

<b>15 July 2014</b>		<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Education Commission Update</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services and Mike Peters, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
<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 public</b>		

## **Executive Summary**

This report outlines the developments of the work regarding the Education Commission and provides an update to the associated action plan.

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress and achievements of Thurrock schools and partners (see 2.2).**
- 1.2 That the Committee comment on the content of the report and action plan and suggest developments that it would wish to be taken forward to further the Education Commission Recommendations.**

### **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 The Education Commission was commissioned by the council and established in 2013. It was an independent commission led by Christine Gilbert, formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted. The Commission reported in the autumn 2013, making six core recommendations. Following consultation with schools, governors and others the Council has fully adopted the recommendations and is taking forward each of the recommendations
- 2.2 There has been much progress since then:
  - **Headteachers and governing bodies support the recommendations and are optimistic about local authority leadership.**

- **Data on school achievement continues to be a strength** and is the basis of effective school led school improvement.
- **Governance is strengthening and continues to grow due to its current level of priority.** Training for governors on key areas of pupil achievement, safeguarding and financial management is effective.
- **The focus on recruitment of high quality senior leadership** in schools is effective and through delivering the Commission recommendations will be strengthened further.
- **Supporting school sustained school improvement through Progress Boards and detailed accountability meetings with specific school leaders and governors is effective** in challenging schools more effectively to improve achievement.
- **Self initiated and brokered school to school support is showing impact in terms of improving quality of leadership, teaching and learning and pupil progress.**
- **Acknowledged support for schools requiring improvement and schools in categories through clarity of provision and commissioning Thurrock Improvement Consultants for these schools** as part of the school improvement strategy. This has demonstrated impact and this approach is now ready to develop further through being commissioned by schools.
- **The proportion of good and outstanding secondary schools is among the best in class and the number of good primary schools is increasing.** Schools requiring improvement have shown promising progress and a strong desire to achieve good or better at the earliest opportunity.
- **The partnerships with maintained schools, academy chains, free standing academies and free schools are productive and positive** and are developing into a system wide approach for school driven school improvement.
- **There is an active *Services to Schools* offer available on line which is being developed further** through the use of an independent survey and setting out the provision for LA. Brokered services deliver the statutory and core responsibilities.
- **The work to support conversion to academy status is highly effective** resulting in strengthened partnership for educational improvement with recent examples showing impact in terms of improvement. These importantly include investments by the Council and academy sponsor partners to significantly improve the quality of education provision, for example at the newly formed Pioneer Academy (formerly Manor Primary School), Purfleet Academy and Quarry Hill Academy.

- **There is effective delivery of services supporting schools** such as admissions with high percentages of children being allocated first choice schools in a timely way and effective provision of music education.
- **Schools have a strong sense of partnership and are sharing information on progress and attainment of their pupils to enable Thurrock to set and achieve ambitious targets for children and young people** from early years through to the age of 19 and beyond.
- **The recruitment of new teachers has been successful in an increasingly challenging environment** and the strategy being developed by key groups of Heads. The 0 to 11 Education Strategy Group, the 11 – 19 Education Strategy Group and the work of the emerging Thurrock Excellence Network will lead to higher profile and innovative approaches recruitment and retention. These include building on the already successful induction programme for new teachers and the work of the three teaching school alliances in Thurrock.
- **There is significant engagement by schools in developing the vision and principles for Education in Thurrock** which is being focussed on schools and early years settings partnerships for improvement with support and challenge by the Thurrock Excellence Network. The vision and strategy will include a range of entitlements and responsibilities for children and young people as well as clear targets for achievement across the system.
- **The conference for schools**, planned by the Shadow Thurrock Excellence Network will take place in late June and **will include best practice in school to school improvement and the vision for education developing entitlements for children**. The draft Ambition, Achievement and Aspiration Strategy is being launched along with the joint Teaching Schools Alliances and LA CPD programme and towards a new school improvement strategy.
- **Major initiatives are in train that will raise the profile and celebrate practice in Thurrock**. These include the **Cultural Entitlement** in partnership with the Royal Opera House. Schools are engaging with this enthusiastically and will lead to a step change in aspirations for children and young people, demonstrating the wide range of nationally and internationally recognised cultural opportunities in Thurrock. The first **Teaching Awards** will be held in the autumn celebrating the very best educational practice in Thurrock.

2.3 The developments are strongly supported and driven strongly by the Thurrock Education Alliance which met as planned in March and will do so again in early July. The Shadow Thurrock Excellence Network is developing and leading on implementation of recommendations. Its focus has so far been on

CPD and ensuring that the school led system for school improvement is well established.

- 2.4 The reminder of key roles and relationships of bodies established through adopting the recommendations of the Education Commission are set out below.

### **Thurrock Education Alliance (TEA)**

- 2.5 At the March meeting of Overview and Scrutiny the purpose and membership of the Thurrock Education Alliance was proposed. Scrutiny also agreed that the Alliance would undertake the role to accelerate and sustain transformation in education and that this would be achieved by:

- Defining and refining the need for change;
- Producing and advocating a compelling and actionable vision for the future of education in Thurrock;
- Facilitating widespread engagement and interaction between those involved or interested in education in Thurrock, not just those working in schools but parents and partners in the arts and creative partnerships, in business and higher education;
- Overseeing and providing governance for the delivery of the Education Commission report action plan and commissioning the outcomes it wishes to secure;
- Sharing challenges and breakthroughs and to generating new ideas, plans and commission outcomes;
- Holding the Thurrock Excellence Network Group, (of educational professionals), to account. The Excellence Network Group will hold professional operational responsibility for delivery of the recommendations and ensuring that detailed commissioning is provided.

- 2.6 The Thurrock Education Alliance is set to meet once a term. The Alliance had its first meeting in March and considered Cabinet decisions on the Education Commission, the role of the Alliance and the proposed Thurrock Excellence Network and the outcomes included in the Ambition, Achievement and Aspiration Strategy.

### **Thurrock Excellence Network (TEN)**

- 2.7 The Education Commission proposed the establishment of the Thurrock Excellence Network (TEN). This is an operational body of professional colleagues accountable to the overall Education Alliance and tasked with delivering the recommendations. This body has been established in shadow form starting with meetings with the three Teaching School Alliances in Thurrock. Teaching School Alliance designation is a national award and those with this award have specific responsibilities for system wide school improvement and teacher development. The Excellence Network must encompass all schools in Thurrock and be driven by meeting the needs of every school to secure an Ofsted judgement of good or outstanding and

remaining so. The purpose of Thurrock Excellence Network is to produce actionable outcomes in regard to moving school improvement to being school to school improvement. TEN is developing and currently meets in 'shadow' form. The Shadow TEN group is considered as the executive engine and will assume the delivery aspect of this role.

2.8 TEN will deal with issues relating to numerous identified priority areas such as:

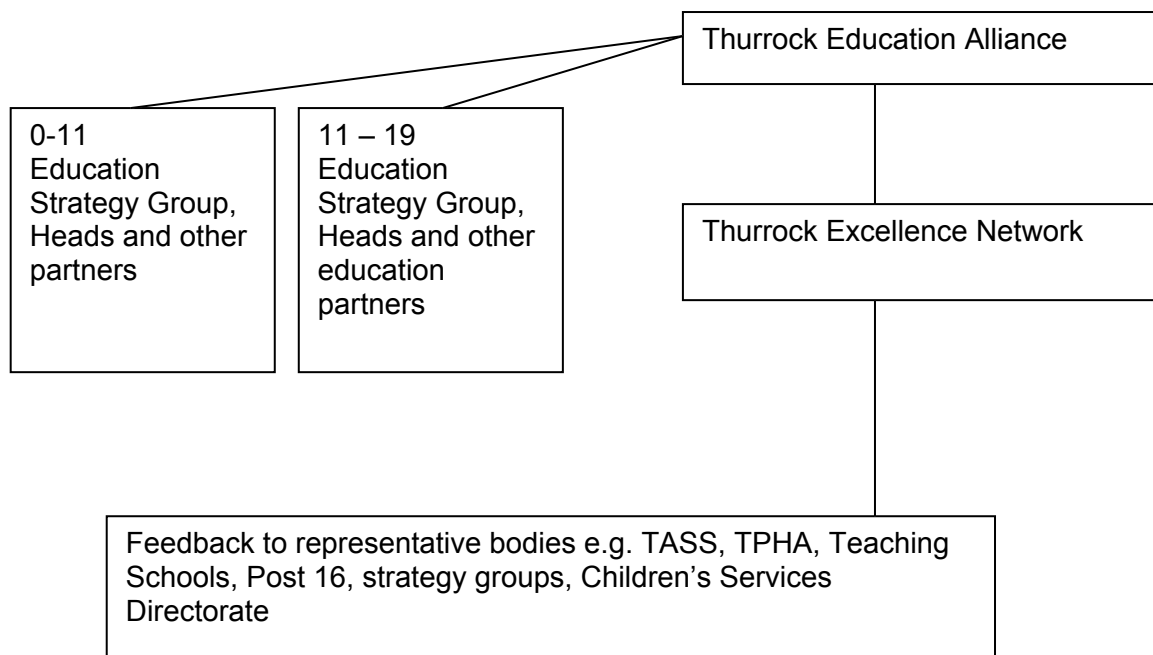
- Recruitment and retention
- CPD
- School to school support
- Monitoring school performance to identify and set out priorities for action
- Knowing the strengths and areas for development in schools and arranging programmes for improvement
- Delivering on the overall strategic aims of the 0-11 and 11-19 Strategy Groups
- Supporting the delivery of the Teaching Schools requirement to deliver the 'Big 6' priorities which are:
  1. Play a greater role in training new entrants to the profession
  2. Lead peer-to-peer professional and leadership development
  3. Identify and develop leadership potential
  4. Provide support for other schools
  5. Designate and broker specialist leaders of education (SLEs)
  6. Research and development

### **Structure of the Alliance, Network and Strategy Groups**

2.9 There are two principal headteacher led groups that are structured to ensure that the most up to date priorities are considered and sufficiently acted upon. The strategy groups are the 0-11 Early Years and Primary Strategy Group and the 11-19 Strategy Group.

2.10 The recommendations provided by these strategy groups arise from half termly meetings with colleagues from related provisions. Information is gathered from a wide area and various other groups and meetings to ensure that the most important priorities are considered. These groups are playing a major role in formulating the Ambition, Achievement and Aspiration Strategy for Thurrock which will be considered by the Education Alliance

2.11 The Alliance will discuss and agree upon the actions to undertake in regard to these recommendations. This information is then shared with the Thurrock Excellence Network whose priority is to agree the commissioning and delivery of appropriate services to address these actions. The Thurrock Education Alliance holds the Thurrock Excellence Network to account.



### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Thurrock Council commissioned the independent review. The work was completed and reported in October 2013. Cabinet's options were to decide to adopt the recommendations in full or part or not at all. In adopting recommendations Cabinet will need to consider how it supports implementation and the role that Council plays in supporting achievement and aspiration of young people in the borough.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny is requested to comments on the contents of the report and to suggest to The Thurrock Education Alliance areas that might be the subject of more detailed further work.

### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 The Education Commission recommendations were agreed following consultation with Schools, Governors, and Children's Overview and Scrutiny and others. They were adopted formally by cabinet and the Council.

### **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 This report relates to the council priority to improve the education and skills of local people.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
**Interim Finance Manager**

The Council has committed £1,000,000 of reserves to support the work of the Education Commission.

The desired outcomes and overall budget will be agreed by the Thurrock Education Alliance. The Director of Children's Services is the accountable Director.

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 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 is a LA resource for school improvement.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**  
**Education Solicitor**

This report is for comment and noting only. The Committee is being asked to comment on the action plan, the contents of which are designed to ensure that the Authority discharges various general and specific legal duties relating to the provision of education of its resident pupils.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**  
**Equalities and Cohesion Officer**

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. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

### 8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Thurrock Education Commission – Action Plan (June 2014)

### **Report Author:**

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