

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)

12 JULY 2017

Statement from the leader of the council on deputy cabinet members

I would like to make a short statement on the appointment of deputy cabinet members.

I would first like to thank Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Councillor Helen Dennis, and Councillor Octavia Lamb, who served as deputy cabinet members last year. Each of them contributed a huge amount during their time as deputy cabinet members, and led the way on tackling serious issues such as mental health, access to careers for young people and developing Southwark's Cultural Strategy. They really have done fantastic work, and I am confident that they will continue to work to make Southwark a borough to be proud of.

I am very pleased that Councillor Octavia Lamb will be continuing as a member of the deputy cabinet, but with a new portfolio looking at Southwark's air quality. High levels of air pollution is an issue which affects the whole of London, with poor air quality exacerbating existing health conditions like asthma, affecting lung capacity and growth, and causing thousands of premature deaths each year. Air quality is an issue which needs addressing by central government, but there are also ways in which we in Southwark can improve our air quality, and I look forward to working with Councillor Lamb to do just this.

I have appointed Councillor Jon Hartley as deputy cabinet member for community involvement (digital). Delivering a fairer future for all our residents is at the heart of everything we do as a council, so it's important that we are listening carefully to residents and ensuring that the voices of a true cross section are heard, rather than just those who can shout the loudest and make themselves heard by councillors. Councillor Hartley will be leading on developing new digital methods with which we can reach out to residents to hear their views on consultations and other work that the council is doing.

I have appointed Councillor James Coldwell as deputy cabinet for community energy. Councillor Coldwell will be looking to establish community-run energy schemes, which will allow communities to invest in green energy whilst also reducing the heating and energy bills for residents, meaning there would be a potential benefit both to local residents and to the environment. Community energy projects could also generate jobs and apprenticeships for Southwark's young people, another potential benefit which Councillor Coldwell is looking forward to delivering.

Finally, I have appointed Councillor Catherine Rose as deputy cabinet member for childcare costs. Childcare cost have risen so significantly that after housing costs, many families spend over 40% of their disposable income on childcare, which is often twice as much as they would spend on food and drink. Councillor Rose will be working to map and understand the current childcare provision in Southwark, and the impact of the costs of childcare on our residents, and looking at new innovative ways in which we can support residents who face these costs.

I am confident that all the new and continuing deputy cabinet members will work hard and deliver real change within their portfolios, and I am looking forward to working with them to keep building a fairer future for all our residents.

Statement from the cabinet member for children and schools

Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

As many of you will be aware, in March this year our children's services were inspected by Ofsted. I am very pleased to be able to report that Ofsted concluded that our services for children and families are "good" overall, placing Southwark in the top 28% of the 146 local authorities which have been inspected to date.

These services, which are absolutely vital for our most vulnerable young people and their families, are ones that the council and partners have striven to protect and improve in the face of growing demand but reducing budgets. We should be rightly proud that the inspection team recognised the monumental efforts of our social workers, foster carers, adopters, and all of those who work tirelessly for the protection, and the futures of the borough's children and young people.

Before I go into some of the details of the Ofsted inspection, I hope all of council assembly will join me in formally putting on record our thanks to staff in Children's Services, our foster carers and adopters, as well staff across all of the council and our partners in our schools, the local NHS, the LSCB and a whole variety of other agencies and voluntary sector groups who day in, day out have worked to secure our services as good.

We face a number of challenges in protecting our young people in Southwark so it is of particular note that Ofsted found when children need protecting our responses are quick. It particularly commended the work that has been done to protect those at risk of female genital mutilation, honour-based violence, child sexual exploitation, knife crime and gang involvement, and homelessness as well as innovations such as our award-winning PAUSE Programme.

The Council's adoption services were found to be "outstanding". Only eight other authorities have received this judgement – an exceptional achievement. Our well-trained social workers were credited for their work supporting and preparing children for adoption, while prospective adopters benefit from high-quality training and post-adoption support. Health and education services have also made a tremendous contribution to this outstanding performance.

Perhaps most importantly, Ofsted found that young people and children are at the heart of everything that we do. Inspectors said that young people consistently told them they feel valued and respected and that they were always supported and encouraged to put forward their ideas. They described this ingrained participation as "a real strength in the local authority" and noted the range of innovative services that had been informed by the views of our children and young people.

There are some areas where Ofsted made clear we need to do more. Our services for children in need of help and protection are good but require continuing support to remain so. This will include –

- Strengthening our approach to long-term neglect
- Building on the significant improvements made at the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) over the last year.

The services for children in care and care leavers require particular attention. Our plans will continue to be developed to –

- Bring in house and so improve the quality of return home interviews to reduce the recurrence of missing episodes

- Ensure our sufficiency strategy and commissioning provides a better supply of high quality placements
- Ensure care plans are more effectively considering how children's needs are met within placements
- Ensure that looked after children achieve more timely permanence in long-term foster care
- Ensure equality of service provision between in borough and out of borough placements

Our plans to improve services to Care Leavers are already being actively developed through our Innovation Bid partnership with Catch 22.

We will be redoubling our efforts across all these areas and we are not complacent. Our post inspection action plan is currently being developed and builds on our comprehensive understanding of the complex needs of our community and the plans already in place to address areas of practice not consistently strong. As Ofsted rightly recognised - *“Managers and local politicians are very determined to continue to improve those services that are not yet good, and they have effective plans to do this”*.

I am confident that our ambition for children here in Southwark, recognises no boundaries or glass ceilings. This comprehensive inspection makes clear the commitment and leadership in Southwark to ensure every child is protected from harm and every young person is set on the path to achievement, fulfilment and happiness.