

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 11 July 2017

PRESENT

Cllr K Ferguson (Chairman)
Cllr D Shelvey (Vice-Chairman)

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| Councillors: | J Chatterley P Hollick Cllr M Liddiard | Councillors: | A Ryan B Saunders |
| Parental Co-optees: | Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands | | |
| Church of England Co-optee: | | | |
| Roman Catholic Co-optee: | | | |
| Apologies for Absence: | Cllrs | Mrs D B Gurney Mrs D Main Mr D Morton B Walker S Watkins | |
| Substitutes: | Cllrs | R D Berry | |
| Members in Attendance: | Cllrs | Mrs A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild Mrs C Hegley B J Spurr Mrs T Stock | Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Health and Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board Deputy Executive Member for Health |
| Officers in Attendance: | K Harvey Ms K Philpot | | Head of Services for Disabled Children Principal Assistant (School Places) |

Mrs R Preen

Scrutiny Policy Adviser

Mr V Wan

Senior Education Officer (Planning)

Public: 2

CS/17/14. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 May 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/17/15. **Members' Interests**

None.

CS/17/16. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced the intention to form a task force to consider and assess the challenges schools were facing in terms of pupil attainment and the recruitment and retention of teachers.

CS/17/17. **Petitions**

None.

CS/17/18. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman confirmed that one person had registered to speak at the commencement of item 11.

CS/17/19. **Call-In**

None.

CS/17/20. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/17/21. **Executive Members' Updates**

The Executive Members for Social Care and Housing and Health both thanked officers for their hard work during the recent Children's Services OFSTED inspection and announced that the outcome would be available after 23 August 2017.

CS/17/22. **Pupil Yield Assumption**

The Senior Education Officer for Schools Planning outlined the rationale behind the decision to request an increase in the pupil yield factor, due to a sharp upturn in numbers arising from housing developments in recent years.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That current Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations precluded the Council from applying Section 106 (S106) contributions against developments of less than 10 dwellings, however in future this may change.
- Members were reassured of the robust evidence and technical studies to support the proposed increase in the pupil yield factor, mitigating any challenges from developers.
- That developer contributions did not currently support special school and SEN places but that the service was working hard to determine the most appropriate way of securing future funding.
- That figures obtained from local hospitals in relation to births enabled the service to accurately forecast future pupil numbers.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive approve an increase to the pupil yield assumptions used for pupil forecasting and the calculation of S106 funding requests for education, from one form of entry per 750 homes to one form of entry per 500 homes, for residential planning applications.

CS/17/23. **Children with Disabilities Short Breaks and Efficiencies**

The Chairman confirmed that one member of the public had registered to speak who raised the following points in summary:-

- The concern of many parents carers, their families and voluntary organisations regards the impact of proposed changes to funding and levels of service provided.
- That support was required for the development of services to ensure they met the differing needs of users.
- That Members of the Committee ought to formally consider the parent carer survey results contained within the report.

In light of the points raised by the member of the public the Head of Service for Children with Disabilities outlined the four levels of change proposed within the report, the Council's statutory duty to provide the service and the differing levels of need of service users. The changes would enable a targeted use of the budget, meeting the efficiencies set out within the Mid Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Members' attention was drawn to Appendix C, which contained details of the legal implications of the proposed changes, with the need for Members to be cognisant of the subsequent impact on families. Regular progress reports would be delivered to the Committee at every appropriate stage.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Concern that children not yet in the system were waiting too long for assessments, impacting the wider family, with parents often reticent about 'labelling' their children.
- The importance of supporting those children who didn't meet the current Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) threshold yet still required additional support.
- That not enough financial detail had been provided within the report in order for Members to have made an informed decision regarding the impact of efficiency savings, with a need for a robust reviewing process to be put in place in order to regularly assess the impact of change.
- That a reduction in funding did not necessarily equate to a reduction in service. The proposals offered an opportunity for the Council to utilise best practice.
- A need to educate children from an early age in order to dispel negative attitudes towards those with disabilities and the need to address the distances some families had to travel in order to access services.
- Concerns that recent changes to benefits would be compounded by the proposed efficiency savings, having a detrimental impact on families.
- That the proposed efficiencies could have similar benefits to those for adults within the social care system, allowing greater freedom to choose individually tailored services, with personal budgets managed by families rather than paid directly to organisations.
- Concerns around the length of time taken to assess a child's needs, the category they were placed in and that safeguards were required in order to ensure the focus of proposed changes was not solely financially led.

In summary, whilst Members broadly supported the proposals they were uncomfortable with the untested efficiency savings highlighted within the report and the potential impact on the voluntary sector and families.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. **That the broad model of delivery be supported but the proposed efficiency savings be carefully considered by the Executive in order to mitigate the impact on families of children with disabilities.**
2. **That the criteria categories as set out within the report be revisited to ensure they are appropriately applied.**
3. **That clarity be provided in relation to who would be consulted on the proposals, how it might affect them and with a timeline for review at every appropriate stage.**
4. **That the Executive consider a ring-fenced reserve whilst the proposals are implemented in order to provide financial safeguards to the service.**

CS/17/24. **Work Programme 2017/18 & Executive Forward Plan**

RECOMMENDED

1. that the Work Programme be agreed subject to the following amendments:-

- **To Assess the Fairer Funding Formula for Schools – Executive Member update 12 September 2017.**
- **Community Speech and Language Provision – To receive a performance report, 12 September 2017.**
- **The School Organisational Plan – Date TBC**

2. That a task force be established to consider pupil attainment and other challenges facing schools, including but not restricted to the recruitment and retention of teachers; deprivation and the impact on children; the changing structure of schools within Central Bedfordshire and; governor training requirements.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.55 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated