

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Special)** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Tuesday, 30 November 2010

PRESENT

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

Councillors: Mrs A Barker
P A Blaine
D Bowater
N Costin
P Hollick

Parental Co-optees: H Copley
D Landman

Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Dr R Egan K Janes A Shadbolt
	Parental Co-optee	B Sear
	Roman Catholic Diocese	Mrs F Image
	Church of England Diocese	J Reynolds

Substitutes: Cllrs Mrs S A Goodchild
J G Jamieson

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

Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter	Overview & Scrutiny Manager
	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
	Mrs S Hobbs	Committee Services Officer

CS/10/63 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

Councillor Hollick declared a personal interest in agenda item 3 'Corporate Budget Strategy – Service Reconfiguration and Reduction Savings Proposals' as he had been asked to be the Vice-President of The Friends of Bedfordshire Youth Music.

Mrs Copley, parent co-optee, declared a personal interest in agenda item 3 'Corporate Budget Strategy – Service Reconfiguration and Reduction Savings Proposals' as her daughter had violin lessons.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

CS/10/64 Corporate Budget Strategy - Service Reconfiguration & Reduction Savings Proposals

Members considered the report of the Portfolio Holder Finance, Governance and People that gave Members the opportunity to consider the viability and suitability of the service reconfiguration and reduction proposals relating to the Children's Services Directorate.

In accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in paragraph 2 of Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution, the Chairman invited those members of the public who had registered to speak. Each speaker was permitted a maximum of three minutes.

The first speaker highlighted the views of parents with deaf and visually impaired children who would be significantly impacted by the outlined saving proposals detailed in Appendix B(i), Section CS4 – Special Education Needs – Service Reductions.

The second and third speaker referred to the saving proposals CS5 – Remodelling of Services to Young People including the Youth Service – Service Reduction. The first speaker read out a letter from a 16 year old who had written about the help that had been provided through the youth service and raised concerns over volunteers taking over the running of such services. The second speaker spoke of concerns about safeguarding children.

Members considered the following four savings proposals:-

CS4 – Special Education Needs – Service Reductions

The proposal for service change was to retain a small core team to discharge statutory duties with schools taking greater responsibility for provision of services to pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Whilst Members reluctantly endorsed the general direction of service delivery as set out in this proposal, they also requested the Director of Children's Services to take on board the following comments and refer such to the Executive. The Committee also requested that the Executive feedback its response to such comments to the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) the Committee found it very difficult to assess the implications of the proposal without a concise definition of the phrase "truly vulnerable" and suggested that without such a definition an informed decision could not be reached;
- (ii) it was the Committee's opinion that there was insufficient detail contained within the proposal to assess its full consequences on service delivery;
- (iii) as a result of the two previous comments, it was the Committee's opinion that the saving proposed in year 2 (i.e. 2012/13) of £272k should not proceed without a much more detailed report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which would describe the implications of the proposal on service delivery (the Committee was content however to support the Director of Children's Services in implementing the saving proposal of £128k in 2011/12).

Members requested a recorded vote on the above comments before recommending them to the Executive:

Votes in favour of the recommendation: Councillors Mrs Barker, Bowater, Mrs Gurney, Hollick, Jamieson and Street.

Votes against the recommendation: Mr Landman and Ms Copley.

Those abstained: Councillors Blaine and Mrs Goodchild.

RECOMMENDED

that the Executive notes the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's reluctant endorsement of the general direction of service delivery as set out in the proposal, whilst responding to the comments set out in items 1(i) to 1(iii) above.

CS8 – Parenting Support – Service Reduction

The provision to support parents was a statutory requirement. The proposal was that the work currently undertaken to support parents would be undertaken by encouraging volunteers in local communities via Sure Start and Children's Centres. Members were advised that all volunteers would be CRB checked and the Sure Start and Children's Centres would ensure the quality of the volunteers.

Members agreed to include on the Committee's work programme a presentation on the future of the public health service in relation to children.

RECOMMENDED

that the Executive implements the saving proposal outlined in Appendix B(i) to the Executive report on 2 November 2010.

CS5 – Remodelling of Services to Young People including the Youth Service – Service Reduction

Whilst considering this proposal, the Portfolio Holder drew Members' attention to a supplementary savings proposal regarding this service, which would be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 7 December. In essence, this supplementary proposal recommended accelerating service reductions so that all were achieved in 2011/12, rather than the phased approach over 2011/12 and 2012/13 as originally planned.

Members were particularly dismayed at this latest initiative, which in their opinion would not allow sufficient time to build capacity and provide training and support to the voluntary sector and schools that a move away from council run provision to a commissioning approach would require.

The Committee therefore agreed to urge the Executive to consider adopting the original 2 phased approach to the remodelling of services to young people.

RECOMMENDED

to the Executive that whilst reluctantly acknowledging the need to support the remodelling of services to young people, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee urges the Executive to adopt a 2 phased approach to the proposal, as originally outlined (i.e. a saving of £570k in 2011/12 and a further saving of £1.328M in 2012/13).

CS9 – Music Service

Members had discussed the future of the Music Service at their meeting on 23 November 2010. Members were content to reiterate and endorse the recommendations agreed at this meeting, which had been outlined within the report to the Executive on 7 December 2010.

RECOMMENDED

that the Executive refer to the Summary of Overview & Scrutiny Comments detailed within Item 9 of the Executive's agenda of 7 December 2010.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.16 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated