

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: MAJOR REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CURRENT AND FUTURE RELATIONSHIP WITH ACADEMIES AND FREE SCHOOLS

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Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Deputy Leader of the Council / Education and Children's Services
Officer Contact(s)	Anisha Teji, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Major Review Report from the Committee on the Council's Current and Future Relationship with Academies and Free Schools

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	To receive the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee's review into the Council's current and future relationship with Academies and Free Schools. To give consideration to the recommendations of the review.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objective of: <i>Our People</i> .
Financial Cost	The recommendations proposed as a result of this review do not in themselves have a financial impact. However, the funding that the Council receives through the Education Services Grant will cease on 31 August 2017 affecting all of those services that the Council is required to deliver under statute. The impact of this has been dealt with in 2017/18 but further work is required to address the impact that will fall on 2018/19, which will be subject to review by Members.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee
Ward(s) affected	All

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- A. Welcomes the Committee's findings from their review into the Council's current and future relationship with Academies and Free Schools;**
- B. Agrees the following recommendations from the Committee for implementation by officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services:**

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

- 1. That the Council provides clear contact details for all school enquiries, including giving consideration to providing a single point of contact to all schools.**
- 2. That officers look at further ways to build on the good relationship between the Council and the Regional Schools Commissioner.**
- 3. That where there are specific attainment and progress concerns at various Key Stages, the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee advises that the Council and schools work together to continue to ensure that there are clear and accountable plans in place.**
- 4. That the Council strongly encourages all school governing bodies to have in place satisfactory induction and continuous professional development arrangements for new and existing governors/trustees.**
- 5. That the Council continues to assist schools with the conversion transition to an Academy school and continues to support existing Academy Trusts where new schools join their Trust.**
- 6. That the Council works with Hillingdon Schools to revise the school improvement framework effective from September 2017 in light of the changing role of the Local Authority in education.**

Reasons for recommendations

To consider the report of the Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee on the relationship between the Council and Academies and Free Schools.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations, or pursue alternative routes in which to progress the objectives of the review.

Supporting Information

1. In light of significant national changes to the education landscape in recent years, Members of the Children's Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee decided to explore the Council's relationship with schools in Hillingdon who already have academy/free school status and with particular regard to academic attainment. The Committee also considered how these relationships would evolve to include current maintained schools who may consider academy conversion in the future.
2. The Terms of Reference of the review were as follows:
 - a) To gain a comprehensive understanding of the national and local academy agenda.
 - b) To explore the Council's current relationship with academies in the Borough.
 - c) To investigate the measures that the Council currently has in place to support conversion to academy status.

- d) To ensure that the Council’s vision for academy schools is clear, aligns with the Council’s wider strategic plans and is in the best interests of residents and providers of education.
 - e) To review the shape of the Council’s current and future relationship with schools and to provide practical recommendations that ensure that Council resources are used effectively during and after the national education transition period.
3. The Committee undertook a series of witness sessions with school representatives, including the Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services. As part of the evidence gathering, head teachers were invited to complete surveys. Head teachers were also given the opportunity to attend the Committee sessions in person.
 4. Members of the Committee were encouraged from the positive feedback by schools participating in the review. This was particularly important, considering the Council’s changing and diminishing role providing strategic education support and advice. It was welcomed that over 80% of Free Schools and Academies, independent from the Council, indicated they had a positive relationship with the Council.
 5. The Committee identified six recommendations which it is hoped will improve the positive relationship between the Council and all schools, irrespective of their status.

Comments on recommendations

Whilst the attached report from the Committee sets out the review in more detail, officers advise Cabinet that the Committee has made some positive recommendations to take forward and would support their implementation as set out below:

Recommendation	Response
<p>(1) That the Council provides clear contact details for all school enquiries, including giving consideration to providing a single point of contact to all schools.</p>	<p>Support - Since education sits within the Residents’ Services directorate all general education queries are directed through the Residents Services Business Support Unit. From there, they are filtered down to the appropriate team in the Council. In addition, the School Improvement Team circulates the direct contact details of key cross-Council education support teams (eg Finance, Virtual School, SEND and Inclusion, Early Intervention & Participation etc) to all Head Teachers via the Head Teacher’s Briefing at least once per year. All new Head Teachers are invited to an orientation event at the beginning of the academic year where they are given packs highlighting key Council contacts for education.</p> <p>However, in addition to current arrangements and in response to the recommendations of this review, the Council will establish and publish the details of a new single email for all education queries which will be regularly monitored and which Head Teachers can use if they do not have direct contacts to hand or are unsure of which department is best placed to respond to their query.</p>

<p>(2) That Officers look at further ways to build on the good relationship between the Council and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC).</p>	<p>Support - The interim Lead for School Improvement links with the RSC's Project Lead for Hillingdon on a weekly basis. In addition, the DCS, Head of Business Performance, Policy & Standards and interim Lead for School Improvement have regular scheduled teleconferences with the RSC, alongside at least annual face-to-face meetings in the Borough. The Council has a positive and collaborative relationship with the RSC's office and is currently building on this by involving the RSC's office in a co-delivered partnership event early in the new academic year where local and national academy trusts will be invited to join the school improvement conversation in the Borough.</p>
<p>(3) That where there are specific attainment and progress concerns at various Key Stages, the Children Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee advises that the Council and schools work together to continue to ensure that there are clear and accountable plans in place.</p>	<p>Support - Regular risk assessment of all schools in the Borough allows for the Council to identify both individual schools whose data raises concern and patterns and trends across the Borough which may relate to specific phases, sectors, cohorts or geographic areas. The Council works closely with maintained schools at risk, using formal powers of intervention where necessary and raises concerns with the relevant authorities in the case of individual academies and trusts. In these cases, the expectation is that clear and accountable plans for improvement are established and monitored by the Council and/or the relevant authority. Where themes of concern arise, these are explored with system leaders at a strategic level via the Hillingdon Schools' Strategic Partnership Board (SSPB) and the associated executive groups. This means that cross-borough projects and improvement activity can be tailored to meet the needs of the Hillingdon context and encourages schools and their partners to work together to tackle areas of concern.</p>
<p>(4) That the Council strongly encourages all school governing bodies to have in place satisfactory induction and continuous professional development arrangements for new and existing governors/trustees.</p>	<p>Support - Induction packs are provided for all new governors in Hillingdon as part of the Council's statutory duty around governance. The importance of skillful and strong governance is highlighted in regular Governors Termly meetings and through the Head Teacher's Briefing which is also mailed to all Chairmen of Governors. In addition and as a consequence of this review, the Council will underline the importance of the investment in governor training and the recent recommendation of the Committee in a separate letter to all Chairmen later this term.</p>
<p>(5) That the Council continues to assist schools with the conversion transition to an Academy school and continues to support existing Academy Trusts where new schools join their Trust.</p>	<p>Support - As a consequence of the Council's positive relationship with the RSC's office, appropriate support for conversion is available whenever a maintained setting is ready for this change. The Council's School Improvement Team currently oversees all conversions and works with a dedicated officer within the Business Performance Team to monitor the progress of agreed conversions and ensure efficient links with relevant Council teams e.g. Buildings</p>

	and Estates, Legal, Finance etc. The Council will need to carefully monitor the capacity of these teams as the likely pace of conversion increases.
(6) That the Council works with Hillingdon Schools to revise the school improvement framework effective from September 2017 in light of the changing role of the Local Authority in education.	Support - The Hillingdon Schools' Strategic Partnership Board (SSPB) is currently engaged in the review of the preferred framework for school improvement in the borough. The impact of national changes to funding for middle-tier monitoring, support, challenge and intervention provided by local authorities means that councils and school communities will need to work differently and innovatively to ensure that individual schools receive the level of support that they need to provide outstanding education for children and young people. In Hillingdon, the Board is actively exploring the concept of a borough-wide schools partnership model involving the Teaching Schools, all local academy trusts, the dioceses and the Council. This scoping activity sits alongside the Council's Education Review of statutory education duties and will necessarily be informed by any decisions that the Council takes in response to that review.

Financial Implications

The recommendations proposed as a result of this review do not in themselves have a financial impact. However, over the last few years, Central Government have implemented a major change in the funding that Council's and academy schools receive through the Education Services Grant (ESG), which has seen a planned significant reduction in the funding provided, culminating in the complete removal of the grant funding at the end of August 2017.

For Hillingdon, the ESG received, totalled approximately £2,380k but from April 2017, £740k has been transferred into the ring fenced Dedicated Schools Grant, and for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 August 2017, the Council will receive a final ESG payment of £654k. Additionally, Central Government put in place a new funding arrangement for School Improvement Services effective from 1 September 2017, providing a part year allocation to Hillingdon of £117k and also allowed the Council to seek funding from schools, resulting in a part year allocation of £23k. This results in a reduction of £846k in the funding that the Council will receive in 2017/18, increasing to a reduction of £1,408k in 2018/19.

It should be noted that the Council's 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) Budget factored in these changes as part of the budget setting process, although further work is required in 2018/19, which will be considered as part of the 2018/19 MTFF Budget setting process.

3. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

These recommendations, if approved by Cabinet, will continue to establish and maintain productive relations between the Council and Academies and Free Schools, aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee sought a wide range of local expert witness testimony as set out in Appendix B of its report.

4. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report, confirming that there are no direct financial implications arising from Cabinet supporting implementation of the Policy Overview Committee's recommendations.

As outlined within the financial implications above, there have been substantial reductions in central Government funding available to support the Council's residual education functions without any accompanying review of the statutory duties remaining with Local Education Authorities. The MTFE reflects this reduced funding position, alongside continued investment in those functions remaining with the Council which contributes towards the substantial savings requirement necessary to deliver balanced budgets over the medium term.

Legal

There are no legal issues arising out of the recommendations contained within this report.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL