

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Hollingsworth, Mills, E Wilson, Evans (Chairman), McWilliams, and Jones.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS: Mrs Brown and Mr Louden.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Bicknell.

OFFICERS: Kevin McDaniel, David Cook, Alison Alexander, Liz Hinchy and Lynne Pen.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Richards, Tanya White, Elaine Redding, Hilary Hall and Martin Post.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

### MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016 were approved as a true and correct record.

### REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMISSIONER

The Panel were informed that the Regional School Commissioner had given his apologies as he had to priorities other areas that required more improvement. That said he had been given a seat on this Panel as it was important that he retained focus on our schools.

The Panel were shown two slides that showed the performance of primary and secondary academies.

With regards to primaries performance was as follows:

- Datchet St Marys – Requires Improvement.
- Knowl Hill – Good
- Lowbrook – Outstanding
- St Francia – Outstanding
- St Lukes – Good
- St Marys – Good
- St Peters (Middle) – Inadequate
- White Waltham – Outstanding
- Burchets Green – Outstanding
- Eton Porny – Requires Improvement

The Panel were informed that with regards to St Peters Middle the judgement was when it was a maintained school and had not been judged as an academy. There was a strong leadership appointment joining the school.

With regards to secondary academies performance was noted as:

- Altwood – Requires Improvement.
- Charters – Outstanding.
- Cox Green – Good.
- Desborough – Good
- Furze Platt – Requires Improvement.
- Newlands – Good.
- Windsor Boys – Requires Improvement.
- Windsor Girls – Outstanding.

The Panel were informed that the LEA continued to collaborate with the academy schools apart from Altwood who although the LEA continued to have concerns they were not responsive to offers of help. If the Commissioner had attended one of the questions to be asked would have been how he planned to improve outcomes at Altwood.

The Chairman questioned the staffing levels of the Commissioner and schools covered and was informed that he was responsible for about 800 schools in the South East, North London and parts of the Midlands. The Commissioner had eight / nine staff whose role was not school improvement but to challenge trusts that they have improvement plans in place. The LEA had offered Altwood officer support.

Cllr Bicknell reported that even if the Commissioner agreed that Altwood was not achieving then all they would do was to go back to the trustees and therefore it was difficult for the LEA to effect change. Cllr Jones raised concern that even though the Commissioners were responsible for Academies the public still looked towards the Council when things were not improving.

Mr Loudon reported that if acadimisation went ahead then there needed to be focus given to primary schools; especially their finances. It was disappointing that the Commissioner had not attended to answer questions.

Cllr E Willson mentioned that if the Commissioner had attended he would have asked questions about financing academy conversion. Schools were given £25k toward aiding conversion but the LEA also incurred costs on areas such as legal fees and consultation costs. He raised concern about the amount of money needed for conversion that should be going towards childrens education.

Cllr E Willson asked if officers could ask the Commissioner how many schools received the School Improvement Grant and how many could benefit from the grant. The Chairman also asked for him to say what his department would be doing about improving Altwood and what dialogue there had been with the school.

With regards to future acadimisation Mrs Brown mentioned that there was a need to talk about accountability and that there was little evidence that MAT's were successful.

Cllr Hollingsworth informed that he had discussed Altwoods situation with two previous governors who had informed him that they had resigned as governors at the school as they could not force improvement.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

The Managing Director informed the Panel that there may resource to help conversion to academies but this would not cover the whole cost. It was noted that the land could be transferred to the DFE rather than the trust. The LEA would be making strong representation that academies must provide sufficient spaces for children to be provided with a high quality education. The DFE would have to look at the mixed quality of MAT's and the LEA would continue to offer challenge to poor performance. Officers were looking at MATs and other

opportunities for secondary schools to offer joint working with primary trusts. The Panel would have an opportunity to discuss the white paper when appropriate.

## DYNAMIC PURCHASING SYSTEM - HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The Panel were informed that the report considered whether dynamic purchasing was a route the Council wished to proceed down to procure its services and the options available in the market. The Report had been considered by Cabinet in March 2016 and went to the Adult Services and Health O&S Panel as if successful the next stage would be adult social care procurement. As there was to be a trial of the dynamic purchasing system for home to school transport the report was brought to this Panel to note.

The system would allow Individuals to choose their service from a group of providers vetted by the council. A spin-off benefit was that individuals made their own decisions therefore they were taking control over their lives. The system would provide benefits by encouraging operators to register allowing more choice and capacity and the accreditation process will improve quality of service.

Cllr Hollingsworth asked if this meant that you could only get HTST via the system and was informed that this was the case to allow for a clear and robust system and accredited DPS checked providers.

In response to questions from the Chairman the Panel were informed that current contracts would continue but in time all HTST needs would be provided from the system. The Panel were also informed that training and marketing of the system would be provided.

The Panel noted the update.

## FINANCE UPDATE

The Panel considered the latest financial update that reported a projected underspend of £483,000, whilst noting the addition of £2.2m to the Adult Social Care budget earlier in the year. Reserves were healthy, with the Development Fund currently at £663,000. At the start of the 2016/17 financial year £1.3m of transitional grant funding from central government would be transferred to the Development Fund.

Members noted that Two5Nine Ltd would be renamed RBWM Property Ltd. The report proposed an increase in the lending limit by £200,000 to £1.5m to enable the refurbishment of a property to be used for affordable rental.

With regards to Children's services the Panel were informed that:

- There was a projected underspend £0.018m (0.1%) against £17.967m net budget.
- There was a reduction in the legal costs of CiC.
- Reduction in public health grant.
- Increased cost of agency workers.
- Changes in high needs placements.
- Continuing pressure on high needs SEN, offset by underspend on education for 3 & 4 year olds.

Cllr E Wilson questioned the money given to Windsor Boys school to fix their bike shed and if this would set a precedent for the other academy schools. It was agreed that a written answer would be provided and added to the minutes; the following email was sent after the meeting:

"Cllr Wilson identified a capital sum of c£10k in 2015-16 for a cycle shelter at Windsor Boys. This sits within the Highways and Transport annual capital programme under the elements for Cycle Parking at Schools and Safe Routes to Schools. This contributes to our targets for

promoting cycling, cutting congestion and reducing casualties as set out in the manifesto and Local Transport Plan.

The figure for Windsor Boys follows from cycle parking installed a few years ago. Unfortunately the contractor did a very poor job and so the cycle shelters twisted, splitting the Perspex coverings and pulling some of the footings out of the ground. The team pursued them for over a year to come back and make good the defects, since the shelters were still within the warranty period. However, the company went into administration before we could get the remedial work completed. The shelters posed a health and safety risk to students who were using them due to the jagged edges on the Perspex, so we included a sum of money in last year's programme to pay for the repairs.

We have an ongoing programme for Cycle Parking at Schools and Safe Routes to Schools with individual schemes approved by Cabinet Prioritisation Sub-Committee. The next round of schemes is coming forward shortly and will include proposals for three schools, including academies. This work is funded in part by the Local Transport Plan Grant."

**Resolved unanimously: That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the latest financial update and fully endorsed the recommendations in the report.**

### NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN ASCOT

The Panel considered the report that provided options for the provision of additional primary school places in Ascot. Members were informed that there was a shortage of primary places across the borough but that the situation was more acute in the south. The proposal was to consult on a number of options including expansion of existing schools and the possibility of a primary free school

Members were informed that appendix A provided the data behind the need for additional places such as although birth rates were declining the number of housing development was increasing, including an increase of in filling in the Ascot area.

As St Francis and St Michael's were too small for expansion it was recommending consultation on possible expansion of Cheapside, Holy trinity, South Ascot Village and there remained the possibility of a free school.

Cllr E Wilson mentioned that when looking at school provision we needed to be mindful of economic conditions effecting parents decision to put a child in private education or the state system. He also felt that there should be a wider consultation and that the success of Charters was effecting demand.

Cllr Jones mentioned that we needed to be mindful of the impact development could have on traffic, especially outside schools, and that the schools were near other authorities boundaries and thus woud attract out of borough children.

**Resolved unanimously: that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations and felt it was a pro-active move by the Royal Borough.**

### ITEM WITHDRAWN - PROGRESS REPORT ON EXTENDING GRAMMAR SCHOOL PROVISION INTO THE ROYAL BOROUGH

The Panel were informed that the Grammar School progress report had been withdrawn from the Cabinet and this Panels agenda and would be re submitted early summer 2016. In response to a question from the Chairman it was confirmed that as much of the report as possible would be in Part I, however it was expected to contain Part II elements.

Mrs Brown asked if the report would contain what percentage of the whole electorate wanted a satellite Grammar school and was informed that a full consultation was part of the process and results would be shown.

It was noted that the provision was a Conservative manifesto commitment and in response from a statement from Cllr Jones the Chairman confirmed that the Panel would have an opportunity to discuss the proposals.

## OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Chairman informed that the Ofsted Improvement Plan report was due to go to Cabinet in May 2016 and proposed that the Panel received a presentation at this meeting with the report being emailed to Panel members for comment in May. The Panel approved this course of action.

The Panel were informed that the March 2015 Ofsted inspection gave a rating of Requires Improvement but recognised the significant progress made over the last two years and 16 recommendations were made. The report due to be discussed at May Cabinet would provide an update on progress being made.

The 16 recommendations in the year 1 action plan had been completed, with ongoing monitoring taking place. The report would deal with the second phase, aiming to move the council to outstanding or good by the time of the next inspection in two years with many existing actions forming part of the phase two improvement plan. The council was also looking at good practice at the only two councils judged as outstanding.

The presentation gave a list of achievements arising from the action plan and also informed that further focus would be given to:

- Integration of early help hub and early help processes, including Children's Centres.
- Corporate parenting.
- Child sexual exploitation and other emerging risks, including radicalisation.
- Consistency of frontline management and supervision.

There would be a Local Government Association Safeguarding Peer Review in September 2016 with the results going to Cabinet in October 2016.

Cllr E Wilson asked when the next Ofsted inspection was due and was informed that they undertook a three year inspection cycle and from 2017 they would be undertaking multi agency inspections. In response to a question on home educated children the Panel were informed that the LEA no longer had any rights to provide advice or monitor the education of children kept at home.

Mrs Brown mentioned that home educated children could be vulnerable and the Panel were informed that the Council kept a missing from education list and if a child was on a Child Protection Plan and left school officers have a right to visit the home. The LEA also offered an annual check from the education welfare service. It was noted that there were about 80 children home educated.

The presentation was noted and the Chairman encouraged the Panel to read the report when available.

## FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 9.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....