

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, 18 October 2011

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)
Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Councillors: | P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell | Councillors: | P Hollick I A MacKilligan |
| Parental Co-optees: | S Beattie H Copley D Landman | | |
| Apologies for Absence: | Cllrs | D Bowater K Janes R B Pepworth J Reynolds Mrs F Image | |
| Members in Attendance: | Cllrs | Mrs S A Goodchild D Jones M A G Versallion P Williams | Executive Member for Children's Services |
| Officers in Attendance: | Mr K Armstead Mr B Carter Mrs E Grant Dawn Hill | Senior Education Officer (Planning) Corporate Scrutiny & Research Manager Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services | |

CS/11/48 **Minutes**

During consideration of this item, a Member raised the issue of the Committee visiting a Children's Centre, which had been discussed at the last meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that such a visit would be arranged immediately prior to the November meeting.

With reference to the request made at the last meeting regarding Youth Support Services, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services

circulated a briefing paper outlining the commissions awarded in relation to these services.

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 September 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/11/49

Members' Interests

(a) **Personal Interests:-**

Cllr Norman Costin.

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

None.

CS/11/50

Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/11/51

Petitions

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CS/11/52

Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Chairman confirmed that no questions, statements or deputations from members of the public had been received in accordance with Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/11/53

Call-In

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CS/11/54

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/11/55

Base Budget Review

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Base Budget Review report, which proposed the budget for the Children's Services directorate for the financial year 2012/13. In doing so, he wished to congratulate the Director and her financial team in particular for the work done

to date to achieve a base budget position in 2012/13, which contained a relatively small pressure of £0.172M (when set against a total budget of £35.743M).

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised the following key issues:

- The forecast overspend in Children's Services operations due to the ongoing pressures within the child protection and children in care budgets and the thresholds used by the directorate when assessing cases; and
- The affect on staffing levels, morale, recruitment and retention as a result of revised terms and conditions and the Directorate's programme for career development and progression within the service;

In considering this item, Members acknowledged that a further more detailed Draft Budget 2012/13 report would be presented to their December meeting. The Director said that whilst thresholds were challenging, she felt that the recent unannounced inspection had validated her view that children remained as safe as possible.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/56

Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Quarter 1 Performance report, which highlighted performance within the Children's Services directorate for the first quarter of 2011/12. In doing so, he wished to thank the Director and her team for the hard work thus far in achieving good performance across all key directorate indicators.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised the following key issues:

- Concerns over the difficulty in encouraging effective partnerships between some schools. In this respect, the Executive Member gave his assurance that he was doing all that he could politically to encourage greater partnership working and noted positively that the advent of academy schools would help given the legislative duty of these schools to partner;
- The drop in performance regarding CS1, the percentage of initial assessments within seven working days of referral (albeit acknowledging that performance was still better than target);
- The 2011/12 target percentage of children in need that led to initial assessments compared to the previous year; and
- The rationale behind target setting and comparison with statistical neighbours.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/57

School Organisation Plan

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services delivered a presentation to the Committee, which covered standards and school organisation in Central Bedfordshire. The presentation was supplemented by additional handouts, which signposted Members to the School Organisation Plan itself and provided further details regarding process.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the presentation in detail and raised the following key issues:

- The implications surrounding any move by a school to change its age range and the impact on neighbouring schools;
- The role of the Council in improving educational attainment;
- The ability of the Council to plan for growth and manage admission criteria and perceived "catchment areas";
- The delegated role of the Executive Member in decision making and potential conflicts of interest;
- The ability of schools to organise themselves independent of local or national government control and the impact this has on the Council's ability to effect collaboration and partnerships; and
- The statutory consultation process and the role of the Office of the Schools Adjudicator.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/58

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Children's Services OSC Work Programme be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.30 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated