

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 6 October 2009.

PRESENT

Cllr J Street (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: P A Blaine
D Bowater
N B Costin
I Dalgarno
Dr R Egan
A Shadbolt

Parental Co-optees: H Chapman
D Landman
B Sear

Church of England
Co-optee: J Reynolds

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs P Hollick
F Image
K Janes

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs A Barker

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Jamieson, Mrs Lewis and Male

CFL/09/25 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Childrens, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 August 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CFL/09/26 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

(c) **Any Political Whip in relation to items on the agenda:-**

None.

CFL/09/27 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements or communications to make.

CFL/09/28 **Petitions**

The Chairman announced that no petitions had been referred to this meeting.

CFL/09/29 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

There were no applications from members of the public to speak under the Public Participation Procedure allowed for under Part A4 of the Constitution.

CFL/09/30 **Call-In**

No matters were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CFL/09/31 **Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CFL/09/32 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Progress Report**

Members received a report that set out the progress made in developing the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) as it related to the Children and Young People living in Central Bedfordshire. The JSNA was a joint document between Central Bedfordshire Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) which described the health, care and well-being needs of the local population to enable agencies to set the strategic direction of service delivery to meet those needs. Members were informed that the Executive Summary contained with their agenda was a summary of the existing JSNA as at April 2009 and Officers were working with the PCT to produce a much stronger document.

Members supported the JSNA but highlighted areas where there were discrepancies such as repeated paragraphs, out of date data, figures not adding up and the need to list the sources of where the information had been retrieved from. Members stated that other hospitals needed to be included and not just the Luton and Dunstable Hospital as there were many hospitals over the border from Central Bedfordshire that residents went to such as Milton

Keynes, Stoke Mandeville etc. Members also felt there should be robust data for children with disabilities in Bedfordshire, children attending alternative education provision such as private schools, electively home educated etc and children who are looked after by a different authority but who live with foster parents or in residential homes in Central Bedfordshire.

It was stressed that whilst the JSNA provided a great deal of background information it did not adequately apply this information in a way that enabled Members to identify necessary service developments.

Members discussed the numbers of children in need and those subject to a child protection plan and were advised that since 1 April 2009 Central Bedfordshire were reviewing every case individually. As a result of this review the number of looked after children had increased from 131 children on 31 March 2009 to 161 children at the date of the meeting. Members queried whether it was possible to obtain any comparative data from neighbouring authorities on how many children were being looked after. The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services stated that when considering the budget for looked after children the priority was keeping children safe.

Members also discussed that anti-social behaviour and bullying were a huge concern especially when children could not share their concerns about being bullied with anyone. Officers advised that in a recent survey carried out with young people the key issue they raised was bullying, which had been reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan. Schools were dealing with bullying, but many problems occurred outside of school and this was a key element of the priority within the Children and Young People's Plan. Anti-bullying week was due to be held from 16 - 20 November 2009 and further details would be circulated.

Members were advised by Officers that the relevant sections of the JSNA would be presented to the Committee when they were looking at the outcome themes for the Children and Young People's Plan.

Members were advised that the JSNA would be available electronically in a web based format so that they could interrogate the data themselves which would assist them in determining priority issues for future work programmes and member task groups.

NOTED

the progress made in developing the JSNA as it related to the Children and Young People in Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

that Officers feedback the Committee's comment detailed above to the JSNA Executive and that a further item be submitted to the Committee outlining how the JSNA would be adopted in the future and how any changes proposed by the Committee would be addressed.

CFL/09/33 **Monitoring Quarterly Performance**

Members received the first quarterly monitoring report that contained the performance information in relation to Children, Families and Learning.

Members noted that only two of the critical performance indicators related to monitoring leisure/sports/parks etc when 27% of the Children, Families and Learning budget was spent on these areas. The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Skills had requested that Officers reconsider this and include further local indicators for better performance monitoring.

Members discussed individual performance indicators as they had been agreed with the Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership Board and through the Local Area Agreement. Members requested further information on the following indicators:

- NI 9 – Use of public libraries;
- NI 10 – Visits to museums or galleries; and
- NI 13 – Migrants English language skills and knowledge.

Members were advised that Officers were waiting for the Government to set some national performance indicators for safeguarding children which will have to be reported on through the Comprehensive Area Assessment and therefore would make their way onto the quarterly performance report as appropriate.

Members were concerned that bullying was not being monitored more closely especially as it was a high priority in the Children and Young People's Plan. It was explained that this would be a key performance measure within the Children's Trust as part of the monitoring of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Members informed Officers that when the quarter two performance monitoring report is submitted to the Committee the pages should be printed in colour for ease of use. Members requested that where there was no target figure available that Officers include commentary to explain this. Members agreed that due to the number of indicators missing target data that they would consider all of the indicators relating to performance of critical indicators as part of quarter two performance monitoring. Members also requested that Officers recommend which targets are highly critical that should be monitored more closely through the quarterly monitoring reports.

RESOLVED

- 1) that officers recommend to a future meeting of the Committee a set of critical performance indicators for their areas that will enable the Committee to sufficiently monitor the delivery of services in the Children, Families and Learning Directorate**
- 2) that officers be requested to report to the Committee on national indicators 9, 10 and 13;**

- 3) ***that where there were no target figures available for performance indicators a sufficient commentary be included to explain this; and***
- 4) ***that Officers be requested to report specifically on how bullying was being monitored through the Children and Young People's Plan when they come to report on the Stay Safe theme.***

CFL/09/34

Strategic Commissioning Framework for Children in Central Bedfordshire

Members received a report which provided Members with the opportunity to comment on the draft Commissioning Framework which would guide the work of the Children's Trust prior to submission to the Executive.

Members supported the draft Strategic Commissioning Framework as a vehicle for delivering the Children and Young People's Plan, but raised concerns regarding the objectivity of the Commissioning Executive. It was suggested that the use of external experts and independent researchers, such as academics, might be an appropriate way of increasing the objectivity of the Commissioning Executive.

The Committee commented on the importance of ensuring that appropriate local data was made available to ensure that services were commissioned in an appropriate way relative to local demand. The Council should ensure that research, which had been carried out by other council services and partners was used to inform the policies that we develop locally.

It was also suggested that information needed to be shared across all Council services via procurement so that previous experience of procuring services from a provider could be used to inform future decisions regard the commissioning of services.

RECOMMENDED

that the Executive approve the Strategic Commissioning Framework for Children in Central Bedfordshire subject to the comments above and the following recommendations:-

- (i) ***that specific references be added to the Strategic Commissioning Framework regarding services for gifted and talented children and young people;***
- (ii) ***that the terminology used throughout the Strategic Commissioning Framework be reviewed to ensure that it is written in plain-English and that on each occasion it is clear who is being referred to as the 'Executive';***
- (iii) ***that the Membership of the Commissioning Executive be reviewed to ensure that it is able to function objectively; and***

- (iv) that it be ensured appropriate local data is made available across Council services, including previous experience of procurement, to inform decisions regarding the commissioning of services in Central Bedfordshire.**

CFL/09/35 **Work Programme 2009-2010**

Members considered the current work programme for the Children, Families and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the terms of reference for the Cultural Strategy Task Force.

Members requested that the Task Force looking at provision of facilities for youth commence as soon as possible before the child poverty Task Force. Members also suggested that whilst the terms and reference were being drawn up, Officers carry out research on what facilities there are within Central Bedfordshire for youths.

It was noted that the Portfolio Holder listed on the terms for reference for the Cultural Strategy Task Force should refer to Councillor Mrs C Turner (Assistant Portfolio Holder) and not Councillor Mrs P Turner.

Members raised concerns that the Committee meeting scheduled for September 2009 had been cancelled. The Chairman explained that he had been advised by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services that there was no new information to be considered at this meeting. The Chairman was aware that some of the Members on the Committee were concerned about this and he confirmed that he had no plans to cancel any future meetings.

Members were advised that there were two items on the Executive Forward Plan which Members may wish to consider. These being the Lord Laming Action Plan and the Eligibility for Payments Policy.

RESOLVED

- 1) that the Lord Laming Action Plan be included on the work programme for 3 November 2009; and**
- 2) that the Eligibility for Payments Policy be included on the work programme for 1 December 2009**
- 3) that the Developing a Strategy for Change for Central Bedfordshire Council be moved from the 3 November 2009 to 5 January 2010 when Members will be considering the theme of Enjoy and Achieve.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.02 p.m.)