

Children and Young People Select Committee		
Report Title	Lewisham Learning Partnership	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 5
Ward	All	
Contributors	Executive Director for Children and Young People	
Class	Part 1	Date: 13th July 2017

REASONS FOR LATENESS AND URGENCY

This report was not available for the original dispatch because the consultation period on the school improvement partnership, and hence closing date for responses, was delayed as a result of the pre-election period. The original dispatch date would not have allowed for meaningful consideration of all responses to the consultation on the School Improvement Partnership. The report is urgent and cannot wait until the next meeting of CYP Select Committee due to the fact that proposals are due to be implemented for the start of the 2017/18 academic year.

Where a report is received less than 5 clear days before the date of the meeting at which the matter is being considered, then under the Local Government Act 1972 Section 100(b)(4) the Chair of the Committee can take the matter as a matter of urgency if he/she is satisfied that there are special circumstances requiring it to be treated as a matter of urgency. These special circumstances have to be specified in the minutes of the meeting. This report does not however require a formal decision by the Select Committee.

1 Summary

- 1.1. This paper details the progress made to date regarding the development of a school improvement partnership in the London Borough of Lewisham as recommended by the Lewisham Education Commission.
- 1.2. This paper summarises the key proposals for Lewisham Learning as developed by the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group, and provides a summary of consultation responses on the proposals.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the CYP Select Committee note and comment on the report and progress made to date.

3 Policy Context

- 3.1. As set out in Lewisham Council's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020, there is a Borough-wide commitment to "make Lewisham the best place in London to live, work and learn". To support this priority the Council is committed to working with partners to:
- Inspire young people to achieve their full potential by removing the barriers to learning.
 - Encourage and facilitate access to education, training and employment opportunities for all our citizens.
 - Celebrate local achievements so people feel proud of their area and eager to be a part of its success.
- 3.2. A key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 2018 is "Raising the attainment of all Lewisham children and young people" and this has a number of specific outcome areas:
- AA1: Ensuring there are sufficient good quality school places for every Lewisham child.
 - AA2: Ensuring all our children are ready to participate fully in school.
 - AA3: Improving and maintaining attendance and engagement in school at all key stages, including at transition points.
 - AA4: Raising participation in education and training, reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) at 16-19.
 - AA5: Raising achievement and progress for all our children at Key Stages 1 – 4 and closing the gaps between underachieving groups at primary and secondary school.
 - AA6: Raising achievement and progress for all our children and closing the gaps between under-achieving groups at Key Stage 5 and Post 16 so that all our young people are well prepared to access the best education and employment opportunities for them.
 - AA7: Raising achievement and attainment for our Looked After Children at all Key Stages and Post 16.
- 3.3. Local authorities retain statutory responsibility for the quality of education in the borough but their resources to fulfil this role are increasingly limited and nationally there is a shift towards school-led models of school improvement.

4 Background

- 4.1. In December 2015, the Mayor agreed to the establishment of an education commission to support the development of a future vision for education in Lewisham.
- 4.2. The Lewisham Education Commission considered the following key questions:
- Given the national and regional context, what is the best form of organisation for Lewisham's schools going forward?
 - Is there a school-led model of school improvement which would put Lewisham's work on a more sustainable footing, given the council's financial constraints?
 - Lewisham needs additional secondary and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places. What are the best means to achieve this, alongside ensuring all our existing schools are schools of choice?
 - Given Lewisham's strong commitment to improving outcomes at KS4 and KS5, are any more radical or leading edge models or approaches that Lewisham could adopt at borough level?
 - Underpinning all these questions is the central theme of how Lewisham's system serves the most vulnerable.
- 4.3. The Commission recommended that there should be an agreement between the local authority, headteachers and governors to set up a partnership to establish a school-led system of school improvement. In September 2016, a Partnership Steering Group, with an independent chair, was established to produce and consult on a detailed set of proposals.

5 Partnership Steering Group Process

- 5.1 Following the publication of the Education Commission report, the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group was established in September 2016 to deliver the Commission's recommendations in relation to school improvement.
- 5.2 The Steering Group comprised headteachers (from early years, primary, secondary, post-16, special schools and academies), governors and local authority officers. The Steering Group was chaired by Christine Gilbert, who also chaired the Education Commission.
- 5.3 The Steering Group embarked on a process of exploring models of school improvement adopted in other London boroughs. Sub-groups were formed to pursue this work in more detail and to feed back to the Steering Group. The sub-groups considered the following three key themes:
- Developing a school-led system of improvement
 - Assessing what sort of area-based improvement partnership would be the most appropriate for Lewisham
 - Exploring the key legal entities used by current partnerships.

- 5.4 The School Improvement Partnership Steering Group examined school improvement partnership models across a range of London boroughs (Brent, Croydon, Greenwich and Hounslow) and Essex County Council making visits to meet with headteachers, company directors and officers, to gather information about best practice.
- 5.5 Following this, the Education Commission Steering Group has produced a draft vision and values, roles and details of governance and funding arrangements for the partnership. Proposals have been consulted on with Headteachers, Governors and other stakeholders in June 2017.

6 Vision and Values

- 6.1. The Steering Group has produced and consulted on the following vision and mission for a school improvement partnership in Lewisham, namely 'Lewisham Learning':
- VISION: Lewisham will have an ambitious and high performing education system where children thrive. Schools will work together across the borough, to draw on each other's strengths and thus complement improvement efforts within individual schools and groups of schools.
 - MISSION: Lewisham Learning will operate as an overarching, cross-borough partnership to ensure the very best education for all children and young people.
 - It will establish a school-led system of improvement for Lewisham where all schools, regardless of status, increasingly take on the primary responsibility, collectively, for supporting improvement and raising standards.
 - Lewisham Learning will operate as a family, sharing strong roots and commitment to the local community with schools working individually, in a variety of groupings and all together to add value to the whole education system.
- 6.2. The Steering Group has consulted on the following values for Lewisham Learning:
- Children first: We put children first every time.
 - Ambition: We have the highest aspiration and ambitions for children and young people, we expect continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and we value and develop the best practice in our schools.
 - Equality and inclusion: we make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people and we demonstrate moral purpose in promoting equality and inclusion and we value all children.
 - Trust and support: We provide mutual support as part of a local family of schools and demonstrate strong collaborative working within Lewisham Learning.

- Transparency: We work transparently and in a way that makes us accountable to each other and to our stakeholders.

7 Role of the Partnership

- 7.1. One of the key rationales for setting up Lewisham Learning is to ensure a mechanism for harnessing and developing learning across teachers and schools. Staff and schools learn from each other and from evidence so that effective practice spreads. Many headteachers and governors are already demonstrating system leadership by taking responsibility for school improvement beyond their own organisations and by organising and providing school to school support.
- 7.2. The council, with its statutory responsibilities for school improvement, is a key part of the partnership. Through the partnership, the schools and the council will work together to provide support and challenge to schools to improve outcomes and young people in Lewisham. The Steering Group consulted on the following key roles for the Lewisham Learning:
- Ensuring strong and productive relationships across all schools and the local authority in pursuit of school improvement, benefiting children and young people in Lewisham
 - Using data and intelligence to identify schools that may require support and may need to be challenged as well as supporting those already identified as requiring support and challenge
 - Developing, supporting and monitoring the effectiveness of school to school improvement support and practice development.
 - Ensuring, where it is necessary to commission school improvement support from outside the borough, that it is coordinated and value for money
 - Developing and commissioning systems for peer review
 - Ensuring schools have the support they need to remain good or outstanding, in particular, taking shared cross-borough approaches to new challenges and national changes where this will be helpful
 - Developing and recognising system leadership at all levels in our schools.

8 Legal Status

- 8.1. Ahead of the setting up of a formal legal entity, it is proposed that a director for Lewisham Learning is appointed and a strategic board established. In order to move the partnership with schools forward, the Headteacher of an 'Outstanding' Lewisham primary school and a 'National Leader of Education' has been seconded to the LA's School Improvement Team as Interim Director of the Lewisham Learning Partnership.
- 8.2. It is not necessary for a legal entity to be established. Some area partnerships continue to be informal collaborative arrangements with no legal standing. Increasingly however, partnerships are opting to establish themselves as a

legal entity. The School Improvement Partnership Steering Group agreed that the legal status of the company should be a second order decision, as the partnership driver was school to school improvement rather than procurement or employment. Forming a company would however allow the partnership to trade, enter in to contracts and employ staff. More importantly, it signals a new venture with schools themselves taking greater ownership. A legal entity also promises longevity and stability as the range of legally defined responsibilities cannot rely on one or two keen individuals who then move on.

8.3. The following legal entities have been explored by the Steering Group:

- Company limited by shares
- Company limited by guarantee
- Community interest company
- Charitable interest organisation

8.4. A company limited by guarantee is the preferred status of most partnerships which have chosen to incorporate. A company limited by guarantee is recommended should the direction for the partnership require it to enter in to contracts and employ staff; ongoing regulation would also be considerably easier to manage than the alternative options. A company might also choose to register as a co-operative or charity or both. The Steering Group has consulted on incorporation and different legal entities.

9 Consultation Findings

9.1. There were 24 responses to an online survey sent to all schools in the Headteachers' Bulletin. Respondents represented all phases and sectors, (across early years, primary, secondary and post 16 and across maintained mainstream and special schools. There was also one response from an academy). The majority of respondents were headteachers.

9.2. Of all respondents representing maintained schools, 100% agreed with the principle of establishing Lewisham Learning. 79% of respondents thought that all maintained schools should be expected to join the partnership, largely to ensure cohesion across the borough; of the remaining respondents who disagreed or did not know, the majority thought that forcing schools to join the partnership could have an adverse effect and thought the local authority should have contingency plans in case a school insisted on opting out.

9.3. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the vision and values as proposed by the Steering Group, in part, due to the focus on transparency and putting children and young people first. Some responses emphasised the need for having appropriate mechanisms for measuring success against the vision.

9.4. The Steering Group asked to what extent respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposed roles for Lewisham Learning; no respondent disagreed with any of the roles and 76% agreed or strongly agreed with all of the roles proposed

as part of the consultation. The majority of comments on the roles for Lewisham Learning concerned the need to clarify what is meant by 'intelligence' and how data will be used; several respondents emphasised that schools cannot be categorised on data alone.

- 9.5. All but one respondent agreed or strongly agreed with the goals for the partnership; the remaining respondent, representing a special school, neither agreed nor disagreed. Some respondents gave comments, many noting that there was no Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) or Primary objective.
- 9.6. Details of a governance structure and membership of a strategic board were given as part of the consultation paper; 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the structure. The remaining five respondents (four of whom were neutral towards the governance arrangements and one disagreed) represented the Primary sector. The majority of comments requested more details as to how representatives on a strategic board would be identified, either appointed or elected. Some respondents commented that the size of the board could become cumbersome, whilst others thought there should be additional representation (for example from governors across all school types).
- 9.7. Of the 24 respondents, 15 replied that Lewisham Learning should be established as a legal entity; the remainder responded that they did not know. Of the 9 respondents who answered that they did not know whether or not Lewisham Learning should be established as a legal entity, eight were headteachers from primary schools.
- 9.8. The majority of respondents who chose to comment on funding arrangements felt the proposals were fair; no respondent chose to comment that they disagreed with the funding proposals. One respondent emphasised the need for funding arrangements to be reviewed.

10 Next Steps

- 10.1. An interim director of Lewisham Learning has been seconded from a school, who will now work to drive forward the development of the partnership.
- 10.2. The School Improvement Partnership Steering Group will continue to meet, with an adapted membership as a 'shadow board' to oversee the establishment of the Lewisham Learning.
- 10.3. The Executive Director for CYP will report back to CYP Select Committee on progress and impact of Lewisham Learning in January 2018.

11 Financial Implications

- 11.1. Although most partnerships receive initial support in money or kind or both to establish themselves, over time they are expected to become self-sufficient.

Creating a sustainable business model is crucial if the partnership for improvement is to survive.

- 11.2. In the majority of cases, partnerships are heavily dependent on income from schools for their funding. This might be in the form of a subscription fee, often at different levels for different services, or of schools buying an individual service or particular packages of services. The subscription fee is often also related to the number of pupils in the school.
- 11.3. In most cases, the local council is also commissioning, or planning to commission, the partnership to provide school improvement services on its behalf. For instance, although local authorities still retain statutory responsibilities for schools causing concern, many are commissioning partnerships to provide those services on their behalf. Some councils are commissioning partnerships to deliver wider services, such as specific work on Prevent.
- 11.4. As part of the Steering Group's research, options for seed-funding were explored. Brent Council established the Brent Schools Partnership with £200K investment in 2014. Brent financed the partnership (including the cost of the operational Director), at a cost of £100K each year until 2016. The Brent Schools Partnership is now financed solely through school subscription and other income generating activity. The Hounslow Learning Partnership received £600K from the local authority until 2016 in order to support the partnership in developing itself as well as funding some school improvement functions. Tower Hamlets Council has supported its partnership with seed funding of £300k a year, and support in kind, for three years. Essex County Council is a much larger local authority and has invested £1.5m over three years.
- 11.5. In Lewisham's case, the Schools Forum has already agreed annual funding of £300,000 from 2017/18 to support school-led school improvement which was decided in anticipation of the establishment of the partnership. This funding represents investment in the partnership on the part of all maintained schools but does not represent a charge on the five academies in Lewisham. If they were to contribute on a pro-rata basis, this would represent an additional £42,000 income to the partnership. They have not, however, budgeted for this contribution in 2017/18 yet they are key members of the partnership (two of them run Teaching Schools). It is proposed that their contribution is seen as being in kind in the first year, with discussion on how this will work in subsequent years.
- 11.6. For its part, the local authority has already reduced its staffing in its school improvement team. Initially this was due to failure to recruit due to the shortage of school improvement professionals in the market. Subsequently this has been a choice to shift much of the limited budget for school improvement into the school-led work which is already underway. For 2017/18 this budget still includes £100,000 from DSG which funds support for 'red' and 'amber' schools (schools which need additional support). The local authority is planning to

commission this support for vulnerable schools from the partnership going forward and currently would expect this funding to continue year on year. In addition, in 2017/18 there is £200,000 in the council school improvement budget which in previous years funded local authority school improvement staff.

- 11.7. It is proposed that approximately £120,000 of this would be 'seed funding' to contribute to the infrastructure costs of the partnership (the director's salary, project support and the basic costs of operation). The local authority will also support the partnership in kind through its HR and other services. The remaining £80,000 would represent commissioning of the partnership by the local authority to deliver school effectiveness monitoring and support to enable the local authority to fulfil its statutory duties. This funding is not secured for subsequent years, but a tapered amount may be possible. Adding all these amounts together gives the partnership a total budget of £600,000 in its first year. There is no legal entity in place so money will either be directly spent by the local authority under our rules of financial stewardship or will be paid to a specific school to undertake specified activities (for example one of the Teaching Schools).

12 Legal Implications

- 12.1. Additional to those set out elsewhere in the report local authorities are required to provide primary, secondary and further education for 16 to 18 year and for people aged 19 or over who have an Education Health and Care Plan.(EHC Plan)
- 12.2. Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 specifically requires local authorities to exercise their education and training functions in relation to those young people for whom that have assumed responsibility so as to promote high standards, fulfilment of potential and fair access to opportunity for education and training. It applies in relation to persons aged 20 or over for whom an EHC Plan is maintained.
- 12.3. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to secure the provision of 'sufficient' schools (as amplified in sub-ss (2),(3) and (4)) for their areas. This function must be exercised with a view to securing diversity and parental choice. Local authorities must have regard to the need to secure primary and secondary education in separate schools, provision for children with special educational needs and boarding provision for those for whom it is desirable. The local authority is not itself obliged to provide all the schools required, but to secure that they are available. Section 18 enables an LEA to make arrangements for the provision of education at non-maintained schools.
- 12.4. The proposals and next steps set out in this report, developed as a result of the work of the School Improvement Partnership Steering Group and the recent consultation exercise and responses will assist the local authority in complying with its general statutory responsibilities in relation to school improvement and the promotion of high standards.

13 Equalities Implications

- 13.1. Education is the principal driver of equalities in an area of high deprivation such as Lewisham. Our schools have a large majority of pupils of BME origin and high proportions with special educational needs and disabilities. It is very important therefore that inclusiveness and equalities are at the core of the schools partnership for Lewisham and that the moral purpose of such a partnership is very clearly articulated and constantly re-emphasised.

14 Environmental Implications

- 14.1. No specific environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report.

15 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 15.1. No specific crime and disorder implications have been identified as arising from this report.

16 Report Author

- 16.1. If you require further information about this report please contact Sara Williams (sara.williams@lewisham.gov.uk).