

## 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, 16 January 2018

### PRESENT

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

Councillors:	J Chatterley Mrs D B Gurney P Hollick	Councillors:	A Ryan B Saunders S Watkins
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee: Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Mr D Morton		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs M Liddiard B Walker  Mrs D Main		
Substitutes:	Cllrs R D Berry		
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs Cllr S Dixon  Mrs A L Dodwell  Mrs T Stock	Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services  Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children  Deputy Executive Member for Health	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt  Mr P Fraser  Mrs S Harrison  Mrs R Preen	Scrutiny Policy Adviser  Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement  Director of Children's Services  Scrutiny Policy Adviser	

Mr V Wan

Head of School Organisation,  
Admissions and Capital Planning

Public: 0

CS/17/63. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 November 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

CS/17/64. **Members' Interests**

Cllr Shelvey declared an interest as a director of the Bedfordshire Schools Trust (BEST) due to the mention of Etonbury Academy within the report.

CS/17/65. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised of a recent restructure within the Executive and that Cllr Hegley would no longer be responsible for Children's Social Care, with Cllr Dixon assuming responsibility as Executive Member for Families, Education and Children. The Chairman extended formal thanks on behalf of the Committee to Cllr Hegley for her years of service and support.

CS/17/66. **Petitions**

None.

CS/17/67. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/17/68. **Call-In**

None.

CS/17/69. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/17/70. **Executive Members' Updates**

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children advised the Committee that following the recent Executive restructure there would be a greater focus on families rather than children in isolation. It was hoped that a more holistic approach would yield positive results and appropriate intervention where required.

The Deputy Executive Member for Health advised that drug and alcohol services in Central Bedfordshire had been combined with a greater focus on

partnership working with mental health services. A report would be delivered to the Committee in due course with regards to children's mental health.

**CS/17/71. The Proposed Change of Age Range for Southcott Lower School**

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning delivered a report which set out the rationale for a change to the age range at Southcott Lower school and the results of a recent consultation which broadly supported the proposals.

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

- That in the event of a school losing a 'Good' OFSTED rating part way through an expansion, school improvements would be prioritised over the expansion.
- The benefits of schools undertaking a governance scoping review.
- That nursery provision did not guarantee a child a place in any particular lower school and that parents would need to follow the usual application process.

**RECOMMENDED: -**

1. **That the Committee support the Executive approval of the statutory process for the proposal to change the age range of Southcott Lower School from 4–9 years to 2-9 namely: -**
  - **Approve publication of the statutory notice**
  - **Commence formal consultation of at least four weeks**
  - **Approve that determination for the proposed change be made by the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children, if responses to the formal consultation are favourable. If responses to the formal consultation are not favourable determination to be made by the Executive. agreed as listed and encouraged that schools are looking to increase age range as it provides early years provision.**
2. **That all schools be encouraged to increase ages ranges where appropriate in order to meet demand for early years provision.**

**CS/17/72. Proposed Change of Age Range for Southill Lower School**

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning delivered a report which set out the rationale for a change to the age range at Southill Lower school and the results of a recent consultation which broadly supported the proposals.

**RECOMMENDED: -**

1. **That the Committee support the Executive approval of the statutory process for the proposal to change the age range of Southill Lower School from 4–9 years to 2-9 namely:**
  - **Approve publication of the statutory notice**
  - **Commence formal consultation of at least four weeks**
  - **Approve that determination for the proposed change be made by the Executive Member for Education and Skills, if responses to the formal consultation are favourable. If responses to the formal consultation are not favourable determination to be made by the Executive.**

**2. That all schools be encouraged to increase ages ranges where appropriate in order to meet demand for early years provision.**

**CS/17/73. The Programme for the Expansion of Henlow Academy**

The Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital Planning delivered a report which provided Members with details of an action plan to mitigate historic problems with the decision making timeline and provision of information relating to the expansion at Henlow Middle School. Members were appraised of the various, but relatively restricted uses of temporary units, and the comparative costs in relation to permanent structures. The original cost estimates presented to Members at an earlier meeting had reduced considerably and the directorate were confident that the project would be delivered within the requisite timescales by working closely with all partners.

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

- That terminology regarding 'temporary' only related to the Pupil Admissions Numbers (PAN) and not classrooms or school buildings, which were permanent structures.
- That the adoption of the Local Plan in future months would stabilise development proposals and aid accurate planning in relation to the ongoing need for school places in Henlow and the surrounding area.
- That the use of temporary classrooms was not deemed in the best interests of children.
- That fluctuations in pupil numbers had partly contributed to the problems the directorate had experienced in securing school expansion at Etonbury Academy. Ensuring accuracy was key to securing sustainable future expansion.

**RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the proposed mitigations identified in the report to prevent similar issues arising in the future.**

(Cllr Gurney left the meeting at 10.30am)

(Cllr Ryan left the meeting at 10.47am)

**CS/17/74. Central Bedfordshire Council's Post OFSTED Inspection Action Plan**

The Director of Children's Services delivered an action plan to address areas of improvement following a recent OFSTED inspection of the service. Several recommendations had been expanded to include a wider remit, not just meeting the minimum requirements set out by the inspector. Members were advised of the need to recruit social workers who understood the holistic approach and new direction of the service, along with the need to support families in order to prevent children entering statutory services. The service had been shortlisted for a national award, the outcome of which would be determined within the coming weeks.

The Vice Chairman formally congratulated the directorate for the positive outcome of the OFSTED inspection, with the service categorised as 'Good' by the inspector.

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

- That the action plan appeared thorough and timescales for delivery were reassuring.
- That, although no child in the care of the local authority had presented as homeless, several older adults who had been through the social care system in the past had experienced periods of homelessness.
- Clarity around the advice provided to 16-17 year olds in relation to their statutory rights to independent living, with a supported housing scheme the preferred option which Members of the Committee endorsed.
- That a new recording system would support a collaborative and joined up approach between local authority departments, which included housing options.

**RECOMMENDED: -**

1. That the Director and Executive Member express the Committee's view to OFSTED that outdated legislative data in relation to the age whereby young people were supported into independent living be revisited at a national level.
2. That the action plan and progress report be delivered to the Committee on a bi-annual basis.

CS/17/75. **Work Programme 2017/18 & Executive Forward Plan**

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

- **Children's Mental Health – May 2018**
- **The School Organisational Plan – May 2018**
- **The First 1000 Days of a Child's Life (part of the Children and Young People's Development Plan) – May 2018**
- **That the Regional Schools Commissioner be invited to a future meeting in order to better understand how academies were held to account for poor performance – Date TBC**

(Cllr Gurney returned to the meeting at 10.50am)

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.01 a.m. and concluded at 10.56 a.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....

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