

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Tuesday, 19 October 2010

PRESENT

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

Councillors: Mrs A Barker
P A Blaine
P Hollick
A Shadbolt

Parental Co-optees: H Copley
D Landman

Church of England
Co-optee: J Reynolds

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs D Bowater
N B Costin
Dr R Egan
K Janes

Roman Catholic Co-optee Mrs F Image

Parental Co-optee Mr B Sear

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs M Mustoe

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Mrs A M Lewis
Mrs C Turner

Officers in Attendance: Ms R Baker Headteacher of Beecroft Lower School, Dunstable
Mr B Carter Overview & Scrutiny Manager
Ms C Cooper Temporary Democratic Services Officer
Mrs E Grant Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Mrs S Hobbs Democratic Services Officer
Mr B Pearson Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning
Ms K Peddie Head of Policy & Strategy - Children's Services

CS/10/37 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 September 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/10/38 **Members' Interests**

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

Councillor Blaine advised that he was a Governor/ Board Member at Barnfield College

Councillor Mrs C Turner was a Governor at Central Bedfordshire College

Councillor Mrs Goodchild was a Governor at Tithe Farm Lower School

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

None.

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

None.

CS/10/39 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman confirmed that a letter had been sent to the local MPs, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury seeking their support to maintain funding for the benefit of young people. A copy was circulated to the Members of this committee. Cllr Anita Lewis commented that she had reinforced this message with the local MPs at a recent meeting.

CS/10/40 **Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 2 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/10/41 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations from members of the public were received in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/10/42 **Call-In**

No matters were referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to call-in of a decision.

CS/10/43 **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.

CS/10/44 **Portfolio Holder Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services communicated to Members on the following current issues:

- the Council had an ongoing duty to refresh the Children and Young People's Plan and this was currently out for consultation;
- the Government had produced a White Paper which proposed changes to the National Health Service (NHS). Until a final report was produced by the Government the exact impact on the Council was not clear;
- the Steering Group reviewing the School Places in Dunstable and Houghton Regis was working hard and the results would be submitted to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 January 2011;
- the Looked After Children Awards ceremony had taken place and was attended by foster carers and young people in care, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services. The event recognised the success of young people in care. The evening was a great success;
- Youth Participation Officers had been working with Young Carers to produce a DVD called 'Undercover Carers' to highlight and raise awareness to both pupils and teachers about young children who looked after their parents. This would be delivered via the PSHE lessons. In addition Look East had interviewed the Portfolio Holder and one of the young carers;
- two Governor meetings had taken place at Priory House and Dunstable, these were to recognise the work being carried out by school Governors. The Chairman attended one of these events and communicated his thanks.

CS/10/45 **Child Poverty Strategy**

Members considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and received a presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services about the development of a strategy to reduce child poverty and alleviate its effects in Central Bedfordshire. Members also watched a DVD produced by Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council about the impact of Child Poverty in this area.

The presentation introduced Members to child poverty and set out:

- the Child Poverty Act including the definitions of poverty
- the percentage of children in poverty in the UK
- why income matters and the poverty and life chances form an inter-generational cycle
- the need to end child poverty and how local authorities and partners can co-operate to reduce child poverty
- the percentage of children in relative poverty by upper-tier local authority
- a breakdown of the percentage of children living in poverty in the Central Bedfordshire Council wards.

The Committee welcomed Ms Baker, Headteacher of Beecroft Lower School, Dunstable to the meeting. Ms Baker communicated to the Members a brief summary of the services in place at Beecroft Lower School which had received an outstanding Ofsted result. She believed that the key to working with parents was to create a relationship and sometimes it was best practice to include informal events in order to meet parents in a less pressured environment.

Members were advised that a Sure Start Children's Centre was attached to Beecroft Lower School and that this meets some of the early intervention needs of some of the children to establish a common starting point for learning. However it was reiterated that there was no link between the school and the services provided at the Children's Centre. In addition, due to the current economic climate whilst some services such as Breakfast Clubs are valued, schools needed to be innovative in how they were funded.

Members were advised that the Government's White Paper proposed changes to the National Health Service (NHS) and recommended that a Health and Wellbeing Board be established. The Board would include the Director of Public Health, Director of Adult Social Care and the Director of Children's Services along with the Portfolio Holders for Children and Adult services.

The framework for the Draft Child Poverty Strategy would follow the four key national objectives with underpinning priorities specific to Central Bedfordshire. In particular, Members commented on Objective 3 'improving life chances of children and families by intervening early to prevent poor outcomes' and 4 'working with colleagues from all sectors and agencies to improve the environmental factors'.

Members were advised that the needs of gypsy and travellers fell under the Gypsy and Traveller Strategy. The child poverty data was provided from the HMRC. Officers would circulate the data to Members, but careful consideration would have to be given to the extent of information provided without identifying individuals in poverty. The data provided from HMRC was two years old and was realigned to reflect the wards in Central Bedfordshire.

Members agreed that the DVD was very good and recommended that all members of Central Bedfordshire Council have the opportunity to watch it.

RESOLVED

to agree the four key objectives that would set the framework for the Child Poverty Strategy as set out in the report.

NOTED

the request that all members of Central Bedfordshire Council have the opportunity to watch the Child Poverty DVD.

ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned from 11:55 am – 12:05 pm for a short break.

CS/10/46 Post 16 Transport Policy

Members considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services that proposed changes to the Post 16 Transport Policy, to take effect from September 2011. Members noted that the proposed policy changes were related to young people attending post 16 education and training in schools, colleges and work based learning providers and not part of the Home to School Transport Policy which had previously been agreed by the Executive in March 2010.

Members were presented with proposals and in particular debated the proposal for the mileage criteria and the fifteen miles radius between home and school or college. Members expressed concern that this should be reconsidered as students in the rural areas within Central Bedfordshire and those on the border would not be able to attend colleges in Bedford under the 15 mile criteria.

Members needed to be certain that students living anywhere in Central Bedfordshire had access to a collage within the 15 mile radius. Members were advised that any amendments to the mileage criteria would need to be costed. Members noted that extensive research had taken place regarding these proposed changes, and this could be shared. Members requested maps setting out what provision was available within Central Bedfordshire which led to recommending the 15 mile radius. The Director noted that travel to learn distances did not need to take account Council boundaries.

Members fully debated the low income criteria and agreed that this should reflect the Home to School Transport Policy.

A suggestion was put forward to amend the proposal on the assessment of Course Content to continue the last sentence 'and that the student has been accepted for a place at the school or college'.

Concerns were raised about the safety of cycle routes within Central Bedfordshire and that cycle routes being used by young people travelling to school or college should be given a higher priority.

Members noted that the consultation on the Policy would commence on 8 November 2010 and would run until 17 December 2010. The outcomes of the consultation would be fed back to the Committee on 25 January 2011 before being submitted to the Executive on 8 February 2011.

RESOLVED

- 1. that Officers reconsider the modal for the 15 miles radius under the proposal for the mileage criteria**
- 2. to suggest an amendment to the proposal on the assessment of Course Content to extend the last sentence 'and that the student has been accepted for a place at the school or college'.**

RECOMMENDED

to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that they consider the safety of cycle routes being used by young people travelling to and from school or college within their work programme.

CS/10/47 Quarter One Performance Report

Members considered the report of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services which highlighted the quarter one performance for the Children's Services Directorate, including the relevant Corporate Health Indicators.

Members noted that the performance had been good within the Directorate. Members queried the amount of days in which an undisputed invoice had to be paid as this currently was within 30 days. Members felt that the turnaround of invoices was very quick especially compared to private industry. Officers agreed to raise this with the Finance team and come back to Members.

NOTED

the report.

CS/10/48

Work Programme 2010 - 2011 & Executive Forward Plan

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided details of the current committee work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. A revised work programme had been circulated to Members as there had been amendments to the November, December and January meetings.

NOTED

the revised Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.30 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated