance in paragraph 2.2 and the validated key stage 2 results in paragraph 2.3.

A panel member expressed disappointment that fees for under 5s day care places (paragraph 2.8) had not been reviewed for some time and that an opportunity for income had been missed. The Director of Children Schools and Families, Yvette Stanley, explained that combination of loss of and changes in government grant funding had meant that we had to review how all aspects of the service were funded and these changes had exposed the issue of subsidy and the council is now trying to set childcare rates that are comparable to those in neighbouring boroughs. The free places for eligible 2 and 3 year olds were unaffected.

The Panel noted the funding that had been obtained from alternative sources to enable two youth centres, Pollards Hill and Phipps Bridge, to continue operating until at least the end of 2016-17 (paragraph 2.9). In response to a question about whether it would be able to get sponsorship for other services, Caroline Holland, Director of Corporate Services, said that across the council all options for sponsorship and commercialisation were being explored. Yvette Stanley said that getting funding for core statutory CSF services would be a massive challenge but would be explored including as an example discussion with London Funders and other charitable organisations. .

In response to a question about social impact bonds (paragraph 2.10), the Assistant Director of Commissioning Strategy and Performance, Paul Ballatt, said that the key issues were that there were a limited number of social investors and logistical difficulties in getting groups of London authorities together to work on developing the social impact bond approach. Officers are actively exploring options but remain cautious. The cabinet member for Finance, Councillor Mark Allison, added that it was important to ensure that managers had the freedom to explore initiatives such as this.

The Panel requested that the human rights, equalities and community cohesion section of the report should be used to address pertinent issues, for example in

relation to child sexual exploitation (paragraph 2.12) and homeless families from Tower Hamlets (paragraph 2.13) in future.

ACTION: Director of Children Schools and Families

Yvette Stanley provided an update on the situation in relation to the homeless families from Tower Hamlets that have been placed in Vantage House. She said that the families were likely to remain there for some time due to the long housing waiting list in Tower Hamlets. Services have been provided ranging from a weekly drop-in session for parents through to more high level support where required.

RESOLVED: to note the report

6 CSF DEPARTMENT TARGET OPERATING MODEL - MAJOR PROJECTS 2016-17 (Agenda Item 5)

RESOLVED: that the Panel notes the major projects outlined the report. Discussion of these took part as part of the discussion on the budget and business plan item elsewhere on this agenda.

7 PERFORMANCE REPORT (Agenda Item 7)

The Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion, Paul Angeli, provided additional information in response to questions:

- The reasons why a child may be subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time are varied. The increase in numbers is a cause for concern and officers are working to ensure the child protection plan is sufficiently outcome focussed to reduce the likelihood of a subsequent intervention being required. There would be training built into the work programme for the coming year to address learning from reviewing these specific cases
- A child protection conference is defined as inquorate when fewer than 80% of the agencies involved with the child are in attendance. Officers phone the agencies in advance to try to ensure maximum attendance.

RESOLVED: to note the report

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

RESOLVED: to agree the work programme as set out in the agenda

9 SAVINGS PROPOSAL CONSULTATION PACK (Agenda Item 9)

This item was discussed as part of agenda item 4 – budget and business plan 2016-20

10 IMPACT OF SAVINGS PROPOSALS FOR 2016-2017 ON SPECIFIC VULNERABLE RESIDENTS, INCLUDING ADULT SOCIAL CARE SAVINGS

CONSULTATION RESULTS (Agenda Item 10)

This item was discussed as part of agenda item 4 – budget and business plan 2016-20

