

<b>28 January 2014</b>	<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Education Commission</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Mike Peters, Interim Strategic Lead, School Improvement, Learning and Skills	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non key
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Michael Peters – Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Carmel Littleton – Director of Children's Services	
<b>This report is</b> Public	
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> The purpose of the report is to update members on the Thurrock Education Commission and to seek guidance on investment	

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is to update Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the action plan following the Education Commission report published in October 2013.

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**1.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to comment upon the developing action plan and note progress towards completing the plan**

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

**2.1** The Commission made six core recommendations. These were reported at the Children's Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 30th October. Implementation of the recommendations will involve the Directorate and Council as a whole, schools, academies settings and many partners across Thurrock. Following publication, the report was sent to Head teachers, chairs of governors of academies, schools and the free school, the colleges and other partners across the borough. They have been asked to respond to the Commission's findings, indicating priorities and actions that need to be taken. Discussions have been held with the Governors Forum, the Thurrock Primary

Heads Association (TPHA) and Thurrock Association of Secondary Heads (TASS) as well as the Children's Partnership Board.

2.2 In broad terms schools, governors and others have welcomed and support the recommendations of the Education Commission and are keen to see and be part of their implementation. It is planned to hold a number of roundtable sessions with schools and others to examine implementation and there will be a session on the development of the action plan at the Head teachers' briefing that is scheduled to take place on 21 January 2014. Verbal feedback will be provided for members at the meeting.

2.3 The action plan which includes adopting the recommendations will be developed following discussion with schools and other partners, consideration has been given to the following:

**2.4 Recommendation 1: Build a compelling case for change and a powerful vision for education across the community in Thurrock that increases pride in what is being achieved and ambition for achieving even more (By March 2014).**

- Produce a draft vision and ambition through an Achievement and Aspiration Strategy which sets out achievements, performance improvement priorities, goals and ambitions.
- Produce and begin to deliver a communication and engagement programme that includes every school, academy, free school, post 16 establishment, early years setting, FE/HE partner and every Council Department and its respective staff, Cultural and Employer partner and the voluntary/community sector. This programme will also engage parents and children, Heads representatives' trade unions children, parents, governors, key employers, sector specialists and members through newsletters, meetings, briefings.

The outcome should be seeking to accelerate and sustain transformation in education in Thurrock by defining and refining the need for change, producing and advocating a compelling and actionable vision for the future of education in Thurrock.

**2.5 Recommendation 2: Redefine the role of the local authority, agree with partners what change means in practice and make sure services are provided efficiently (March/April 2014).**

The role should include the importance as the champion for the needs of local children and being decisively on the side of parents too. The action will

include how the local authority will deliver its statutory responsibilities that relate to educational achievement including:

- The drive for high educational standards for all children and young people, paying particular attention to the most disadvantaged groups.
- Listening to parents, carers, children and young people.
- Working with head teachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals, local authorities should promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance.
- Taking rapid and decisive action in relation to poorly performing schools, including using their intervention powers with regard to maintained schools and considering alternative structural and operational solutions.
- Developing robust school improvement strategies.
- Supporting effective school to school collaboration and providing local leadership for tackling issues needing attention which cut across more than one school, such as poor performance in a particular subject area across a cluster of schools.
- Supporting maintained schools in delivering an appropriate National Curriculum and early years providers in meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (as outlined in the EYFS Statutory Framework).
- Establishing and maintaining the Schools Forum and maintaining a scheme for financing maintained schools and provide financial information.
- Undertaking specified responsibilities in relation to staffing and governance of maintained schools.
- Running School Admissions and School Admissions Appeal Codes and ensure appropriate information is provided to parents.
- Ensuring provision for suitable home to school transport arrangements.
- Actively promoting a diverse supply of strong schools.
- Promoting high quality early years provision.
- Securing access for young people to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities and facilities for the improvement of their well-being and personal and social development.
- Promoting children's and young people's participation in public decision-making so they can influence local commissioners.
- Promoting participation in education or training of young people, including by securing provision for young people aged 16-19 (or 25 for those with learning difficulties/disabilities).
- Securing assessment, and meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Ensuring the educational needs of Looked After Children are met.

Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the provision of these services will form part of the action plan.

Part of the action plan includes a detailed discussion with schools in Thurrock over the next few months about what they do themselves and how much they see the local authority doing.

The Commission recommended the local authority continue to capture local knowledge and intelligence by undertaking some scrutiny of education provision to ensure it is meeting the needs and interests of children and young people in the area. Based on this, accessible and easily readable data should be provided to governors for each individual school. This is already underway and the action plan will address any future needs of schools highlighted in discussion.

The Commission also recommends that the council should produce an annual report on the quality of local education provision, which should be shared with schools and the community. It should also be sent to the Secretary of State so he receives early warnings of any emerging issues and addresses them through his relationship with academy trusts.

The key actions in relation to this recommendation include:

- Consideration of the above responsibilities with schools
- Drafting the annual report covering the academic year 2012/13
- Setting out options for planning and commissioning places and provision post 16

## **2.6 Recommendation 3: Grow the role of schools themselves as the leaders in supporting other schools to improve (From March 2014).**

The Commission recommends that, within three years, the council should phase out its provision of school improvement services and devolve them to a school led partnership, Thurrock Excellence Network. It is exceptional for a local authority the size of Thurrock to have the number of teaching schools that it does. The Commission recommends that this important resource is built securely into the new school improvement framework and used across the entire borough.

The Thurrock Excellence Network should be established by March 2014. It should offer all schools access to a learning partnership rooted in peer learning and development. This Network would be subsidised by the local authority for the first three years of its life and thereafter would be self financing. The Excellence Network is being developed through meetings with

the teaching schools and other school leadership groups in Thurrock. They are giving consideration to the functions of the Excellence Network and how it relates to every school in the borough. Under consideration also is a school, improvement programme offer that could be in place from the beginning of the summer term 2014.

The priorities for the programme include assessment for learning and effective pupil feedback, English and Mathematics; involving good schools that are ambitious to become outstanding for primary; high impact teaching; good quality of information, advice and guidance and a similar model to the highly effective Good to Great initiative in London schools for secondary.

## **2.7 Recommendation 4: Recruit and retain the best teachers and leaders by establishing greater pride in Thurrock (From February 2014 for September 2014).**

Issues raised by the Commission include:

- Promoting Thurrock as an interesting and vibrant place in which to live and work.
- Greater use of Teach First trainees in schools that meet the Teach First criteria.
- The exploration of a customised arts-based teacher-training programme for Thurrock based on the Teach First model.
- School Direct is used more extensively and strategically across the local authority to create a Thurrock School Direct offer and a clearing house that is accessible to all schools in Thurrock.
- The Thurrock Excellence Network should be asked as a priority to develop a coherent approach to talent management and succession planning across Thurrock.
- The expertise of the teaching schools and other schools should be of value here. At the same time, the Network should look at the investment of some schools in teaching assistants and Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and support the creation of a development path for them to become teachers.

The next steps are to develop a draft recruitment and retention strategy involving Teaching School Alliances, schools and academies, the Council Directorates and partners demonstrating that Thurrock is an exciting place to live and work and to develop the strongest professional portfolio and career potential. It is important this covers key roles in schools – heads, senior leaders and support staff as well as key professional roles such as social workers as well as teachers.

## **2.8 Recommendation 5: Use governors as key agents of support for improvement both within their own schools and across the school system in Thurrock (From March 2014).**

The Commission points out that school governors have a particularly important role to play in ensuring that each school is well managed and that senior leaders are held to account for improving both outcomes for pupils and school capacity. Key actions include:

- Governance being prioritised and supported financially for the next three years. In collaboration with governors, an action plan for development and training should be devised building on the good work already in place
- Chairs and vice chairs of governing bodies being offered an intensive induction programme and personal support, particularly in their first year.
- The Local authority continuing to supply information to each governing body, such as short updates of key educational issues, or signposts where these might be accessed, as well as clear data that enables the governing body to benchmark its school locally against London and the national context.
- Making school reviews more open and inclusive, particularly of the local community.
- Academy trusts in Thurrock producing an annual report.

## **2.9 Recommendation 6: Recognise and celebrate education and achievements in Thurrock (From January 2014).**

Key actions include:

- Creating a website with teachers of good practice in and across schools in Thurrock;
- Using social media to celebrate key achievements;
- Publishing case studies of interesting initiatives and projects;
- Organising activities and competitions across schools for targeted groups of children and young people;
- Establishing a Thurrock 'alumni' club of adults who had attended Thurrock schools;
- Organising an annual awards ceremony to showcase Thurrock excellence.

## **3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:**

- 3.1 Thurrock Council commissioned the independent review. The work was completed and reported in October 2013. During the Autumn term 2013 the

report was consulted upon and received strong buy in from schools and others.

#### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- 4.1 The reason for the recommendation is that the action plan is still the subject of consultation and Scrutiny is being asked to comment on actions suggested and suggest priorities for it.

#### **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Schools, academies, the free school, colleges and other partners have welcomed the report and wish to take the recommendations forward. Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet has initially considered the Commission report and have welcomed its publication and support the recommendations. The report has been publicised through local newspapers and the council website and comments invited.

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

- 6.1 This report relates to the council priority to make Thurrock a great place for learning and skills.

#### **7. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**  
[kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk)

In establishing the Thurrock Education Commission, the Council has committed £1,000,000 over three financial years to take forward the recommendations of the Commission. The desired outcomes and overall budget will be agreed by the Thurrock Education Alliance when established. There will be a detailed action plan against which resource allocations will be made. The Director of Children's Services is the accountable Director. The budget will be allocated against priorities by the Thurrock Education Alliance and the Thurrock Excellence Network when these boards are set up by March 2014.

Resources to deliver educational improvement are held by:

- The schools, academies and free schools budgets

- The designated Teaching Schools in Thurrock to deliver their key priorities for training new entrants to the profession, leading peer-to-peer professional development, developing leadership potential, providing support for other schools, organising specialist leaders of education and research.
- School improvement budget for staff, consultants for schools and early years settings causing concern, training and development
- Support for Governance in schools.
- Educational provision for children with high needs including special education needs, inclusion and pupil support and the Virtual School for Looked After Children.

The intention of the Commission is to use the resource allocated to address the recommendations to support development which is then sustained by schools and academies and available LA resource for school improvement

## 7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
 Telephone and email: [Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk](mailto:Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk)

This report is for comment and noting only. There are no legal implications.

## 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652472**  
[Sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk)

The Education Commission was established to raise standards of achievement and aspiration in Thurrock. Delivery of its recommendations will impact upon the achievement of all groups in the borough.

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

N/A

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):**

- Thurrock Education Commission Report
- Statutory Guidance of the role of Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member for Children Services

## APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- None

## Report Author Contact Details:

**Name:** Michael Peters

**Telephone:** 01375 652539

**E-mail:** [mpeters@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:mpeters@thurrock.gov.uk)