

Committee:	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date:	29 June 2016
Wards:	All
Subject:	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2016/17
Lead officer:	Annette Wiles, Scrutiny Officer
Lead member:	Cllr Dennis Pearce, Chair of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
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Recommendations:

That members of Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- i. Consider their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year, and agree issues and items for inclusion (see draft in Appendix 1);
 - ii. Consider the methods by which the Panel would like to scrutinise the issues/items agreed;
 - iii. Identify a Member to lead on performance monitoring on behalf of the Panel;
 - iv. Identify a Member to lead on budget scrutiny on behalf of the Panel;
 - v. Agree on an issue for scrutiny by a task group and appoint members to the Task Group;
 - vi. Consider the appointment of co-opted members for the 2016/17 municipal year, to sit on the Panel and/or on the Task Group;
 - vii. Consider whether they wish to make visits to local sites; and
 - viii. Identify any training and support needs.
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PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to support and advise Members to determine their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year.
- 1.2 This report sets out the following information to assist Members in this process:
 - a) The principles of effective scrutiny and the criteria against which work programme items should be considered;
 - b) The roles and responsibilities of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
 - c) The findings of the consultation programme undertaken with Councillors and co-opted members, Council senior management, voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations and Merton residents;
 - d) A summary of discussion by Councillors and co-opted Members at a topic selection workshop held on 24 May 2016; and
 - e) Support available to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel to determine, develop and deliver its 2016/17 work programme.
2. **Determining the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme**

- 2.1 Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2016/17 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of Merton.
- 2.2 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has a specific role relating to children and young people. This includes education, children's social care, child protection and youth services which should automatically be built into their work programmes.
- 2.3 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work. Any call-in work will be programmed into the provisional call-in dates identified in the corporate calendar as required.
- 2.4 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2016/17, including the scheduled budget meeting (representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting). Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the work programme.

Principles guiding the development of the scrutiny work programme

- 2.5 The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
- **Be selective** – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - **Add value with scrutiny** – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the Council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
 - **Be ambitious** – The Panel should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the Council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.
 - **Be flexible** – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Panel. For example Members may wish to question officers regarding the declining performance of a service or may choose to respond to a Councillor Call for Action request.
 - **Think about the timing** – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

Models for carrying out scrutiny work

2.6 There are a number of means by which the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Panel can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter ■ A variation of this model could be a one-day seminar-scrutiny of issues that, although important, do not merit setting up a 'task-and-finish' group
Task Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Commission with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet/Council ■ This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
The Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Panel may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report – either from the service department or from the Scrutiny Team – to give them more details
Meeting with service Officer/Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/Partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. ■ If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the Panel needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter s/he takes it back to the Panel for discussion
Individual Members doing some initial research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A member with a specific concern carries out some research to gain more information on the matter and then brings his/her findings to the attention of the Panel if s/he still has concerns.

2.7 Note that, in order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the Panel may choose to take some “information only” items outside of Panel meetings, for example by email.

Support available for scrutiny activity

2.8 The Overview and Scrutiny function has dedicated scrutiny support from the Scrutiny Team to:

- Work with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel to manage the work programme and coordinate the agenda, including advising officers and partner organisations on information required and guidance for witnesses submitting evidence to a scrutiny review;
- Provide support for scrutiny members through briefing papers, background material, training and development seminars, etc;
- Facilitate and manage the work of the task and finish groups, including research, arranging site visits, inviting and briefing witnesses and drafting review reports on behalf on the Chair; and
- Promote the scrutiny function across the organisation and externally.

- 2.9 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel will need to assess how it can best utilise the available support from the Scrutiny Team to deliver its work programme for 2016/17.
- 2.10 The Panel is also invited to comment on any briefing, training and support that is needed to enable Members to undertake their work programme. Members may also wish to undertake visits to local services in order to familiarise themselves with these. Such visits should be made with the knowledge of the Chair and will be organised by the Scrutiny Team.
- 2.11 The Scrutiny Team will take the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel's views on board in developing the support that is provided.

3. Selecting items for the Scrutiny Work Programme

- 3.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel sets its own agenda within the scope of its terms of reference. It has the following remit:
- Children's social care, including child protection;
 - Education, including school standards, special educational needs, the extended schools programme; and the healthy schools initiative;
 - Youth services and youth engagement, including the Youth Parliament, young people 'Not in Education; Employment or Training' (NEET), and the Connexions Service;
 - Youth offending;
 - Children's Centres; and
 - The Children's Trust.
- 3.1.2. The Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for issues to scrutinise either as agenda items or task group reviews. Suggestions have been received from members of the public, Councillors and partner organisations including the police, NHS and Merton Voluntary Service Council. Issues that have been raised repeatedly at Community Forums have also been included. The Scrutiny Team has consulted departmental management teams in order to identify forthcoming issues on which the Panel could contribute to the policymaking process.
- A description of all the suggestions received is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.2 The councillors who attended a "topic selection" workshop on 24 May 2016 discussed these suggestions. Suggestions were prioritised at the workshop using the criteria listed in Appendix 3. In particular, participants sought to identify issues that related to the Council's strategic priorities or where there was underperformance; issues of public interest or concern and issues where scrutiny could make a difference.
- 3.3 A note of the workshop discussion relating to the remit of the Panel is set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 contains a draft work programme that has been drawn up, taking the workshop discussion into account, for the consideration of the Panel. The Panel is requested to discuss this draft and agree any changes that it wishes to make.
- ### **4. Task group reviews**
- 4.1 The Panel is invited to select an issue for in-depth scrutiny and establish a task group.

5. Co-option to the Panel membership

5.1 Scrutiny Panels can consider whether to appoint non-statutory (non-voting) co-optees to the membership, in order to add to the specific knowledge, expertise and understanding of key issues to aid the scrutiny function. Panels may also wish to consider whether it may be helpful to co-opt people from “seldom heard” groups.

6. Public involvement

6.1 Scrutiny provides extensive opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by the Panel.

6.2 Service users and the public bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to scrutiny, particularly if “seldom heard” groups such as young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic communities and people from lesbian gay bisexual and transgender communities are included.

6.3 This engagement will help the Panel to understand the service user’s perspective on individual services and on co-ordination between services. Views can be heard directly through written or oral evidence or heard indirectly through making use of existing sources of information, for example from surveys. From time to time the Panel/Task Group may wish to carry out engagement activities of its own, by holding discussion groups or sending questionnaires on particular issues of interest.

6.4 Much can be learnt from best practice already developed in Merton and elsewhere. The Scrutiny Team will be able to help the Panel to identify the range of stakeholders from which it may wish to seek views and the best way to engage with particular groups within the community.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1 A number of issues highlighted in this report recommend that Panel members take into account certain considerations when setting their work programme for 2016/17. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel is free to determine its work programme as it sees fit. Members may therefore choose to identify a work programme that does not take into account these considerations. This is not advised as ignoring the issues raised would either conflict with good practice and/or principles endorsed in the Review of Scrutiny, or could mean that adequate support would not be available to carry out the work identified for the work programme.

7.2 A range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme are set out in the appendices, together with a suggested approach to determining which to include in the work programme. Members may choose to respond differently. However, in doing so, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are also free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.

8. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

8.1 To assist Members to identify priorities for inclusion in the Panel’s work programme, the Scrutiny Team has undertaken a campaign to gather suggestions for possible scrutiny reviews from a number of sources:

- a. Members of the public have been approached using the following tools: articles in the local press, My Merton and Merton Together, request for suggestions from all Councillors and co-opted Members, letter to partner organisations and to a range of local voluntary and community organisations, including those involved in the Inter-Faith Forum and members of the Lesbian Gay and Transgender Forum;
- b. Councillors have put forward suggestions by raising issues in scrutiny meetings, via the Overview and Scrutiny Member Survey 2016, and by contacting the Scrutiny Team direct; and
- c. Officers have been consulted via discussion at departmental management team meetings.

9. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the financial, resource and property issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific financial, resource and property implications.

10. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Overview and scrutiny bodies operate within the provisions set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 10.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific legal and statutory implications.

11. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The reviews will involve work to consult local residents, community and voluntary sector groups, businesses, hard to reach groups, partner organisations etc and the views gathered will be fed into the review.
- 11.2 Scrutiny work involves consideration of the human rights, equalities and community cohesion issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Police and Justice Act 2006, all Council departments must have regard to the impact of services on crime, including anti-social behaviour and drugs. Scrutiny review reports will therefore highlight any implications arising from the reviews relating to crime and disorder as necessary.

- 13. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 13.1 There are none specific to this report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the risk management and health and safety issues relating to the topic being scrutinised. Furthermore, scrutiny work will also need to assess the implications of any recommendations made to Cabinet, including specific risk management and health and safety implications.
- 14. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- 14.1 Appendix 1 – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel draft work programme 2016/17
- 14.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of topics relating to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel’s remit suggested for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme
- 14.3 Appendix 3 – Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 25 May 2016
- 14.4 Appendix 4 – Notes from discussion of topics relating to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Scrutiny Topic Selection Workshop on 25 May 2016
- 15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 15.1 None

Draft work programme 2016/17**Meeting date – 29 June 2016**

Item/Issue
Elected Member and department portfolio priorities: Cabinet Members for Children's Services (Cllr Katy Need), Education (Cllr Caroline Cooper-Marbiah) and the Director (plus other officers)
Performance monitoring (including agreeing a performance lead)
School provision (pre-decision scrutiny) – timing dependent
Task group update (routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts)
Agreeing the work programme

Meeting date – 11 October 2016

School provision
School admissions
Performance monitoring
Update report
Task group update (implementation of the recommendations of the online strategies task group)

Meeting date – 9 November 2016

Budget scrutiny round 1
Safeguarding (including focus on Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation and Radicalisation)
Performance monitoring
Update report

Meeting date - 11 January 2017 (scrutiny of the budget)

Scrutiny of the budget
Performance monitoring
Update report
Update on health and wellbeing strategies for children and families

Meeting date - 8 February 2017

Performance monitoring
Update report
Schools annual report (including focus on attainment and recruitment and retention of teachers)

Meeting date - March 2017¹

Performance monitoring
Update report
Corporate Parenting (including focus on those areas identified through the previous Corporate Parenting scrutiny workshop)

¹ There is a proposal to swap the date of this meeting with that of the Children and Young People Panel to optimise phasing.

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2016/17 Background

Review of the CYP topic suggestions from the last municipal year (2015/16)

Topic suggestion	What happened
School runs and school travel plans	The Panel decided not to include this in the work programme.
Housing and health offer for care leavers and looked after children to prevent homelessness and unemployment	Mini task group formed. This has now been refocused onto routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts including Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
Recruitment of Foster Carers and other placements for Looked After Children	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a themed Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. Supported by an external expert.
Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting Report	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a themed Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. Supported by an external expert.
Safeguarding	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a panel meeting.
Transfer of public health functions to Local Authority and broader engagement of health in provision of services for children and young people	Subject to scrutiny review as part of a panel meeting.
School Leadership Succession Planning Task Group	The Action Plan to achieve the recommendations of the task group was further scrutinised by the CYP Panel allowing for the implementation of the task group's recommendations to be reviewed.
Educational attainment for disabled children and young people	Mini task group formed. This has been refocused onto routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts including Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This means the task group's focus on the educational attainment of disabled children and young people has not happened.
Transition between child and adult social care and health services	It was agreed to focus on this at the Corporate Parenting themed meeting but this wasn't picked-up.
Update reports provided by the CSF department (including the special needs	These were introduced and have been part of the agenda at every scrutiny Panel

travel budget, free school meals take-up and the impact on pupil premium, and the provision of school places.	meeting during 2015/2016. The workshop provides an opportunity to review if these are working successfully for Panel members and the Department.
Pre-decisions scrutiny	There were few if any opportunities in the Panel's work programme for the last municipal year to undertake pre-decision scrutiny.
Performance monitoring	It was agreed to have lead members for any performance indicators causing concern. However, it is unclear if this happened.

Policy overview

This is a broad subject. The following provides a quick digest of the key policy developments that affect the work of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- **Adoption:** the new enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 allow for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements. The Government's recent white paper, [Adoption: a vision for change](#) outlines how the new regional adoption agencies will be achieved and the workforce developed with the overall aim of reducing the time children wait to be adopted.
- **Academisation:** the recent announcement has seen a watering down of the government's expectation that all schools will become academies by 2020, or to have an academy order in place to convert by 2022. This is a developing policy area.
- **Childcare:** a tax-free Childcare Scheme will be introduced from 2017.
- **Costing schools:** the Education and Adoption Bill will give the Department of Education (DFE) new powers to address failing and coasting schools. [Link](#)
- **Extending the school day:** extra funding will be provided to extend the school day in 25% of secondary schools, and £10m funding will be provided to 1,600 schools to expand Breakfast Clubs.
- **Funding for new schools:** the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and DFE have published a joint letter setting out opportunities for securing funding for both the expansion of existing schools and new schools to support housing growth. [Link](#)
- **National Funding Formula:** this will replace existing funding mechanisms for schools from 2017-18. An additional £500m additional core funding above that set out in the 2015 Spending Review will be allocated to support this accelerated timetable.
- **Education White Paper:** the Government has published an Education White Paper and a new strategy for the Department for Education. The White Paper includes proposals to change teaching qualifications and bring in a new accreditation system that includes class room performance and judgement of the Head Teacher. Also, it requires a more skills-led approach to recruiting school governors. [Link](#)

Annual Resident Survey:

The annual survey of Merton's residents did not take place in 2015 (because the contractor withdrew from delivering the Survey of Londoners package). It is currently unclear whether or not this will happen in 2016. However, until this occurs, the most recent resident survey results are from 2014 with the following potentially of greatest

interest to the Children and Young People Panel in prioritising the issues it wishes to scrutinise:

- Concern over the standard of education is ninth priority for the borough overall, but concern about this is significantly higher than average for those aged 34-49, and those with children;
- 12% of residents stressed concerns that not enough was being done for young people; and
- There has been an increase in satisfaction with nursery and primary education, both of which are ahead of the London average.

Topic suggestions received in relation to the remit of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2016/17

The following topics were suggested by residents, members and officers, for consideration by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel, for its 2016/17 work programme:

1. Attainment;
2. Corporate Parenting;
3. Health and wellbeing (with a specific focus on childhood obesity);
4. Ofsted;
5. Radicalisation;
6. Recruitment and retention of teachers;
7. Safeguarding (with a specific focus on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation);
8. School admission arrangements;
9. School provision;
10. School runs;
11. School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities; and
12. Transition between child and adult social care and health services.

1. TOPIC: Attainment

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by Panel members collectively at a Panel meeting and individually through the annual member survey. The Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department Management Team has also suggested the specific focus on attainment of children with Special Education Need and/or Disability (SEND) be picked-up.

Summary of the issue

Scrutinising the overall attainment of all children in Merton's schools as well as that of specific cohorts of children is a key part the Panel's annual work programme; the objective is to ensure that all Merton's children achieve a good level of attainment including specific cohorts. Merton's results are benchmarked against national averages and attainment in London both generally and that of close statistical neighbours. This is presented to the Panel in the Schools Standards Annual Report and through an update on the Schools Standards Committee, prepared and presented by the CSF Department.

During the last municipal year, (2015/16) the Schools Standards report highlighted improving attainment outcomes in Early Years, Year 1, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for the 2014/2015 academic year. However, there was a drop in attainment at Key Stage 4 and the attainment of key cohorts was highlighted as needing scrutiny focus; specifically, the attainment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) cohorts, Looked After Children and children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Additionally, it

was noted that at Key Stage 4, attainment remained the same if secondary schools outside of the Council's control (Academies) were removed from the analysis.

The School Standards Annual Report for the last municipal year is available [here](#) for reference. The Panel's comments on this are available in the meeting minutes available [here](#).

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel should continue to receive the Schools Standards Annual Report and an update on the Schools Standards Committee, making this the key theme of one Panel meeting during the municipal year. This provides the opportunity to review attainment generally but also provides the opportunity this year to focus down on those specific issues that have been highlighted. The Panel could request a detailed report from officers on the attainment of those cohorts that have been highlighted to understand activity that has happened over the past year and its impact (**performance monitoring**).

There is also scope within this meeting to seek the involvement of those directly working with those cohorts highlighted, to hear first hand about the issues and how action being taken is working. It would also be possible to invite a suitable representative of Merton's Academies to talk about how they are adding value to provision.

Logistics

It would be good to consider if the presentation of the Annual Schools Standards Report and the focus on attainment is happening at the right time of the year to best benefit officers. It is also suggested that this meeting is held at a Merton school, to give Panel members the opportunity to discuss attainment with the school's Senior Management Team. Alternatively, Merton's heads could be invited to attend the meeting.

Guidance

The Local Government Associations (LGA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny have provided [guidance](#) for members on how scrutiny can influence local education and support school leaders to improve results.

2. TOPIC: Corporate Parenting

Who suggested it?

Corporate Parenting is the most suggested topic for the Children and Young People's panel this year. No doubt this reflects the focus that has been placed on this topic by the Panel over the last municipal year (2015/16). This has supported Panel members to think strategically about which aspects of this statutory duty require scrutiny focus over the forthcoming year. As a result, various aspects of this agenda have been suggested for scrutiny focus collectively by Panel members at Panel meetings and individually through the annual member survey. A specific focus on unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) has also been suggested by the CSF Department Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The Council is Corporate Parent to all Looked After Children (LAC) within the borough and increasingly older Care Leavers reflecting the impact of the 'stay put' policy that supports Care Leavers to continue to receive support up until the age of 25 and possibly older. Our LAC population has increased from 96 (2006/7) to 157 (2014/15) and currently stands at 160 (January 2016). The reasons for this rise include increased national awareness of safeguarding, an increasing birth rate, the classification of young people on remand as

LAC and more generally demographic changes in Merton. The profile of Looked After Children in Merton is unusual at the older age range as this includes an increase in the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers (32 during 2014/15). A significant proportion of the increase in LAC and Care Leavers is a result of UASC.

As Corporate Parent to these children, the Council is responsible for all aspects of their care including education, health and welfare, what they do in their leisure times, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements.

During the last municipal year, the Panel used a workshop format during a dedicated Panel meeting to look at Corporate Parenting. This allowed scrutiny time to be used more effectively, covering the Corporate Parenting topic in greater breadth and depth. An external expert was used to support the session and provide advice on how to scrutinise Corporate Parenting. Members valued this approach which supported them to define their priorities for the forthcoming year:

- The percentage of children in and leaving care that are NEET;
- Quoracy at child protection conferences (which is a safeguarding performance indicator);
- The changing profile of the LAC population in Merton and the needs for service provision to reflect these changes (with specific focus on ensuring the ethnic diversity of social workers to reflect the population characteristics of Looked After Children);
- The stability of placements;
- Retention of Merton's high quality LAC team;
- Increasing recruitment of foster carers that are resident in Merton (especially in the West of the borough) and those willing/able to care for adolescents;
- Ensuring the right mix of placements is provided including within a children's home in the borough;
- Supporting foster carers so they understand the vulnerability and complexity of the children they are looking after; and
- Looking in detail at the survey responses from children who identified themselves as dissatisfied.

Officers have also highlighted unaccompanied asylum seeker children for focus given they now account for a significant proportion of our increase in LAC and Care Leavers.

Scrutiny of Corporate Parenting will also need to reflect the new enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 that allow for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements.

The Corporate Parenting Report for the last municipal year is available [here](#) for reference.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel should continue to receive the annual Corporate Parenting Report and the Adoption and Fostering Inspection action plans prepared by the CSF Department to undertake performance monitoring and make this the key theme and focus of one Panel meeting during the municipal year. This provides the opportunity to scrutinise Corporate Parenting generally but also gives the opportunity to focus down on those specific issues that have been highlighted (**performance monitoring**). This could be supported by requesting the attendance of members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to answer member questions.

It should be noted that some aspects of this agenda might lend themselves to specific and more in-depth focus, particularly the issues that have already been highlighted by Panel members and the CSF Department Manager Team. This might be achieved through a **task group**.

Logistics

Given the importance of housing and for care leavers, it will be important to include key officers from the Community and Housing Department in this meeting. Also, given the number of care leavers in the NEET population, it could be beneficial to invite members of the Economic Wellbeing Board to attend. A focus on health matters for those in and leaving care could be supported by inviting the participation of local health partners.

Guidance

The Local Government Associations (LGA) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny have provided [guidance](#) for members on scrutiny of Looked-After Children. [Guidance](#) is also becoming available specifically on the scrutiny of provision for unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

3. TOPIC: Health and wellbeing of children and young people

Who suggested it?

This topic has been suggested by several Panel members through the annual member survey both in its broadest application and specifically looking at children's obesity in primary schools. Additionally, health and wellbeing has been raised during Panel meetings; the focus on measuring the success of Merton's schools predominately through academic outcomes has been questioned.

Summary of the issue

The general focus on academic outcomes has led to a growing narrative around the health and wellbeing of children and young people, specifically how to ensure that this is adequately supported and measured. This also reflects growing awareness that the issues affecting children's health and wellbeing have changed. A [report](#) from the Health and Social Care Information Centre published in June 2015 highlighted the shift; smoking in pregnancy has decreased, a growing number of mothers now breastfeed, vaccinations rates remain relatively high and the number of 11 – 15 year olds reporting drugs use has decreased, but children's lives are more sedentary with a 10%+ drop since 2008 in the numbers getting the recommended amount of exercise, between a quarter and a third of children at primary schools now being overweight or obese, and the number of referrals to psychological therapies significant (and double for young women). These issues have been highlighted in Merton's second annual public health [report](#).

One of the greatest areas of concern is childhood obesity; "Being obese or overweight increases the risk of developing a range of serious diseases, including heart disease and cancers. The impact of obesity on the health of adults has long been established. In addition, rising levels of childhood obesity has consequences for the physical and mental health of children and young people in both the short and the longer term. Obesity is associated with the development of long-term health conditions, placing demands on social care services.... Being overweight or obese in childhood and adolescence has consequences for health in both the short term and longer term. Once established, obesity is notoriously difficult to treat, so prevention and early intervention are very important" (Public Health England, [The impact of obesity](#)).

In Merton priorities are set out in the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and the [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). This includes working in partnership to strengthen preventative strategies and to ensure early identification to better target services at those families that are in greatest need of support.

Key aspects of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy include:

- helping infants have the best start in life;
- supporting the personal, social and mental wellbeing of children and young people;
- promoting healthy weight in children and helping young people make healthy life choices.

Delivery is a changing picture. During this municipal year, it will be the first anniversary of the transfer of public health functions from the NHS to local authorities. A public health team has been established and a Director of Public Health appointed (Dagmar Zeuner). The council now works in partnership with Merton Clinical Commissioning Group which in turn works with local health practitioners including GPs and nurses.

During the transfer The Children's Trust has aimed to retain a sharp focus on improving children's health outcomes. Chaired by the Director for CSF, the Trust brings together commissioners and providers with representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group. This sits alongside the Health and Wellbeing Board, which the Director for CSF attends along with the Director of Public Health and the Lead Member for Children's Services.

Additionally, over the last year, The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has been subject to a transformation plan following a Health Needs Assessment and a Service Review. It is intended that this would be implemented by 2020. Merton has established a CAMH Partnership Board. Membership will include a range of local partners from the local Community and Voluntary Sector and schools.

How could scrutiny look at it?

This is a big agenda area which continues to be subject to considerable change. As such it lends itself to in-depth scrutiny which could be achieved through a themed meeting using a workshop approach to make the best use of the time available and drawing on the support of an external expert. It would be beneficial for the Panel to hear from the Directors of Public Health and CSF and the chair of the Health and Wellbeing board to look at how the key groups in Merton's structure are working together to meet local needs (**performance monitoring**).

It should be noted that some aspects of this agenda might lend themselves to specific and more in-depth focus. Childhood obesity is one topic that has already been highlighted by a Panel member. This might be achieved through a **task group**.

Logistics

It is also suggested that this meeting is held at a Merton Children's Centre, to give Panel members the opportunity to meet and discuss the issues highlighted with members of staff who are in the front line of delivery.

Guidance

The Government (through Public Health England) has published a [framework](#) for improving young people's health and wellbeing that aims to support local areas in the delivery of their public health role for young people. It poses questions for councillors (page 16), health and wellbeing boards (page 17), commissioners (page 18), providers

(page 19) and education and learning settings (page 19). This is supported with [guidance](#) on developing a whole school and college approach.

4. TOPIC: Ofsted

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by members of the CSF Departmental Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The Council's arrangements for supporting [school improvement](#) and [children's services](#) are subject to inspection by Ofsted. This may happen during this municipal year and requires some contingency to be built into the work programme to allow this to be picked-up by the panel.

How scrutiny could look at it?

Ofsted inspections are no notice and therefore contingency time should be built into the work programme.

5. TOPIC: Radicalisation

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by the Muslim Women of Morden with a specific focus on the impact the 'Prevent' strategy is having on Muslim children's educational attainment, social and mental health.

Summary of the issue

Preventing Violent Extremism, now known as [Prevent](#) – has been a Government priority for over a decade. It is one of the four Ps that make up the Government's post 9/11 counter-terrorism strategy, known as Contest: Prepare for attacks, Protect the public, Pursue the attackers and Prevent their radicalisation in the first place.

Since summer 2015, schools and childcare providers have had a legal obligation to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. According to the Government's [guidance](#), the day-to-day responsibilities of teachers and nursery staff include being able to spot children who might be vulnerable to radicalisation, and intervening appropriately. This can include referral to the Government's anti-radicalisation programme, [Channel](#).

In 2015, 3,800 people in England and Wales were referred to Channel. This is more than twice the number in 2014, including 2,003 aged under 18 years. About two thirds of referrals, were for Islamist extremism (others referred include far-right extremists). Through a FOI request, the BBC has established that 415 children aged 10 and under and 1,424 aged 11 – 15 were referred to Channel between January 2012 and December 2015.

Whilst there are notable case studies where the Prevent strategy is described as being successful, it has also been much criticised. The National Union of Teachers has called on the strategy to be withdrawn stating, "There is evidence that some of the expectations driven by the Prevent agenda and Ministerial speeches are undermining the confidence of teachers and students to explore and discuss global issues". Others such as the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) emphasise that the safest lens through which to view this is that of safeguarding and as such this is something schools have been doing for years. It recommends that teachers continue to be alert but to not conduct surveillance. The strategy remains controversial with critics stating it is counter-productive and discriminates against Muslims and others highlight there is no clear way to measure its effectiveness.

Local authorities are part of the Prevent strategy. They are required to establish or make use of existing local multi-agency groups to agree risks and co-ordinate Prevent activity. Many local authorities use Community Safety Partnerships but other multi-agency forums may be appropriate. It is considered likely that links will need to be made to other statutory partnerships such as Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Safeguarding Adults Boards, Channel panels and Youth Offending Teams. It is recommended that local Prevent co-ordinators have access to senior local authority leadership to give advice and support. The strategy expects local multi-agency arrangements to be put in place to effectively monitor the impact of Prevent work. The Merton Safeguarding Children's Board has developed and published its own Prevent [guidance](#).

Prevent work, conducted through local authorities will often directly involve, as well as have an impact on, local communities meaning effective dialogue and coordination with community-based organisations will continue to be essential.

How could scrutiny look at it?

This is a difficult, sensitive and complex issue and one that requires a high degree of expertise. The Panel could subject the MSCB's guidance to scrutiny review. This would provide the opportunity to understand the support available to teachers and others in Merton's schools, how the relationships between partners are managed to achieve this support, the context in which this is set (safeguarding?) and how the on-going dialogue/engagement with local communities is managed and informs how Merton's schools are responding to the Prevent agenda. This would provide the opportunity to focus on the impact the 'Prevent' strategy. Whilst specific data isn't collected to understand the impact on attainment there are opportunities to understand whether or not Prevent is affecting relationships between pupils and teachers in Merton. This could be achieved as part of the themed meeting on safeguarding (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

This provides an ideal opportunity to engage with all segments of the local community to understand the impact of Prevent locally.

6. TOPIC: Recruitment and retention of teachers

Who suggested it?

This topic has been suggested by Jane White, the headteacher of Priory school. (All headteachers were written to as part of the call for topic suggestions). The increasing shortage of teachers and over-reliance on agency supply staff mainly from overseas was highlighted. (It is noted that this could be seen to apply to all key public sector workers including, for example, social workers.)

Summary of the issue

The National Audit Office published a report in February 2016 which has brought the issue of the availability of trained teachers into sharp focus. It has summarised: "Training a sufficient number of new teachers of the right quality is key to the success of all the money spent on England's schools. The Department, however, has missed its recruitment targets for the last four years and there are signs that teacher shortages are growing. Until the Department meets its targets and can show how its approach is improving trainee recruitment, quality and retention, we cannot conclude that the arrangements for training new teachers are value for money," Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, 10 February 2016.

The key points from the NAO's report are:

- Recruitment targets for teacher training have been missed for the last four years;
- Between 2011 and 2014 the number of teachers leaving the profession increased by 11%, and the proportion of those who chose to leave the profession ahead of retirement increased from 64% to 75%;
- Overall the number of teachers has kept pace with changing pupil numbers, and the retention of newly qualified teachers has been stable. However, indicators suggest that teacher shortages are growing. The recorded rate of vacancies and temporarily filled positions doubled from 0.5% of the teaching workforce to 1.2% between 2011 and 2014;
- In secondary schools, more classes are being taught by teachers without a relevant post-A level qualification in their subject. The proportion of physics classes, for example, being taught by a teacher without such a qualification rose from 21% to 28% between 2010 and 2014;
- Secondary school teacher training places are proving particularly difficult to fill. It is not proving possible to recruit enough trainees in the majority of secondary subjects: 14 out of 17 secondary subjects had unfilled training places in 2015/16, compared with two subjects with unfilled places in 2010/11. In subjects with hard-to-fill places, providers are more likely to accept trainees with lower degree classifications;
- Whilst the routes by which trainees can achieved qualified status has increased, potential applicants do not yet have good enough information to help them decide where to train. Providers and schools told the NAO the plethora of training routes is confusing;
- Indicators of trainee and training quality are encouraging, but not enough to prove that training is raising the quality of teaching. The proportion of postgraduate trainee entrants with at least an upper second class degree increased from 63% in 2010/11 to 75% in 2015/16. While degree class is a reasonable indicator of subject knowledge, it is a less clear predictor of other aspects of teacher quality;
- There is a weak understanding of the extent of local teacher supply shortages and whether they are being locally resolved; and
- The NAO's research suggests problems in poorer areas, with some 54% of leaders in schools with large proportions of disadvantaged pupils saying attracting and keeping good teachers was a major problem compared with 33% of leaders in other schools.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel looked at succession planning in schools in 2014 through a task group but this was exclusively focused on headteacher recruitment and retention. (The Panel has continued to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from this task group through its meetings.) Currently, teacher recruitment and possible shortages doesn't appear to be an aspect of Merton's school provision that is being routinely monitored through scrutiny and therefore it is difficult to quantify the extent of this issue across all Merton's schools. However, the fact that this has been raised to the Panel by a headteacher from Merton school is indicative. The Panel could question the Director of CSF about the degree to which teacher recruitment is an issue in Merton's schools and how it is being addressed. It may be appropriate for the Panel to conduct its own survey of Merton schools to help quantify this issue. This topic could be examined as part of the schools standards meeting (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

Given the importance of housing to the recruitment of key public sector workers, it will be important to include key officers from the Community and Housing Department in this meeting.

7. TOPIC: Safeguarding

Who suggested it?

This is a standard item on the Panel's work programme each year. Additionally, the Children's Schools and Families Departmental Management Team has suggested the Panel could examine two aspects of safeguarding which are priorities: Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation.

Summary of the issue

Safeguarding children is one of the key functions of the CSF Department and its partner agencies. Regulators expect appropriate political engagement in and scrutiny of how effectively the council is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities.

The [Merton Safeguarding Children Board](#) (MSCB) is the multi-agency forum for agreeing how local child protection services are planned, delivered and monitored in the borough. Its role is to ensure the effectiveness of what member organisations do individually and together.

The Panel undertakes scrutiny of safeguarding during the year through the receipt of a series of reports including from the MSCB and on Looked After Children (minutes of the Panel's most recent discussion of safeguarding are available [here](#)). These outline the challenges for safeguarding in the context of rising demographics and the changes required to respond to local and national policy direction. During the next municipal year, this will include the new enacted provisions of the Education and Adoption Act 2016 allowing for regionalisation of local authority adoption arrangements.

The Panel also regularly monitors safeguarding and LAC indicators as part of its routine performance monitoring.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE): The Department for Education defines child sexual exploitation (CSE) as "a form of child abuse [which] involves children and young people receiving something—for example, accommodation, drugs, gifts, or affection—as a result of them performing sexual activities, or having others perform sexual activities on them". Underpinning this are "exploitative relationships characterised ...by fear, deception, coercion and violence."

In the year prior to September 2014, the Merton CSE service worked with 67 children between 11-17 years old. The majority were female, and ethnicity was broadly in line with the changing demographics in Merton, with just over 50% from a White/British or White background. In terms of age, 13% of those referred for possible CSE were under 13 years old, 54% 14-15 years old, and 33% 16-18. Risk factors included drug, alcohol and mental health issues; just under a third were Looked After, the majority of who were placed out of borough.

Following other cases, specifically in Rotherham, Councils, police forces and others have been subject to Government criticism, "It is unacceptable for councils, police forces or other public bodies to use severance agreements to cover up examples of under-performance or organisational failure", stated in the Government's [Tacking Child Sexual Exploitation](#) strategy.

This follows on from the [Jay](#) enquiry into the Rotherham cases. This made a number of recommendations relevant to Councils.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): this is child abuse and has been banned in the UK since 2003. Last year, the Government introduced a new law requiring professionals to report known cases of FGM in under-18s to the police. Activists and the police have been raising awareness about the risk of British school girls being flown out of the UK specifically for FGM over the summer.

It is not known how many girls are at risk of FGM. The NSPCC [estimates](#) this based on knowledge of FGM in other countries and has determined that 23,000 girls under 15 could be at risk of FGM in England and Wales. The latest data published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre highlighted that between April and September 2015, a case of FGM is reported in England every 109 minutes or 2,421 cases in total for this period.

How could scrutiny look at it?

It is proposed that the panel receive annual reports on safeguarding children including from the Merton Safeguarding Children Board. Partner agencies could be invited/called to contribute/address issues raised by panel members in relation to this report including the board itself, health services and the police.

For both FGM and CSE, scrutiny can ensure Merton's strategy for prevention is being effective. Things to consider include whether professionals are getting sufficient training and support to be able to identify those at risk and know how to respond. MSCB has produced a [FGM policy](#) working with partner agencies from health, social care, education, police and the voluntary sector. For CSE, the Government's policy requires action from councils. The Panel could request reports on both from officers allowing the Panel to consider effectiveness in both areas as part of a themed meeting focusing on safeguarding (**performance monitoring**).

Guidance

To help Panel members, the Local Government Association has provided a practical [guide](#) for overview and scrutiny councillors on safeguarding children.

8. TOPIC: School admission arrangements

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by the Children's Schools and Families Department Management Team.

Summary of the issue

The [growth](#) in Merton's population has resulted in increasing demand for school places which is being addressed through new provision (see below) and changes to school admission arrangements.

During the last municipal year, the CSF department undertook a consultation of residents to gather views and feedback on admission arrangements for Merton's school. This data was being analysed at the end of the last municipal year. When this analysis is complete, it has been agreed it would be presented to the Panel.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could request a report from officers on the results of the consultation and the resulting decisions for school admission arrangements that are being recommended by the Department. This would afford the Panel an opportunity for **pre-decision scrutiny**.

9. TOPIC: School provision

Who suggested it?

This has been suggested by Panel members collectively at a Panel meeting and individually through the annual member survey. The focus on this topic is caused by two key factors; 1) Merton's growing and changing population and 2) the Government's schools policy which aims to make all schools academies, removing them from Local Authority control.

Summary of the issue

As Merton's population continues to [grow](#), there is a consequential impact on demand for school places. This is being addressed through new school admission arrangements (see above) and provision of additional places. At the primary phase, additional places have already been provided with demand for increased secondary places now pressing.

Secondary place provision in Merton will be increased through a new school that is being commissioned by the [Education Funding Agency](#) (EFA) and provided by [Harris Academy](#). (The opening date for the new school is September 2017 but this may be delayed. Cabinet has already approved the expansion of Harris Academy Merton which will fulfil demand for increased secondary places prior to the opening of the new school.) Panel members have asked to have pre-decision scrutiny of the site for the new secondary school.

Additionally, Panel members have expressed a desire to have oversight of the implications of the Government's academisation policy as well as wanting to examine the perceived dependence on Harris as Merton's preferred Academy provider. Within this context, members have flagged their interest in exploring different forms of modern education delivery including what happens within classrooms, schools having single and split sites etc. There is also interest in exploring opportunities for the Council to develop commercial income streams from the delivery of consultancy (for example, the standards team providing paid for support to schools in other localities in both the state and school sectors).

How could scrutiny look at it?

The panel could request a report from officers reviewing expected population growth and detailing demand for increased provision and how this will be provided. It has already been suggested it would be possible to invite a suitable representative of Merton's Academies to talk about how they are adding value to provision (**performance monitoring**).

The Panel could set-up a **task group** to review the broader issues in terms of school provision looking at different delivery options and the benefit for educational outcomes as well as opportunities for commercialisation.

10. TOPIC: School Run and Travel Plans

Who suggested it?

Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage has again proposed that the adequacy of measures to address problems caused by the school run should be reviewed. They also

feel that school travel plans are poorly prepared, rarely implemented and need to be more robust.

Summary of the issue

The overall aim of School Travel Plans is to reduce car use for school journeys or keep it at low levels in schools expecting higher numbers of pupils over coming years. Active travel campaigns and [STAR](#) (School Travel Accredited and Recognised) accreditation are used to reduce car use and increase walking, cycling and using public transport. STAR is a strategic framework that encourages and rewards schools to adopt safer and active travel behaviour with three levels of award; sustainable, higher and outstanding. Participation in STAR is also an important building block towards achieving other accreditations and standards such as Healthy Schools, Eco-Schools and Sustainable Schools. Each school in Merton has a School Travel Plan Champion. They are responsible for producing their school's travel plan in conjunction with the borough's School Travel Plan Advisor (an officer from the Environment and Regeneration Department).

The aims of the service are to:

- Significantly reduce the number of car trips on journeys to and from schools;
- Remove the barriers, both perceived and actual, to walking, cycling and using public transport for school journeys;
- Increase the number of young people and adults choosing 'active travel' options over that of the car; and
- Increase understanding among whole school communities of the travel options that are available to them.

A School Travel Plan can result in:

- Less cars and congestion around the school site;
- Healthier and more active pupils, families and staff;
- Less pollution around the school;
- Safer walking and cycling routes around the school; and
- Improved school grounds with provision for bicycle storage.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could request a briefing report from the Schools Travel Plan Adviser on the number of school travel plans which are meeting STAR accreditation, operating effectively and how these are being enforced. It would be possible for the Panel to make recommendations, as appropriate, to Cabinet and schools on any improvements the Panel feels need to be made (**performance monitoring**).

Logistics

It is worth noting that air quality and the consequential desire to reduce car travel is a topic suggestion for the Sustainable Communities Panel this year.

11. School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

Who suggested it?

Panel members have suggested this topic through the annual member survey.

Summary of the issue

Panel members have signalled their interest in exploring ways to reduce the cost of school travel for students with SEND and to look at ways of ensuring efficiency and greater value for money.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Commission is looking at this topic through its finance committee (in conjunction with similar services for adults). Any Panel members wishing to explore this further are welcome to attend the relevant Commission meeting(s).

12. TOPIC: Transition between child and adult social care and health services

Who suggested it?

Merton Centre for Independent Living proposed that the Panel look at how young people are supported in the transition from receipt of children's social care and health services to adult social care and health services.

Summary of the issue

The Merton Transition Team supports young people between 14 and 25 years of age with severe and complex needs and disabilities making the transition from childhood to adulthood. The team works directly with the young person and their family/carers to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are central in the planning of their future life as an adult. The Merton Transition Team will ensure that parents/carers are involved in every step of the process by sharing knowledge and information, enabling them, along with their child, to make informed decisions about their child's future. The service works closely with children's social care, health, voluntary organisations and adult social care, amongst others. Adult Social Services also has a strategy which seeks to change the way in which adult social care services are commissioned. This includes a focus on improving the transitions process between children's and adult services.

How could scrutiny look at it?

The Panel could review the processes in place for supporting young people in making the transition to other services by engaging with officers internally, external partners and consulting service users, with a view to making any recommendations it feels are appropriate to the relevant body/organisations. This might be done as part of the Panel's safeguarding agenda.

Selecting a Scrutiny Topic – criteria used at the workshop on 24 May 2016

The purpose of the workshop is to identify priority issues for consideration as agenda items or in-depth reviews by the Panel. The final decision on this will then be made by the Panel at its first meeting on 29 June 2016.

All the issues that have been suggested to date by councillors, officers, partner organisations and residents are outlined in the supporting papers.

Further suggestions may emerge from discussion at the workshop.

Points to consider when selecting a topic:

- Is the issue strategic, significant and specific?
- Is it an area of underperformance?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's and/or its partners' overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective, tangible outcomes?
- Is it an issue of community concern and will it engage the public?
- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population?
- Will this work duplicate other work already underway, planned or done recently?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?

Note of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel topic selection meeting on 24 May 2016

Attendees

Councillors: Agatha Akyingyina, Mike Brunt, Adam Bull, Edward Foley, Joan Henry, Katy Neep, Jerome Neil, Dennis Pearce (Chair), Marsie Skeete, Linda Taylor and Jill West
Officers: Paul Ballatt (Assistant Director, Commissioning, Strategy and Performance) and Annette Wiles (Scrutiny Officer)

Apologies

None were received.

Attainment

AGREED to scrutinise attainment of children in the borough as part of the schools annual report. This will be presented to the Panel in February 2017. It was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel will fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for children's attainment through the scrutiny function.

Corporate Parenting

AGREED to scrutinise the Council's Corporate Parenting performance through 1) relevant performance measures featured in the performance reports provided at each meeting and 2) through a dedicated Panel meeting at which the annual Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting report is presented to the Panel (March 2017). It was noted that this will also focus on the performance of the Council's fostering service. Again, it was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for Corporate Parenting through the scrutiny function.

Health and wellbeing (with a specific focus on childhood obesity)

AGREED to focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people if time allows.

Ofsted

AGREED to allow enough time and flexibility in the work programme to accommodate any matters arising throughout the year including any resulting actions should an Ofsted inspection occur.

Radicalisation

AGREED to pick this up as part of the Panel's scrutiny of safeguarding of children and young people.

Recruitment and retention of teachers

AGREED to pick this up as part of the Panel's scrutiny of the schools annual report that will happen in February 2017.

Safeguarding (with a specific focus on Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation)

AGREED to scrutinise the Council's safeguarding of children and young people as part of a dedicated and themed Panel meeting. This should include a focus on the items seen as high priority by the Department (Child Sexual Exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation)

and Radicalisation as previously agreed. Again, it was highlighted that Ofsted expects the Panel fulfil this role and it will want to see evidence of how the Council demonstrates its accountability for safeguarding through the scrutiny function.

It was agreed that relevant external witnesses be invited to attend the themed meeting. Representatives from the police were specifically noted.

School admission arrangements

This was not specifically discussed at the workshop but has been noted in the minutes of previous Panel meetings as needing to return for consideration once the outcomes of the public consultation are known.

School provision

AGREED that this would be scrutinised by the Panel specifically in the context of the planned new secondary school. It was noted that Cabinet has requested the decision of where to site this new school be subject to pre-decision scrutiny. It is hoped this will happen at the June meeting but the timing is yet to be confirmed.

School travel for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities

The intention for this to be picked-up by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission was noted but it was requested that this should return for consideration by the Panel if it is not progressed by the Commission. (NB: subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that this item will be progressed by the financial monitoring task group as part of the work of the Commission.)

Performance monitoring

AGREED to continue receiving the performance monitoring report. However, it was also agreed that it would be beneficial for the Panel to understand more about the issues that have been highlighted to Departments that have received poor judgements from Ofsted in addition to the outcomes of the Department's own self-evaluation. This would be used to judge if the right performance indicator measures are being reported/monitored. The Panel will select a lead member for performance monitoring.

Update report

The Panel noted the value they place on receiving the Director's update report and AGREED that this will continue.

Logistics

AGREED:

- For the chair and vice-chair to attend pre-meetings with officers prior to Panel meetings;
- For the key Cabinet Members and officers to attend the first meeting to provide insight on priorities for the next municipal year;
- For there to be continued use of the expert witnesses/workshop format; and
- To explore the possibility of holding Panel meetings off site in relevant venues to support members in gaining further insight.

Task group

No potential task group subject was identified at the workshop and what format this activity should take was discussed. It was suggested that the Panel might support a task group during the year if a topic arises lending itself to in-depth scrutiny. Paul Ballatt suggested this might be fulfilled through an in-depth workshop approach with external experts.