



Overview & Scrutiny Committee 8th February 2007

Report from the Director of Policy and Regeneration

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee update

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update of the work of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 As the overarching co-ordinating body for the Overview and Scrutiny structure members are asked to consider the work of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that there are no duplications or omissions.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Following the introduction of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee structures as agreed by Full Council on 11th September 2006, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee held its first meeting in November 2006. The Committee has identified **Looked after Children** and **Special Education Needs** as its main priority areas for the year. Reports on both these issues were included on the first agenda. It was also agreed that regular updates and issues of concern on the priority areas would be brought to subsequent meetings.
- 3.2 An update on the Looked after Children agenda will be considered by the Committee in April. The Committee will also look at the progress of a new Pupil Referral Unit for children with special educational needs when the information becomes available. **A full outline of the work programme for the Committee is set out at Appendix A.**
- 3.3 The Committee has set up a task group, consisting of a cross party group of three councillors and a voting co-optee to look at improving outcomes for

underachieving pupils in Brent. The Children and Families department asked the Committee to review this area as trends over a number of years have shown that some young people from BME groups, mainly African Caribbean and Somalian boys, show below average outcomes across a range of measures including educational attainment, crime, and school exclusions.

- 3.4 The Children and Families department have also set up a project to tackle this issue and a range of initiatives are taking place across the borough both within schools and the voluntary and community sector organisations. The role of the task group will be to review the work that is already taking place. An update from the task group will appear as a regular item on the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda.
- 3.5 The task group is keen to speak with those affected by the issues and have arranged to speak with young people, members of the Somalian Community, and school governors. A round table discussion with stakeholders will also be held to discuss the work taking place in Brent. There will also be some direct consultation with Members. The task group is aiming for a final draft of it's report with recommendations to go the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April.
- 3.6 On 22nd November 2006, a special meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held to consider a decision that had been called in on the issue of the site for a new school in Brent.

At the end of the discussion the Committee agreed by vote to submit the following views to the Executive:

- that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee was in agreement that in addition to expanding existing schools there was a need for a new school in Brent
 - that based on the evidence before them the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked that the Executive give greater consideration to the Wembley Park (Bridge Road) site for the academy as the Committee held the view that this was the preferred site.
 - that the Executive should give consideration to providing a safeguard with regard to school capacity with the effect that all Brent Children should be provided with the choice of going to a Brent School.
- 3.7 The recommendation regarding the preferred site for the school was agreed by the Executive. Although the Executive's final decision was not solely based upon advice from the Committee, this is a good example of scrutiny making a positive contribution to the decision making process.

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