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| 25 February 2010 | | ITEM | 5 |
| Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee | | | |
| SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT | | | |
| Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sue MacPherson, Children's Services | | | |
| Wards and communities affected: All | | Key Decision: Key | |
| Accountable Head of Service: Christine Tinkler, Head of School Provision | | | |
| Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Corporate Director of Children, Education and Families | | | |
| This report is Public | | | |
| Purpose of Report: To agree the changes proposed for school improvement in Thurrock. | | | |

Comment [s]: Please leave this for completion by Democratic Services

Comment [s]: PLEASE CLICK THIS BOX ONCE and enter the name of the Committee you are reporting to (in font 16, not capitals)

Comment [s]: Please state the name of the Cabinet Member and the Portfolio to which the report refers

Comment [s]: Please enter details of any Wards and Communities affected by the report. If this section is not applicable, you should enter "none".

Comment [s]: Yes/No/Not Applicable – a 'Key Decision' is generally one affecting more than 2 wards or above £50,000 expenditure – see Guideline 2.7

Comment [sj]: Please state the Head of Service's name and job title

Comment [sj]: Please state Director's name and job title

Comment [sj]: State whether your report is Public or Exempt. If Exempt (i.e. not to be given to the public or discussed in

Comment [sj]: Briefly set out the purpose of your report

Comment [sj]: Please provide a summary of the key points in your report

Comment [s]: The recommendations should be set out in bold in the form of the decision that the decision-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the issues of concern, the underpinning factors, and the options considered to achieve transformative and sustained change in the educational outcomes of children and young people in Thurrock. This report recommends the key actions to secure the necessary change. The report is due to be considered by Cabinet on 17th March and has been submitted to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for observations.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CABINET :

1.1 That Cabinet agree the appointment of an interim Head of School Improvement tasked to

- communicate a compelling vision of aspiration and expectation of and for children and young people, their families and their schools.
- build upon the existing strengths in the Council's school improvement service and redress identified weaknesses.
- ensure an effective transition for schools and for Council services in readiness for 2011.

- 1.2 That Cabinet agree that the proposals outlined in the report will properly address the CAA red flag for educational aspirations.
- 1.3 That Cabinet (by Portfolio lead) agree the restructuring proposal (set out in separate business case).
- 1.4 That Cabinet note that a separate school organisation/capital strategy report is in development. This work is intended to re-state council policy on strengthening leadership across schools (particularly in the primary sector) and strengthen policy implementation.

Comment [s]: You should briefly explain why the report is on the agenda - See para. 5.3 and 5.4 of the report writing guidelines.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report, and makes any observations prior to consideration of the report by Cabinet.

3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 3.1 The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) has given Thurrock a red flag for education. The red flag is built upon educational outcomes at the key stages and the CAA assessment that, in Thurrock, we have had a culture of low aspiration and expectation. Educational outcomes are built upon aspirations and expectations and we will not achieve good or outstanding outcomes with low aspirations and expectations.
- 3.2 Attainment in Thurrock schools is mixed. (see appendix one for detail). It is possible to select data, especially deprivation data that will shape a story that excuses performance. The purpose of the deprivation data is to shape interventions, ensuring that the deprivation data shows us needs and risks but does not pre-determine the destiny of children, nor excuse poor performance.

Attainment

| | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Early years Foundation | (128/152) | 4th quartile |
| Gap between Thurrock and national increasing | | |
| KS1 | | 3 rd quartile |
| Gap between Thurrock and national reducing | | |
| KS2 | (149/152) | 4th quartile |
| Gap between Thurrock and national increasing | | |
| KS4 5 A*-C | | 1st quartile |

Exceptional performance improvement

KS4 5A*-C (E&M) (83/151) **3rd quartile**

Significant performance improvement, gap reducing

3.3 Deprivation

Thurrock's picture of deprivation is complex (see appendix two for detail). On some deprivation indicators Thurrock performs below the average. For example on parental education attainment, 88% of super output areas in Thurrock are below the median. However, when taken together, using a rank of ranks, deprivation in Thurrock is below average and improving. In 2007 Thurrock was 131 out of 354 which is comfortably in the second quartile. We might reasonably expect our overall outcomes also to be comfortably in the second quartile. An aspirational target would then be first quartile. We are currently some way from this.

3.4 Narrow and wide definitions of school improvement

The school improvement responsibilities of the LA can encompass a wide range of activities. They can be visualised as a dartboard with an inner circle where school improvement is narrowly defined around the school improvement partner (SIP) function. There is a middle circle of pupil support functions (for example SEN, behaviour and attendance) and an outer circle of school or business support functions (for example asset management, ICT and finance). This report deals only with the inner circle but delivering our school improvement responsibilities will require transformative action in the middle and outer circles. Developmental progress is being made and where key decisions are required, or as part of cabinet's progress monitoring on red flags, reports on the middle and outer circles will be brought to cabinet

4. **ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:**

4.1 We have thoroughly explored the following options.

- 1) Outsourcing the function to an alternative provider.
- 2) Entering a partnership with another Local Authority.
- 3) Limited revision of our internal arrangements.
- 4) Radically revising our internal arrangements to increase coherence and increase effectiveness.

4.2 The external environment of school improvement is gearing up for significant change in 2011 and that has effectively eliminated the first option as most external providers are focussed on their preparedness as providers of school improvement services. (for detail of the impending national changes in school improvement – see Peter Wylie's report appendix three).

Comment [s]: Other headings may be appropriate. The report should outline the reasoning that leads to its recommendations and **must** include:

1. a brief summary of options considered;
2. consultation outcomes
3. a risk assessment.
4. Whether the responsible cabinet members have been consulted/contributed to the report (NB professional and political advice must be clearly distinguished)

- See para.5.5 of the report writing guidelines.

Experience of working with 3 providers, (CEA Islington, Nord Anglia and VTE&S in Waltham Forest) shows that improvements are not delivered quickly as the commissioning and procurement processes are lengthy and complex and the critical change lever is in the quality and experience of the leadership.

- 4.3 Peter Wylie has, on our behalf, thoroughly explored the option of a shared service with another Local Authority and this is not his recommended option. Consultation with schools showed an openness to the option and helpful clarity about potential partner Local Authorities. The evidence on effective shared services shows that it is a time-costly and complex option though medium rather than high risk. The fundamental requirement is a shared objective and we are ultimately not satisfied that we have enough in common with any potential partner Local Authority.
- 4.4 Work commissioned under Malcolm Newsam has already led to revisions in our internal arrangements and we have some external and internal validation of elements of our arrangements. We have introduced a more systematic and differentiated model of school improvement and school improvement conversations are more focussed on attainment and the Ofsted judgements framework. We are not satisfied that the extent of the revisions we have made will be sufficient to make the transformative change we need to make and for changes to be embedded and sustained over time.
- 4.5 Our final option and our recommendation to Cabinet is a radical revision of our current arrangement and it is in three parts.

Part One

An internal re-structure moving from four Heads of Service to three, this will increase internal coherence and enhance a “single conversation with schools” approach. Revised job descriptions will ensure stronger strategic leadership and commissioning and a reduced emphasis on operations management.

Part Two

An interim Head of School Improvement who will ensure that rigorous school improvement is effected throughout the period of restructure where there is a high risk of distraction and consequent loss of focus. This will be secured through consultancy days, to ensure we secure people of the highest calibre

Part Three

Investment to accelerate our progress.

There are two key elements to improving attainment of children and young people, strong leadership and high quality teaching in every class every day. 31% of primary schools in Thurrock have new or interim Heads. To enable them to ensure high quality teaching in every class every day we will

strengthen the councils SIP responsibilities and consider, with headteachers, investment in a programme of coaching/intervention that is personalised and differentiated according to need. The work undertaken to date shows that Teachers' capacity to assess and intervene to accelerate pupil progress needs to be strengthened in Thurrock to achieve the improved outcomes.

The interim Head of School Improvement will need the flexibility to assess and reach a judgement on priorities, tailoring the interventions, in partnership with schools, to achieve the required outcomes, hence the proposed programmes set out here are purposefully loose.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 Reports and proposals on school improvement in 2009/10 have been considered by Overview and Scrutiny, the Schools Collaborative and the Children's Trust.

This report will be considered at:

- * Directors' Board 20 January 2010
- * Childrens' Trust Board 16 March 2010 – as this is the day before Cabinet we have consulted by email
- * Schools Collaborative 3 February 2010
- * Overview and Scrutiny 25 February 2010

The report will also be sent to the heads' groups (TPHA and TASS) for their consideration. The decision on the interim head of school improvement will be effected immediately; consultation will therefore consider the proposed programmes and any other aspects of school improvement that consultees believe require consideration

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 Raising attainment and ensuring Thurrock does not retain a red flag on educational aspiration and expectations are corporate priorities.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Yannick Stupples-Whyley**
 Telephone and email: **01375 652532**
ystupples-whyley@thurrock.gov.uk

There are significant financial implications to the recommended option. It should be noted that option 3, limited revision is cost neutral and option 2 is

Comment [j]: This should include any consultation with Ward Members and Shadow Portfolio Holders, as well as any public or statutory consultation

Comment [a]: Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Report Writing Guidelines

Comment [sj]: This section should always be completed – if they are dealt with fully in another part of the report, they also need a brief cross reference here. The names and job titles of the officers providing the implications should be provided in full – see Guideline 6.1 and please note Democratic Services Deadlines and ensure that officers providing implications are given 5 clear working days to work on the report. Authors can write implications but they must be signed off by the appropriate officers

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.2

costly in terms of senior officers and political time, plus consultancy (in the region of £100k). Option one (outsourcing) has not been properly costed, nevertheless it would be at least as costly as option 2.

The costs in the recommended option are for one year only and total £330k. Cabinet may want to consider a small (£100k) contingency allowance for future years. This will ensure that if the findings of the interim head of school improvement indicate the need for investment we have some capacity for this:

- Interim Head of School Improvement £150k
(to attract a Head of an outstanding school at consultancy rates)
- Leadership Coaching and Intervention £90k
(a scaleable programme over two terms with a 50/50 LA/schools contribution)
- Assessment of Learning £90k
(a scaleable programme over two terms with a 50/50 LA/schools contribution)

There is no funding currently included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and no funding has been built into the 2010/11 budget. If this is approved funding will need to be found from schools and within existing resources.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Kevin Colville**
Telephone and email: **01375 652042**
kcolville@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no direct legal implications. However any relevant restructuring effecting staff will need to comply with the relevant employment legislation to include appropriate consultation and sight of all relevant documentation by legal services to give any necessary employment law advice

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
Telephone and email: **01375 652472**
sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk

Current attainment levels impact differently on different groups of children with white working class boys achieving consistently less well than other groups. The proposal will impact positively on groups currently doing less well.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.3

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 6.4

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- None

Comment [sj]: See Guideline 8. If any Papers are to be placed in the Members room that relate to this report, you should also list them here

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix 1 – Standards Achieved – Key Stages
- Appendix 2 – Thurrock Analysis of Deprivation
- Appendix 3 – A Review of School Improvement
- Appendix 4 – Consultation Comments

Comment [sj]: List the Appendices referred to in the Report

Comment [sj]: Insert the full contact details of the author of the report

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