

2011/2012 DRAFT SCOPING REPORTS

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SUMMARY

To enable the Committee to consider 3 draft scoping reports and select one of them as a potential first review topic for 2011/12.

INFORMATION

At the Committee meeting on 8 June 2011, Members discussed 3 potential review topics for 2011/12 and requested officers to prepare early draft scoping reports on:

1. Elective Home Education in Hillingdon
2. Risky Behaviour Undertaken by Young People
3. Parental Skills in Education Attainment

The draft scoping reports are attached for Members' consideration. The draft scoping report on Elective Home Education is more comprehensive than the other two for the reasons outlined below. It is usual for a Policy Overview Committee to take forward two review topics during the municipal year, though it is up to Members of the Committee to determine this. Any second review topic can be decided at a later date.

DRAFT SCOPING REPORTS

1. Elective Home Education in Hillingdon

At the last meeting of the Committee, Members were informed of some issues that were ripe for review regarding the children whose parents had decided would be educated at home. The Council has an existing Elective Home Education Policy but it needs to be updated to reflect a more balanced approach to both safeguarding issues and the rights of parents. This would be a potential review involving both internal and external witnesses, including parents and young children. This is a service area that has not been reviewed at Member-level for a very long time. Such a review would also result in a new policy on this matter being presented to Cabinet by the Committee.

2. Risky Behaviour Undertaken by Young People

Risky behaviour by young people is a far reaching issue that touches not only on the Council, but other agencies and communities and is influenced considerably by wider societal and cultural changes. It can cover activities such as unprotected sex leading to sexually transmitted infections or under-18 conceptions, substance misuse (including alcohol), poor emotional health and wellbeing, not being in education, employment or training (NEET) or even as first time entrance into the criminal justice system or re-offenders.

In terms of what the Council has influence over, the Business Improvement Delivery programme led by the Leader and Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services is currently undertaking a project on all early intervention services within Children and Education Services which is expected to help mitigate some elements of risky behaviour by young people.

Members may feel that two reviews on this by the Council may lead to duplication of effort. In addition, given the huge scope of this area as a review topic Members may wish to narrow their focus on a particular area of risky behaviour that is well suited for review and within the remit of the POC.

3. Parental Skills in Education Attainment

Members raised this issue following the Health Inequalities Working Group Review in 2010 which looked at the effects of overcrowding on educational attainment and children's development. This review came to the conclusion that there was a strong link between overcrowding and educational attainment and that this did indeed have an impact upon many families in the Borough.

Whist the Council has a role, albeit diminishing, in facilitating and improving education in the Borough, its role in relation to how parents should behave / use their parental skills to encourage their children to learn is still rather limited. Policies to improve parenting skills cannot in isolation eliminate any skills gap some parents may have, but a caring environment during childhood does have a positive effect meaning that policies aimed at improving parental skills can have some impact.

Members may wish to consider how best council services and local schools can provide specific information and guidance to give parents all the tools they need to choose a school for their child and provide a home environment that nurtures learning.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

1. To consider the draft scoping reports and ask any further question from officers;
2. To agree the first scoping report to undertake as a major review in 2011/12;
3. Subsequently, to agree the programme and the scheduling of witness sessions and amend or update the work programme accordingly.