

## **Contribution from Councillor Neep, Cabinet Member for Children's Services Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel 1 February 2018**

The things that are providing challenge to the department and that are areas I am working on and watching are:

1. **Change of leadership and managing the interim** - As we all know Yvette is moving on in a few weeks which will mean that there will be period without a DCS and also of course will be a period of significant change for the department. I will be working with Jane and Paul and Ged to ensure this is managed effectively and that the whole department feels confident in the process that we have in place whilst we wait for the position to be filled.
2. **Police changes** - There have been significant changes in the way that the police are organised and a number of senior leaders that we had in the borough have now moved on. Merton will be part of a four borough arrangement with Wandsworth, Kingston and Richmond and there will be one Borough Commander who covers all four. We have been fortunate to date that the Borough Commander has taken an active role at the MSCB and other important boards and conferences for the department. With four boroughs to now serve it may be less likely that we have representation as this level going forward.

The new configuration also sees Safeguarding, Gangs, Youth Crime and DV separated out into four different reports and areas. Historically these would of been looked at in the round and by one or two lead officers. Again we have concerns that we will not be able to access the right representation at both statutory and partner meetings.

I am writing to the head of MOPAC to seek assurances and we will work to build relationships with the new structure leads in order to ensure that Merton remains a key priority.

3. **SEND support:** As we see an increase in the number of young people who need support around SEND we are also seeing an increase in the number of personalized Education, Health and Care plans that are being delivered. This is of course completely the right thing and indeed families, young people and social workers are feeding back that this personalized approach is working well for the family which is great.

My concern is to ensure that we have the services within borough that our young people can then access. As well as the interplay of balancing these needs between health and education and how we ensure that this support is fairly and appropriately divided. I look forward to the feedback on the Autism Strategy that will be out for consultation shortly.

### **Finally please promote:**

We are always looking for more foster carers so that we can provide support to our young people locally and not through private foster agencies. It would be great if you could promote becoming a foster carer in your newsletters, at forums and through your networks.

If you want more information on fostering a young person you can call: 0800 073 0874 or 020 8545 4070 or email [fostering@merton.gov.uk](mailto:fostering@merton.gov.uk). We hold regular fostering information events at Morden Baptist Church, where people can find out more about fostering with Merton, meet the team as well as experienced foster carers, who will answer any questions that people may have.