

Item No. 4.1	Classification: Open	Date: 16 July 2014	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Motion on the Theme – Children and Young People	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Proper Constitutional Officer	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The theme for this meeting is children and young people (excluding employment and training but including schools).

The relevant cabinet member shall submit a motion on the theme. All other political groups on the council are allowed to submit one amendment to the motion. The cabinet member's motion and the amendments do not need to be seconded. The cabinet member will present the motion to the meeting, followed by the shadow cabinet member's response and moving of their amendment. Following this the subject of the theme will be open to debate. Amendment(s) from other opposition groups on the council can be moved during this part of the meeting.

1. MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR VICTORIA MILLS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Children and Young People

Schools

1. Council assembly recognises that there are real challenges ahead for local authorities to meet demand for school places, with more than one in four councils forecasting a shortage of primary school places this coming September, and nearly half of local authorities facing a places shortage in September 2015.
2. Council assembly welcomes the work of the current administration over the last four years to expand school places to meet demand, by expanding popular local schools and working with partners to open new ones, ensuring that last year every on time applicant in Southwark was offered a reception place.
3. Council assembly acknowledges that there continues to be a shortage of school places in certain areas and that some parents in Southwark feel they have little choice especially when they are unable to secure places at the community schools nearest to where they live.
4. Council assembly recognises that the work being done by the current Labour administration to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand in the borough is being done against the backdrop of the Liberal Democrats working with the Conservatives in government making it harder and harder for councils to build new schools in the places they are most needed.

5. Council assembly notes with concern that the coalition government's flagship free schools policy is failing to address the national shortage of school places, with an estimated two thirds of primary school places not in areas of need. Council assembly calls on the government to stop putting politics before the needs of children by diverting money away from areas with a real shortage of places.
6. Council assembly recognises that the current situation in Southwark, where despite increasing demand some schools are struggling to fill places, with 335 vacancies in secondary schools and 201 vacancies in primary schools currently across the borough, is unsustainable.
7. Council assembly calls on cabinet to continue to drive up standards in Southwark schools and to bring forward a programme to work with schools to ensure that over 70% of students in every secondary school in the borough get at least five good GCSEs. Council assembly also calls for this programme of work to look beyond schools and to what additional support can be given to our looked after children and children from troubled families who all too often achieve well below their potential.
8. Council assembly also recognises the challenge where there are secondary schools in the borough which are rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, but where parents do not want to send their children.
9. Council assembly therefore calls on the cabinet to work with local parents and the Department for Education to ensure that decisions about new schools are based on the needs of the community.
10. Council assembly calls on the cabinet to ensure that free schools work as part of the educational mix of the borough, by continuing to work with popular local schools who choose to come forward with free school proposals, sponsors who can demonstrate their commitment to working in partnership with both the council and local parents, and committed parents who want to open new schools in their area.

Childcare

11. Council assembly recognises that the increasing cost of childcare is one of the most pressing issues affecting families in Southwark. Childcare prices have risen significantly while real earnings have fallen – contributing to the cost of living crisis – and there are serious gaps in provision for quality affordable childcare, particularly for working parents.
12. Council assembly recognises that the rising childcare costs are particularly detrimental to women and are pricing half a million British mothers out of work. Council assembly welcomes Labour's commitment nationally to increase the provision of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds from 15 hours to 25 hours a week, but recognises that more needs to be done across the council's services to support mothers back into work.
13. Council assembly welcomes the commitment of this administration to invest in Southwark's children's centres and work with parents to set up two new community nurseries to increase the number of affordable childcare places in the borough.

14. Council assembly recognises the need for real long term solutions to this growing problem and therefore welcomes the establishment of the Childcare Commission, bringing together experts, parents, providers and employers to find ways to secure childcare provision that is accessible and affordable to all parents, supports them to be economically active, and delivers quality education and development for children in the early years.
15. Council assembly calls on the cabinet to implement the recommendations of the Childcare Commission and to look for opportunities for facilitating and encouraging employment through the provision of quality, affordable childcare, particularly for working mothers.

Beyond education and childcare

16. Council assembly recognises that the council's duty towards children and young people goes beyond education and childcare. Therefore, council assembly also welcomes the council's commitment to:
 - Ensure a top quality playground in every local area and to introduce "play streets", closing some streets to traffic during school holidays to ensure children have the opportunity to play safely.
 - Continue to deliver free healthy school meals for every primary school child in Southwark and extend free fruit to all primary school children as a morning snack.
 - Keep young people safe at home and in our community and protect children from abuse or neglect by investing in early support for families.
 - Help more people to foster and adopt by paying their council tax, to help give more children a home where they are loved, safe and secure.
 - Help young people to get sound financial education by opening a credit union account with a £10 deposit for every 11 year old and helping them get good money advice.

Note: If the motion is agreed, any proposals will be submitted to the cabinet for consideration.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Cabinet member's motion	Constitutional Team 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Andrew Weir 020 7525 7222

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Manager
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