

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2016

ATTENDANCE OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

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Summary

This report provides the Committee with an overview of the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner. The Regional Schools Commissioner for South-East England and South London, Dominic Herrington, will be in attendance at the meeting.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The performance of schools continues to be a priority in the Council Plan “Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway” and the terms of reference of this Committee, which are set out at Chapter 4, paragraph 22.2(b) of the Medway Constitution, includes issues relating to schools and education.

2. Background

- 2.1 In September 2014, eight Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs), formally appointed as civil servants in the Department for Education, were given responsibility for intervening in underperforming academies in their region and approving new free schools. RSCs are responsible for approving and monitoring academies and free schools in their area on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. RSCs are accountable to the National School Commissioner and are supported by a board of 6 to 8 experienced academy headteachers and other sector leaders.
- 2.2 Their role was expanded from 1 July 2015 to include responsibility for approving the conversion of underperforming maintained schools into academies and deciding on their sponsors, and further expansion is proposed in the Education and Adoption Bill currently before Parliament.
- 2.3 The RSC for South-East England and South London, Dominic Herrington, is responsible for making decisions about the academies and free schools in the following local authorities:

- Bexley
- Brighton and Hove
- Bromley
- Croydon
- East Sussex
- Greenwich
- Hampshire
- Isle of Wight
- Kent
- Kingston Upon Thames
- Lambeth
- Lewisham
- Medway
- Merton
- Portsmouth
- Richmond Upon Thames
- Southampton
- Southwark
- Surrey
- Sutton
- Wandsworth
- West Sussex

3. Role of the Regional Schools Commissioner

Current responsibilities of the RSCs

3.1 The main responsibilities of the RSC are to:

- monitor the performance of the academies in their area;
- take action when an academy is underperforming
- decide on the development of new academies
- address underperformance in local-authority-maintained schools through sponsored academy arrangements
- make recommendations to ministers about free school applications
- encourage organisations to become academy sponsors; and
- approve changes to open academies, including:
 - changes to age ranges;
 - mergers between academies;
 - changes to multi-academy trust arrangements

Expected further expansion of the role

3.2 Further expansion of the role of RSCs has been proposed in the Education and Adoption Bill, which introduces a new category of “coasting” schools that will be eligible for intervention by the RSCs; such interventions may include replacing the governing body with an interim executive board, or issuing an academy order.

3.3 RSCs will have discretion to decide which schools within the definition of coasting have a sufficient plan and sufficient capacity to improve, which schools will need additional support and challenge in order to improve, and in which schools it will be necessary for the RSC to intervene.

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Appendices

None.

Background papers

None