

## **Education Select Committee observations on responses to the recommendations in the First Select Committee Report on the Education Landscape in Bromley**

1. The Committee has considered the responses that had been received following the publication of the Select Committee's first report – the Education Landscape in Bromley.
2. The purpose of this enquiry was to examine the role of the Council in education once all maintained schools had become academies. The Committee made 12 recommendations in total.
3. The Portfolio Holder for Education provided responses to eight of the recommendations. The Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation provided responses to three of the recommendations. The Development Control Committee considered the Select Committee's report at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016.. The Executive considered the Select Committee's report at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016.
4. The Committee noted the blandness of some of the responses that had been provided by the Portfolio Holder for Education and felt that they did not properly address the recommendations. Whilst the Committee acknowledged that the Portfolio Holder would receive advice from his officers, the replies should be from the Portfolio Holder rather than 'Sir Humphrey'. In response, the Portfolio Holder indicated that he was happy to put some more flesh on the bone of the responses.
5. In relation to the response provided to recommendation 2.2, the committee sought more information about the Schools' Partnership Board and the Portfolio Holder explained the role of that Board and emphasised its importance as a mechanism for supporting and increasing collaborative working. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that representations had been made to a number of agencies concerning strengthening the requirement and duty to co-operate. The Senior Education Welfare Officer reported that earlier in the year, the Government had published guidance with elements of legislation making it compulsory for all schools to report data to the Local Authority. The Education Department in Bromley was currently in the process of establishing systems to ensure that data was received from school. The Portfolio stressed that within the Government's Academy agenda Bromley was a leader in the field but as a result of this Bromley was to a certain extent having to navigate its way in the dark.
6. In response to a question, the Director of Education confirmed that invitations to the Schools' Partnership Board had been positively received. A range of agencies would be represented on the Board including the Regional Schools Commissioner, Primary, Secondary and Special School Head Teachers, Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health, the Police, the Virtual Headteacher amongst others. The Harris Academy Trust would also be represented on the Board and it was clear that there was a determination amongst all the agencies to work collaboratively for the benefit of all young people in the Borough.

7. In relation to recommendation 2.4 the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would welcome applications for new schools from anyone in the Borough and would be happy to hold a meeting with representatives of the Catholic Community in order to discuss the provision of a Catholic Secondary Schools in the Borough.

8. In considering the Portfolio Holder's response to recommendation 2.9, the Committee sought confirmation of the structure of the Education Department as more schools converted to academy status. The Portfolio Holder stressed the need to ensure that the Department was able to meet the challenges that lay ahead in terms of pupil place planning and being a champion for pupils and their parents. The Director of Education reported that the Bromley Commissioner for Children's Services had been reviewing the whole of Children's Services including Education and it was clear that the Commissioner's expectation was that the Local Authority's relationships with schools are strengthened even as the Local Authority's responsibilities towards them decrease.

9. The Chairman reported that at the Executive meeting on 14 September 2016, the Leader of the Council had indicated that he would consider with the new Executive Director of Education, Care and Health Services whether to create a new role of Portfolio Holder for Children and Families.

10. The Committee expressed some scepticism surrounding the response of the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation to the recommendations as the Local Plan would not be approved if it did not have within it provision for education sites. The Committee noted that the Development Control Committee had voted that they could not give such assurance until after the public consultation on the Local Plan. The Portfolio Holder expressed dismay at some of the more recent decision of the Planning Sub Committees in relation to planning applications concerning schools, especially the decision that had been taken in relation to Eden Park High.