

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 21 December 2010

PRESENT

Cllr J Street (Chairman)

Councillors: P A Blaine
D Bowater
N B Costin

Parental Co-optee: D Landman

Church of England Co-optee: J Reynolds

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
Mrs D B Gurney
K Janes

Mrs H Copley
Mrs F Image
Mr B Sear

Members in Attendance: Cllrs Mrs A M Lewis – Portfolio Holder Children's Services
Mrs C Turner – Assistant Portfolio Holder Children's Services

Officers in Attendance: Mr B Carter Overview & Scrutiny Manager
Mrs M Clampitt Committee Services Officer
Mrs E Grant Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Dawn Hill Finance Manager - Schools
Mr R Parsons Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
Ms K Peddie Head of Policy & Strategy - Children's Services
Helen Redding Head of SEN and Inclusion

CS/10/65 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meetings of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2010 and 30 November 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

CS/10/66 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

There were no declarations made.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

There were no declarations made.

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

There were no declarations made.

CS/10/67 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman wished everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He invited the members of the Committee and the public in attendance to enjoy a mince pie.

CS/10/68 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.

In response to a question relating to a petition for Connexions Services, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services clarified that any petitions should be sent to Central Government. The Local Authority had been advised that the Area Based Grant was no longer available and the Executive had noted this at its meeting in 2010.

CS/10/69 Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Committee received statements from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

Mrs Duncan, her daughter and a family friend addressed the Committee on behalf of the youth service and the proposed cuts in Arlesey. They expressed their concerns over the loss of a valuable service, which provides children with safe places to go after school.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) thanked Mrs Duncan and others for coming to speak to the Committee. She confirmed the good work being done by the youth service and confirmed that Arlesey Town Council had agreed to consider its role in the provision of the youth service in the future.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services provided further clarification of the Council's statutory obligations. It was noted that as a minimum requirement the Council had to provide information and signpost opportunities for youth. It was also noted that the Council's website was undergoing a major review and the information for the youth service would be reviewed to ensure it was in plain English and easily accessible.

CS/10/70 Call-In

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

CS/10/71 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/10/72 Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) communicated to Members the following information:-

- The Ofsted report had been received and it was a good report. Whilst the rating remained the same as last year, the report also highlighted good progress. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services and her team were to be congratulated on a job well done.
- More schools were applying for academy status – 11 schools were awaiting their letters from the Secretary of State. It was noted that by 2012 approximately 17% of school children will be in academies.
- Schools were holding their high quality Christmas activities. In addition the Chairman was thanked for the Christmas card competition, the winning card being made by a child at Thornhill.
- Good news had been received on the Capital Programme, the press release stated that Central Bedfordshire schools would be receiving an £18m capital grant.
- The Education White Paper would be the subject of a presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services following the paper becoming a bill in early 2011.

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee were thanked for their work during the year and were a critical friend to the Directorate.

CS/10/73 Base Budget Build and Savings Proposals

The Committee received and considered the report which set out Central Bedfordshire's Base Budget, an outline of the Directorate's activities and savings proposals for 2011/12.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services informed the Committee that the transfer of budget inherited from the legacy authority had been too small and Central Bedfordshire Council was not in a position to supplement the budget as had been done historically. Efficiency savings, including redundancies had been made resulting in a service which was now leaner, with a focus on the truly vulnerable.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services explained that the work to create a balanced budget had been thorough and challenging. It was noted that the Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would review the draft corporate budget and provide commentary to the Executive and Council. Children's Services OSC members were welcome to attend the C&CS OSC meeting to participate in the debate.

Members noted that current pressures had been built into the budget and revenue savings had been addressed. The Committee acknowledged that it had already been given the opportunity to comment upon savings proposals at its meeting on 30 November and was therefore content to reaffirm the comments and recommendations made at this previous meeting.

RESOLVED

that the Base Budget Build and Savings Proposals report be noted.

CS/10/74 **Budget Strategy Update**

Discussion of this item was included in the Base Budget Build and Savings Proposals (please refer to minute no. CS/10/73).

CS/10/75 **Quarter 2 Budget Information**

The Committee received and considered the Budget Management Report Quarter ended 30 September 2010 which set out the projected full year forecast overspend of £1.4m.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services explained that the figures contained in the Base Build would not match this report due to the time lag.

Members raised a number of queries regarding the budget information, which were addressed by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services.

RESOLVED

that the current projected full year forecast of £1.40m overspend be noted.

CS/10/76 **The Future of Special Schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire: Proposal to publish Statutory Notices to discontinue the Dyslexia Provision at Priory Middle School**

The Committee received and considered the report which outlined the amended options for special education needs provisions that were subject to statutory consultations and therefore did not fall within the remit of delegations to the Director of Children's Services or the budget consultation process. These were the future of special schooling in the South of Central Bedfordshire and the dyslexia unit of Priory Middle School.

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 23 November 2010 (please refer to minute no. CS/10/59) had already agreed with the third option to merge Glenwood, Hillcrest and Weatherfield over two sites would be the preferred way forward.

It was noted that a statutory consultation would be carried out and the planned date for any change would be April 2012. Concerns were expressed that the consultation which had been carried out for Schools in the North of Central Bedfordshire had resulted in some ill feeling. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services explained that only one school in the merger had claimed the decision was inappropriate. It was noted that there had been no repercussions from Ivel Valley, no redundancies and all students were settled.

In addition, a proposal for the publication of statutory notices in the Spring for the discontinuation of the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School effective 1 September 2011 would be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 11 January 2011. The Committee endorsed this proposal and agreed the recommendation to the Executive.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 23 November preferred option for the delivery of Area Special Schooling in Dunstable/Houghton Regis was to merge Glenwood, Hillcrest and Weatherfield schools through the closure of two and the prescribed alteration of one across all three sites initially or the closure of all three schools and the opening of one new school across three or two sites. The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Executive that the statutory consultation on this proposal should commence and that the results of the consultation be brought back to a future meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to Executive consideration in May 2011.**
- 2. that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to the Executive that Statutory consultation should commence on the discontinuation of the dyslexia provision at Priory Middle School.**

CS/10/77 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring

The Committee received and considered the report which highlighted the Quarter Two performance for the Children's Services Directorate.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services confirmed that all the Directorate's work was moving in the right direction and had been reflected through the Ofsted rating.

The Committee offered congratulations to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services and her team for their hard work.

RESOLVED

that the Quarter Two performance report be noted.

CS/10/78 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.

Members agreed that the reserve date of 1 March 2011 would be used to consider the Review of School Places in Dunstable & Houghton Regis (originally scheduled for 25 January 2011).

RESOLVED

- 1. that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme be noted.**
- 2. that the reserve meeting date 1 March 2011 be used to consider the Review of School Places in Dunstable & Houghton Regis.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.45 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated