

28 January 2015	ITEM: 21 (iii)
Council	
Cabinet Member Report - Education	
Report of: Councillor John Kent	
This report is public.	

I am pleased to present my portfolio holder report for education in a year which has seen Thurrock schools achieving their best ever results. Over the last year I have had the pleasure of visiting over two thirds of our schools in Thurrock and aim to get to all of them in the next term. I have been impressed by the quality of leadership and aspirations of our headteachers, staff, governors and children. Many heads have spoken to me about a step change in the aspirations for our children and young people and the shared vision which has been developed. Heads have spoken very positively about the benefits of the Education Commission report and the shared priorities which we have developed through the new partnership bodies – the Thurrock Education Alliance and the Thurrock Excellence Network - set up as a result. In Thurrock we have been working for some time in supporting schools and academies to help each other in line with the national drive towards sector-led improvement. The Cabinet set aside £1 million pounds to be spent over three years to support the actions arising out of the Education Commission and work to improve the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, improving attainment at all levels and raising post 16 results are just some of the areas which are now being addressed.

Thurrock Education Alliance and Thurrock Excellence Network

Excellent progress has been made in developing the strong partnership work between schools, academies and the local authority. Over the last year, schools, colleges, and early years providers have worked closely with the local authority to create a strong and shared vision to reach excellence in every area.

Underpinning the drive for accelerated improvement is the principle that there is a wealth of talent and expertise in Thurrock schools and academies and that this expertise can be used to support others in their improvement. Last summer, the leading academic Professor Bill Lucas - with Thurrock's teaching schools and the school improvement team - kicked off a conference which has resulted in schools and academies putting in place plans to share their expertise in groups of three, sharing areas of expertise and collaborating on areas for development. Professor Lucas applauded the council for supporting schools in developing sector led improvement and reiterated the importance of a shared vision such as that developed in Thurrock.

Thurrock Education Awards

One of the strong recommendations coming out of the Education Commission was

the need to celebrate success and publicise our educational achievements in Thurrock. I was delighted – and I know many of my fellow councillors were too - to attend the inaugural Thurrock Education Awards at High House Production Park, a glittering event which celebrated in the best possible way the achievements of our unsung heroes – the heads, teachers, teaching assistants and governing bodies who work tirelessly to transform our children's lives.

The evening was attended by over 250 people and was supported by local businesses who sponsored the event, gave financial support and proudly presented awards. After the success of this first event we already have even more sponsors confirmed for the 2015 Education awards, as this has already become an eagerly anticipated event.

I was particularly pleased to see an award presented by two members of the youth cabinet, who were delighted to be part of the evening.

Educational attainment and OFSTED outcomes

This year saw Thurrock's best ever results at early years and foundation stage, key stage 1 and key stage 2 and at GCSE. In a year which saw a dip in GCSE results nationally as the exams changed, the number of Thurrock young people that achieved the benchmark 5 grade A*-C including English and Maths increased to 59%. There is considerable support from the local authority, from academy trusts and from the Thurrock Excellence Network to support schools which perform less well than others.

To get on at school children need to attend regularly. So I am particularly pleased to report that attendance at Thurrock schools has improved over the last year and overall absence is now at 4.2% in primary schools, which is just above the national average. In secondary schools there has been a significant improvement in attendance with overall absence dropping by 2.2% down to 4.5%. Although national figures are not yet published the indications are that this is likely to be significantly better than the national average. The Education Welfare service which monitors attendance and intervenes where necessary has been working closely with staff and families at schools and academies to ensure that good attendance is a top priority for all.

In terms of OFSTED outcomes Thurrock is currently in the strongest position it has ever been in. 76% of our primary schools are currently rated as good or outstanding – up from 33% in 2010 – and shows the wealth of work with and between governors, teachers and headteachers which has contributed to this. Thurrock primary schools have been recognised as in the top ten most improved authorities in the country over the last year. This will put primary schools in a strong position to exceed the national average figure in the coming months – currently 81%. In the secondary sector currently 88% of our schools and academies are good or outstanding and puts Thurrock in the strongest position in our region and a strong performance compared with the national position.

Areas of focus over the coming year include supporting the attainment of children who are looked after, who often have disrupted schooling and in common with the national picture underachieve compared with their peers. A "virtual" headteacher

who supports the pupils has been appointed to accelerate their progress and work closely with their schools.

Childcare places for 2 year olds

This year saw a rapid increase in the provision of early years provision and the new requirement to provide childcare for eligible two year olds. The council has worked very hard with a range of providers to create 1024 new places for our eligible two year olds to give them a flying start. I am pleased to report Thurrock has been very successful in ensuring take up of these places and has the second best performance in the east of England in creating places and ensuring families take up those places. 748 two year olds have taken their places up this year so far.

Pupil place planning and School Building

Over the last two years Thurrock has published an annual pupil place plan which sets out the expected increases in demand for places over the coming years and the number of places available. Nationally, we know that there is strong pressure on school places – particularly in primary schools – and we have seen that evidenced in Thurrock. The work at Bonnygate school to complete an additional form of entry throughout the school has now been completed as well as the additional two forms of entry at Graham James school. Little Thurrock school is expanding to three forms of entry and the work has proceeded apace and is shortly set for completion. Planning permission was recently granted for the new 5 form entry free school sponsored by the Harris academy, partly funded by the council through its basic need allocation. I am also pleased that the plans to relocate the Pupil Referral Unit into a new home in Tilbury have been given the go ahead and the pupils will have a brand new building from which to complete their education.

Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training

This year Thurrock has once again done well in ensuring that young people not in education, employment or training are tracked properly and are involved in good planning for their future. Our latest data shows that every young person who is not in education, employment or training has been contacted and puts Thurrock as the only authority in the country that has been able to do this. This means that planning to offer high quality training, education or employment can take place as quickly as possible and has been responsible for the fall in the numbers of young people who are NEET to just 5.4% in November.

SEN

The national Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms were introduced over the last year and Implementation of SEN reforms is strongly underway. Work has taken place to ensure that families are strongly involved in planning for their children and to recognise their importance as the expert in their own child's needs. This year Treetops school was again judged "outstanding" by OFSTED – which makes it three

times in a row and alongside Beacon Hill, another outstanding special school, offers extremely high quality provision for our children and young people with special needs. Support for children with special needs is also offered at many resource bases at our mainstream schools, where the council has partnered with schools and academies to offer some excellent provision. This work in contracting with academies has been recognised in national conferences and is an example of the thriving partnership working in Thurrock.

Arts and Cultural Entitlement – the Trailblazer programme

2014 also saw the launch of the arts and cultural entitlement programme in Thurrock for young people, which launched in September as the Trailblazer programme. 21 schools are involved in the pathfinder programme which was devised here in Thurrock and has created considerable national interest. The council commissioned the Royal Opera House Learning team to organise the programme for the schools. What particularly excites me apart from the obvious cultural benefits is the way the programme has been jointly funded between the council, the Arts council and schools themselves. It is this partnership approach I believe which will support us through tough financial times ahead. Participating schools are currently involved in a rich and diverse programme of activities including visits to leading arts organisations, as well as creating and responding to cultural activities themselves. One of the things which singles Thurrock out is the growing arts and cultural scene locally and I am delighted that this has been taken up so wholeheartedly by our schools. The programme will culminate this year in a series of flagship events at High House production park in July.

Conclusion

There has been a huge amount to celebrate in Thurrock' schools and colleges this year. The whole educational community has worked very hard to develop a shared vision with the council and other partners. The Thurrock Education Alliance has made good headway in agreeing the vision and priorities and the Excellence Network has already put together a comprehensive training brochure, is progressing a recruitment and retention of teaching strategy and is organising support between different schools and academies and between the primary and secondary sector.

The Education Awards evening showed the best of Thurrock. It showcased the many examples of outstanding headteachers, effective governing bodies and inspiring staff members. We haven't got everything right. We know that there is more to do until all schools and academies are good and outstanding. We know that we would like all children to achieve their potential and there is more to do with some groups of pupils, particularly children in the care system who currently underachieve compared with others.

What I am enormously heartened by as I have visited schools and academies is the desire and drive to work together to get the best for our children and young people,

regardless of type of school or institution.

Financial Information:

(A Motion agreed by the Council on 23 January 2013 requires the Cabinet Member to cover all finance and budget issues of their portfolio that they consider relevant, including (but not limited to): fiscal management; budget responsibility of the cabinet member; receipts and actual spend vs. predicted spend; the levels of virements and value for money.)

Note DEPLOYMENT OF DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT

The council's expenditure on schools is funded primarily by grant monies provided by The Department for Education, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). An element of DSG is recouped to by the Department to fund academy schools in the council's area. DSG is ring fenced and can only be applied to meet expenditure properly included in The Schools Budget, as defined in the School Finance (England) Regulations 2011. The Schools Budget includes elements for a range of educational services provided on

An authority-wide basis and for the Individual Schools Budget, which is divided into a Budget share for each maintained school.

Details of the deployment of DSG receivable for 2013/14 are as follows

Notes		Central Expenditure £'000	Individual Schools Budget £'000	Total £'000
A	Final DSG for 2013/14 before Academy Recoupment	7,312	118,009	125,321
B	Academy figure recouped for 2013/14	0	64,032	64,032
C	Total DSG after Academy Recoupment for 2013/14	7,312	53,977	61,289
D	Brought Forward from 2012/13	2,714	0	2,714
E	Carry forward agreed to 2014/15 agreed in advance	0	0	0
F	Agreed budgeted distribution in 2013/14	10,026	53,977	64,003
G	In Year Budget Adjustments	(321)	321	0
H	Actual Central Expenditure	6,921	-	6,921
I	Actual ISB deployed to schools	-	54,298	54,298
J	Local authority contribution 2013/14	0	0	0
K	Carry Forward to 2014/15	2,784	0	2,784

Comparatives for 2012/13

Income	11,556	67,649	79,205
Less Expenditure	8,842	67,649	76,491
	2,714	0	2,714

Notes

A: This is the original Final DSG Figure, before recoupment for historic and in-year Academy Conversions.

B: This is the reduction in the Thurrock allocation of DSG for those Schools that are no longer under local Authority Control, and are now funded directly by the DfE.

C: This is the Net DSG figure issued by the DfE in March 2014. For Funding Maintained Schools and Specific Education services to Schools and Academies.

D: The figure brought forward from 2012/13, is unspent Central DSG Contingency.

E: Any amount which the authority decided after consultation with the schools forum to carry forward to 2013/14 rather than distribute in 2012/13.

F: Budgeted distribution of DSG, adjusted for in year Academy conversions, as agreed with the schools forum.

G. in Year movements to ISB.

H: Actual amount of central expenditure items in 2013/14, after in year allocations to ISB.

I: Amount of ISB actually distributed to schools (ISB is regarded for DSG purposes as spent by the authority once it is deployed to schools' budget shares).

J: Any contribution from the local authority in 2013/14 which will have the effect of substituting for DSG in funding the Schools Budget.

K: Carry forward to 2014/15.