

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 17 January 2012

PRESENT

Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

Councillors: P N Aldis
D Bowater
Mrs S Clark
A L Dodwell

Councillors: P Hollick
K Janes
R B Pepworth

Parental Co-optees: S Beattie
H Copley
D Landman

Church of England
Co-optee:
Roman Catholic
Co-optee:

Apologies for
Absence: Cllrs Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)
I A MacKilligan

J Reynolds
Mrs F Image

Substitutes: Cllrs A Shadbolt

Members in
Attendance: Cllrs A D Brown Deputy Executive Member for
Children's Services
Mrs S A Goodchild
M A G Versallion Executive Member for Children's
Services

Officers in
Attendance: Mr B Carter Corporate Policy & Scrutiny
Manager
Mrs E Grant Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Children's Services
Mrs M Scott Director of Public Health

CS/11/84 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/11/85 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

Cllr N Costin.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

CS/11/86 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman made no announcements.

CS/11/87 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/11/88 Questions, Statements or Deputations

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

CS/11/89 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/11/90 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/11/91 Children's Health

The Director of Public Health delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with an overview of children's health in Central Bedfordshire. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- A summary of key statistics including a child health profile;
- Deprivation in Central Bedfordshire;
- The association between learning & development, behaviour and health;
- Breastfeeding;
- Healthy weight;
- Under 18 conceptions;
- Mental health;
- Child poverty;

- Early intervention and prevention; and
- What the NHS Bedfordshire, the Council and other partners are doing to address the above issues.

Members of the Committee raised a number of queries during the presentation regarding the following issues, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance:-

- The health and wellbeing of Looked After Children and the need for effective and co-ordinated partnership working;
- What the Council and its partners were doing to tackle child poverty, particularly as the economic climate would almost certainly increase it. In this respect, the Director confirmed that child poverty had been recognised within the Children & Young People's Plan as an important issue which required attention. She also acknowledged that it was an issue not just for her directorate but for every other service area, partner and agency. The Director further informed the Committee that the Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children Board had recently mentioned the need to undertake some research into the impact of proposed benefit changes on child poverty.
- The impact of homelessness (which seemed relatively significant in Central Bedfordshire, based on 2008 DCLG data) on children's health and education. In this respect, the Executive Member undertook to check current data and report back to the Committee in due course.
- The ability and capacity of Children's Centres to improve children's health. In this respect, the Director confirmed that the recent reconfiguration of Children's Centres would be a catalyst for improving outcomes, supported by better communication, better use of data and targeted funding.
- The need to encourage/empower parents, particularly in areas of deprivation. In this respect, the Director referred to the use of Parent Partnerships and the pilot programme of Payment by Results, which the Council was monitoring with interest.
- The importance of early intervention and prevention not only to ensure every child is given the best possible start in life but to reduce health inequalities in later life. In this respect, the Executive Member made reference to the recently formed shadow Health & Wellbeing Board, whose key focus was on early intervention and targeting families with multiple problems.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Director of Public Health for a most informative and interesting presentation, and requested that an electronic copy be circulated to Members, together with a glossary of terms and further diagrammatical information regarding the relationships between the various partners and agencies involved in children's health.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/92 Executive Member Update

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on current activities pertaining to his portfolio, which covered the following issues:-

- The new Education Act 2011, specifically the repeal of the requirement to give 24 hours notice of detention and the power of teachers to now search pupils;
- The current status of Academy Orders granted (8 Upper, 17 Middle and 16 Lower schools, covering over 50% of the school population);
- Traded services to schools and the proposed withdrawal of certain of those services;
- The four Age Range applications in the Houghton Regis area; and
- Latest Key Stage 2 results, which were not as good as they should be when compared to peer authorities. The Executive Member assured the Committee that improvement was the foremost priority both politically and professionally and Members noted that a presentation on educational attainment was due to be received by the Committee at its next meeting.

The Committee thanked the Executive Member for his update and agreed that updates should continue to be provided at future meetings. During discussion, Members also raised two other issues, namely the recent statement by the Chief Inspector of Schools regarding a proposed change to the classification of schools performing at a "satisfactory" level to "requiring improvement", and the imminent School Governors forum. With regard to the forum, the Executive Member confirmed that it was his intention to raise the issue of effective scrutiny of school performance by governors.

CS/11/93 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Quarter 2 Performance report, which highlighted performance within the Children's Services directorate for the second 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 many of the key directorate indicators despite increasing workloads.

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

- Concern over the fall in performance regarding the percentage of initial assessments undertaken within 10 working days of referral. The Director explained that this quarter's performance reflected a national change in the way this indicator was measured and it was anticipated that performance would be on target by year end; and
- Concern over a fall in standards in the current year regarding Key Stage 2 results. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, the Executive Member reiterated his assurance to the Committee that improvement was the foremost priority both politically and professionally. He further confirmed

that actions to improve performance were ongoing and included a conference for middle schools to focus on good practice and a programme of support targeted at those pupils at risk of not achieving Level 4 in English and/or Mathematics;

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/94

Alternative Future Provision of the Pupil Referral Unit

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which summarised work completed to date regarding future provision of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and identified proposals for alternative models of service delivery.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of queries regarding the funding and operation of a free school PRU, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance.

Members of the Committee welcomed the proposals and agreed that the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services (in consultation with the Executive Member) should support schools in establishing a free school PRU (and relevant commission for medical needs) whilst at the same time maintaining existing arrangements until such new provision had been established.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the recommendations contained within the draft Executive report regarding the establishment of a free school PRU (and a commission for medical needs) whilst at the same time maintaining existing arrangements until such new provision had been established, be fully endorsed by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CS/11/95

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

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

With regard to the impact of homelessness and benefit reforms on children's health and education (discussed in minute CS/11/91 above), the Committee agreed to receive a further report on the subject at its November meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Children's Services OSC Work Programme be noted with the addition of a report to the November 2012 meeting regarding the impact of homelessness and benefit reforms on children's health and education.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.00 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated