

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, 21 November 2017

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	J Chatterley Mrs D B Gurney P Hollick	Councillors:	Cllr M Liddiard B Saunders
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Parental Co-optees: Mrs G Deans
Mrs E Rowlands

Church of England
Co-optee:
Roman Catholic
Co-optee:

Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	A Ryan B Walker S Watkins Mr S Court Mrs D Main Mr D Morton
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Substitutes:	Cllrs	R D Berry N B Costin
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Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	Cllr S Dixon	Executive Member for Education and Skills
		Mrs A L Dodwell	Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
		Mrs S A Goodchild	
		Mrs C Hegley	Executive Member for Social Care and Housing and Lead Member for Children's Services
		B J Spurr	Executive Member for Health and Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board
		Mrs T Stock	Deputy Executive Member for Health

Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Fraser	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Miss J Mortimer	School Admissions Manager
	Mrs R Preen	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Mr V Wan	Senior Education Officer (Planning)

Public: 0

CS/17/49. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/17/50. **Members' Interests**

Parental Co-optee Mrs G Deans declared an interest in item 11 as a parent of a child in attendance at St Swithun's VC school.

Parental Co-optee Mrs E Rowlands declared an interest in item 13 as a director of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) Nurseries.

Cllr D Shelvey declared an interest in item 13 as a director of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST).

CS/17/51. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

CS/17/52. **Petitions**

None.

CS/17/53. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/17/54. **Call-In**

None.

CS/17/55. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/17/56. Executive Members' Updates

The Executive Member for Education advised the Committee that the contractor responsible for the expansion of Henlow Middle School had been appointed and progress was continuing well.

CS/17/57. Careers Education and Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in Central Bedfordshire – Briefing (October 2017)

The Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement advised the Committee of the key areas of focus in relation to Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) within Central Bedfordshire, the statutory responsibilities of the local authority and schools, also highlighting the need to raise participation in the scheme due to the requirement for young people to be in education or training until the age of 18. Members were apprised of a recent successful event in relation to career options and that the department were seeking best practice examples in order to ensure young people in the region had the greatest level of opportunity when entering the work place.

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

- Whether the system catered for all pupils, particularly those undertaking skills based subjects, with a need to lobby government regarding parity of esteem between academic and vocational subjects given that the national curriculum was primarily focussed on academic outcomes.
- The benefits of work experience being made available to those students interested in practical based subjects, taking into account health and safety requirements, with the local authority setting an example as a large local employer and increasing the offer of work experience to students.
- The disparity between feedback from pupils and schools regarding the offer of careers advice and guidance and the reasons behind why no local schools had achieved the kite mark as detailed within the report.
- That there had been a positive response to the proposals with a commitment from schools to improve the offer in partnership with the local authority, acknowledging the need for the involvement of school governors in order to ensure an appropriate offer to students.
- To consider offering careers advice and guidance to younger pupils prior to the selection of GCSE options and the importance of engaging with parents.
- That the development of a new online portal would improve accessibility.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Executive Member liaise with the Secretary of State for Education in order to promote a more vocational based curriculum for those students who required it.**
- 2. That the Council considered more robust methods of facilitating and supporting schools to engage proactively with businesses in order to promote work experience for young people.**

3. That the local authority undertakes an annual youth audit of the IAG provision within Central Bedfordshire.

CS/17/58. **Consultation On The Council's Admission Arrangements For The Academic Year 2019/20**

The Executive Member for Education introduced a report which highlighted proposed changes to the Council's admission arrangements for 2019/20.

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

- That parents within the Leighton Buzzard area, particularly those within the south of the region broadly supported the proposed removal of catchment areas.
- Whether the removal of catchment areas would have an impact on future development and the allocation of Section 106 contributions.
- That the proposals would remove the need for schools transport in many cases, creating a cost saving for the Council.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee support the Council's proposed admission arrangements for the academic year 2019/20.**
- 2. That further clarity be provided within the public consultation documents in relation to the distance criteria and the options available to parents when selecting a school for their child.**

CS/17/59. **Pupil Admissions Numbers Increase**

The Senior Education Officer (Planning) outlined the proposed temporary increase in the Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) at Thomas Johnson Lower School and how they would be accommodated. Birth data suggested a very high number of pupils from the Lidlington area, with the next nearest available school over two miles away which would significantly impact transport costs.

With regards to the expansion of Biggleswade Academy, Members were advised that forecasts suggested additional and significant future growth in the town, with the expansion of other schools unlikely due to site constraints. A proposal for a future free school would meet the longer term requirements within the town.

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

- That the proposals in relation to Thomas Johnson Lower School appeared to be an efficient use of funds which would benefit the school and local area in future years.
- Concerns that forecast numbers were not being considered at an early enough stage, to which it was confirmed that forecasting was carried out over a 5 year period, with an annual review to ensure data was as accurate as possible.
- That the broader school organisational plan would minimise the impact of regular changes to PAN.

- The need to liaise with neighbouring authorities due to their proximity to Central Bedfordshire and pupils from outside of the region crossing the border into local schools.
- Members were offered reassurance that the proposals would not jeopardise the free school bid.
- That in the Committee's view, temporary units were not a long term, appropriate solution and that a permanent structure would be preferable, notwithstanding concerns regards the high costs involved.
- The need for effective planning in order that schools were able to appropriately manage their sites and staffing requirements.
- That increasing the pupil head room over the requisite 5% would not be possible due to the impact on developer contributions and staffing within schools.
- Concerns that due to the impact on local children and the need for appropriate accommodation, it was necessary for the Committee to agree the proposals, despite ongoing concerns about the cost of temporary expansions.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the commencement of capital expenditure as set out in the Executive report be supported, subject to the granting of planning permissions under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act for the temporary expansion of Thomas Johnson Lower School and Biggleswade Academy.**
- 2. That the Committee support the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services to enter into all appropriate legal documentation to implement the scheme.**
- 3. That the school organisational plan be brought to the Committee at the earliest possible stage due to ongoing concerns in relation to effective planning of school places and the high costs involved for the temporary expansion of schools.**

CS/17/60. **New School Places**

The Executive Member for Education outlined the rationale and need for the proposed new free school and confirmed that once the site had been agreed, admissions numbers would be included for new applications to the school.

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

- That the use of cycle ways be supported in order to minimise the need for school transport and encourage sustainable travel to school.
- Concerns at the lack of 6th form provision with a need to understand what would attract 6th form students into the region.
- That any overspend on the project would be funded by the Department for Education and not the local authority.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. That the Committee support the release of land (subject to planning) for the new free school and for the Council to deliver the new free school on behalf of the DfE.
2. That the Committee support the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services to enter into all appropriate legal documentation to implement the scheme including the building contract and ancillary documents, funding agreement, development agreement, Academy lease and all contracts required to secure delivery and operation of the new school.

CS/17/61. **OFSTED Outcomes Improvement Plan**

The Director for Children's Services delivered a presentation which outlined recommendations for improvement arising from a recent OFSTED inspection. Members were advised that the success criteria would be to demonstrate how the inspector's recommendations would be met, with the directorate expanding on them and delivering milestones at each relevant stage of the process.

NOTED the positive outcome of the recent OFSTED inspection with the Committee welcoming the delivery of an action plan to a future meeting.

CS/17/62. **Work Programme 2017/18 & Executive Forward Plan**

That the Committee Work Programme be agreed subject to the following amendments:-

- **Henlow Church of England Expansion – Process Management Report and Tender Process update to include financial details relating to the costs of temporary units – 16 January 2018**
- **The School Organisational Plan – 13 March 2018**
- **Pupil Attainment Task Force Report – 13 March 2018**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated