

Committee: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 22nd March 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 Judy Saunders), Cllr Martin Whelton

Contact officer: Paul Ballatt, Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance

Recommendations:

A. Members of the panel discuss and comment on 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 February 2016.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 Two primary schools have been inspected with reports published since the panel's last meeting. All Saints retained its overall rating of good and Malmesbury has improved its rating to good.
- 2.2 The DfE has confirmed Chipstead Valley Academy Trust as the preferred sponsor for Beecholme Primary School. An initial meeting with the Board of Directors of Chipstead Valley has taken place and the LA has been working with the sponsor to facilitate meetings with staff and parents as part of the consultation process. In parallel, work is taking place to improve teaching and learning and a full review was undertaken in February. This review has informed the development of the school's post Ofsted inspection action plan.
- 2.3 The council has recently consulted on school admissions arrangements for 2017-18. Views were sought on a number of potential changes to arrangements as reported to the Panel at its last meeting. Over 50 public responses were received, largely supporting the proposals. Following consideration of the responses and discussions with the cabinet member, changes are expected to be agreed by the Director on March 15th under delegated powers. There will now be a more flexible approach taken to enable delayed entry to primary school for summer born children; the existing Admissions Priority Area (APA) around Wimbledon Chase Primary School will be reduced and a new APA for Dundonald primary School introduced; the sibling policy at the above schools will be altered to prioritise siblings living within the APAs; minor changes to sixth form entry requirements for the

- combined RR6 will be implemented and a cross sibling policy between Ricards Lodge and Rutlish Schools introduced.
- 2.4 Officers have been examining preference data for primary school admissions in September 2016. As anticipated there was a slight reduction in overall applications from Merton residents for 2016 reception class places, with 2745 applications compared to 2768 in 2015. Preferences for schools in Wimbledon have increased significantly with more modest increases in the Raynes Park and central Mitcham areas. Preferences for schools in Morden and east Mitcham have reduced. It is likely that children unable to be offered a preference school in the Wimbledon area will be provided with central offers largely at the Park (Free) Community school in south Wimbledon or in schools to the east of the borough. School expansion plans in Lambeth seem to have affected preferences for Stanford and Lonesome schools in particular.
- 2.5 Offers of secondary school places have recently been made to Merton pupils as part of the national secondary school places 'offer day'. The council received over 70 additional resident applications compared to last year but was able to increase the percentage of first preference offers from 62.76% to 65.00%. We were also able to increase marginally the percentage of first to third preference offers from 88.35% to 88.75%. 98 (4.8%) Merton resident pupils received central offers, however, with no offer of a preference school being possible. Officers expect all secondary school year 7 places to be filled in 2016 except at Raynes Park, which is expected nevertheless to be in a healthier position than in 2015, and at St Mark's Academy, whose popularity continues to concern the council.
- 2.6 An interim inspection of Brightwell children's home has found the home has 'improved effectiveness' since its last full inspection rating of requiring improvement. Requirements from the full inspection have been addressed with notable improvements including the completion of the registration process for the interim manager; revisions made to policies and procedures including on safeguarding and transitions arrangements; the review of the home's Statement of Purpose; the completion of a workforce plan supported by bespoke training already provided; and refurbishment of the fabric of the building. The home is expected to have its next full inspection during 2016-17.
- 2.7 Merton's Safeguarding Children's Board held a successful annual conference in early March with some 80+ attendees. Chaired by Merton's Young Inspectors, the event included keynote presentations on learning from research on best practice in inter-agency working and on further developing a 'think family' approach in child protection work. A number of workshops were also delivered by CSF and our partners including adult services providers and included working with learning disabled parents and those experiencing mental health or substance misuse difficulties. The conference is part of the MSCB's and council's comprehensive learning and development offer for workers involved in children's safeguarding in Merton.
- 2.8 The department is currently refreshing its Target Operating Model (TOM) documentation which is supporting the next phase of our service transformation and the delivery of the savings the department is likely to be required to make over the next two to three years. As noted in previous reports, key elements of the department's approach include reviewing thresholds for services and

focusing resources on our statutory duties; streamlining access points for service users; increasing use of new technology to improve efficiency where possible; delivering service specific change projects; reviewing the department's property needs and refreshing our workforce strategy. Significant re-organisation of the department's functions will also be required. During 2016-17, the following key pieces of work will be progressed as part of the department's Transformation Delivery Plan:

- Review and restructure of the department's management functions to enable the deletion of the Commissioning, Strategy and Performance Division and the transfer of service areas to the remaining two Divisions.
- Undertake feasibility and progress further integration of commissioning responsibilities across CSF department, other council services and Merton's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- Review of the department-wide data and intelligence functions, developing options for future organisation.
- Review of the department's business support/administrative function, developing options for future organisation.
- Review of the department's property portfolio to examine potential rationalisation and asset release.
- Review of Merton's Child Wellbeing Model including our early help offer, MASH operation, thresholds for services and pathways for accessing services.
- Complete implementation of MOSAIC, the new ICT client information and casework system, within CSF and Housing and Community departments.
- Progress further implementation of our early years TOM, including implementation of new fees policy for council delivered childcare, establishment of a sustainable provision map of children's centres and the co-location of community health staff into children's centres.
- Further develop and extend the department's trading approach with schools in Merton and examine wider trading opportunities outside the borough.
- Develop further proposals to promote the future sustainability of universal youth provision.
- Review current SEN transport arrangements including taxi contracts and clienting function.
- Continue implementation of the SEN components of the Children and Families Act 2014

More detailed updates on progress in implementing these key projects will be provided during the course of the year.

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 An equalities assessment was completed during the consultation on changes to school admission arrangements for 2017-18

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