1. **Summary**

   1.1 This report sets out the scope for the Panel’s meeting which will focus on Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision in London.

2. **Recommendation**

   2.1 That the Panel notes the report, puts questions to the invited experts and notes the discussion.

3. **Background**

   3.1 At its 26 June 2014 meeting, the GLA Oversight Committee re-established the Education Panel as a working group with the following term of reference:

       To keep under review and investigate as appropriate the development and delivery of the Mayor’s policies and strategies in relation to education and to report back to the GLA Oversight Committee as necessary.

   3.2 The Panel has previously agreed as part of its work programme that this meeting would primarily focus on what role the Mayor has, or could have, in Alternate Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Units (PRU) in London.

   3.3 AP, which includes PRUs, provides an alternative to mainstream education. AP allows the development of a more personalised learning programme for students that are not suited to mainstream education, are at risk of permanent exclusion, have mental health or challenging behavioural issues.

   3.4 There is a range of AP on offer. PRUs are registered with the Department for Education (DfE), are managed by local authorities and subject to Ofsted inspections. Many PRUs are now converting to AP academies. The DfE states that giving PRUs the opportunity to convert to AP academies gives “education professionals greater scope to innovate and raise standards for their pupils whilst still
remaining clearly accountable for the outcomes they deliver. They will be able to develop their own provision and increase and diversify the range of AP provision in the area.”

3.5 AP Academies can have a number of benefits over maintained PRUs. These include freedom from local authority control; greater control of their budgets; the ability to set pay and conditions for staff; the ability to change the lengths of terms and school days to benefit pupils; decisions on how to deploy resources to gain maximum benefit for pupils; and freedom to develop new types of support for pupils.

3.6 Pupils referred to PRUs and AP are among the most vulnerable. Many pupils referred to PRUs and AP are from very deprived backgrounds. Pupils in PRUs and AP are more likely to be known to the police and social services, and often face a number of issues at home, including domestic violence, family breakdown, drug and alcohol problems and mental health issues.

3.7 Academic outcomes for pupils in PRUs and AP are poor. This can be attributed to late arrival in AP and PRUs or the limited time spent in AP and PRUs. However, some PRUs and providers of AP are criticised for not providing an academic education but merely ‘keeping their children off the streets.’ Many pupils do not have a clear post-16 destination and a lack of academic focus often means young people do not achieve the level of GCSE they are capable of.

3.8 PRUs and AP face a number of challenges. Few PRUs and AP have access to sufficient information on pupil’s previous schools and struggle to establish attainment levels on admission. Indefinite PRU and AP attendance times make long-term planning difficult, and reintegration processes are often unclear. PRUs and AP also experience negative stereotyping and pupils attending London PRUs and AP face the challenge of travelling through postcodes that are felt to be hostile.

3.9 The Mayor’s Education Inquiry committed to establish, with the London Pupil Referral Network, a programme to support PRU leadership development and strengthen subject knowledge for those students in English and maths. However, in the last Education Programme delivery plan the level of support has been reduced instead to “scope two strands of the London Schools Gold Club tailored for alternative provision and special schools.”

3.10 The Mayor’s Education Programme sets out plans to promote excellent teaching in all London schools. This includes AP and PRUs. This is being delivered through:

- London Schools Excellence Fund;
- London Curriculum; and
- London Schools Gold Club.

3.11 The Programme refresh in 2014/15 identified that AP and PRUs should also be supported to share best practice by: inclusion into the Gold Club award scheme; work with the London PRU Network to ensure AP and PRUs are linked into school improvement networks; and highlight and share best practice in AP.

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1 Guidance Pupil Referral Units conversion to Alternative Provision Academies in 2012/13, DfE, December 2012
2 See www.aeplambeth.org/page/212/AP-Academy-Conversion.aspx
3 Charlie Taylor, Improving Alternative Provision, 2012
4 Charlie Taylor, Improving Alternative Provision, 2012
5 The Research Base, Alternative Education Provision in London, April 2013
4. **Issues for Consideration**

4.1 The Panel will discuss the current situation in London, the key challenges PRUs and AP face and the role of the Mayor in supporting PRUs and AP in London, with the following experts:

- John d’Abbro, Head, New Rush Hall Group, Redbridge;
- Anna Cain, Chief Executive and Head of Boxing Academy, Hackney;
- Gabrielle Grodentz, Head of Alternative Provision, Islington;
- Seamus Oates, Executive Headteacher, Tri-borough Alternative Provision (TBAP).

5. **Legal Implications**

5.1 The Panel has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

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**List of appendices to this report:** None

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<td>List of Background Papers: None</td>
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