

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, 28 February 2012

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	P N Aldis D Bowater A L Dodwell P Hollick	Councillors:	K Janes I A MacKilligan R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	Mrs S Beattie H Copley D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee: Roman Catholic Co-optee:	J Reynolds		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Mrs S Clark Mrs F Image	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	A Shadbolt	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	Mrs A Barker A R Bastable A D Brown Mrs S A Goodchild D Jones K C Matthews Ms C Maudlin D McVicar Mrs P E Turner M BE M A G Versallion J N Young	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development Chairman of Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee Executive Member for Economic Partnerships Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic

Development

Officers in Attendance:	Mr K Armstead	Senior Education Officer (Planning)
	Mr B Carter	Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager
	Mr P Dudley	Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)
	Mrs E Grant	Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
	Ms K McFarlane	Head of Community Regeneration & Adult Skills
	Mr R Parsons	Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning
	Mr B Pearson	Head of Children's Services Commissioning
	Mrs L Wade	Assistant Director Economic Growth and Regeneration

CS/11/96 **Minutes****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 January 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/11/97 **Members' Interests****(a) Personal Interests:-**

Councillors D Bowater, A Dodwell, P Hollick, D Jones & S Goodchild declared a personal interest due to their position as Chairman of Governors at respective Central Bedfordshire schools.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

CS/11/98 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/11/99 **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/11/100 **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/11/101 **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/11/102 **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/11/103 **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on current activities pertaining to his portfolio, which were not already included on today's agenda. These covered the following issues:-

- The Ofsted inspection of the Council's provision for safeguarding children and supporting "looked after" children; and
- The recent appointment of a new Children's Services Assistant Director managing Children's Services Operations;

CS/11/104 **All Age Skills Strategy**

The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities (Strategic Planning & Economic Development) introduced the Council's draft All Age Skills Strategy, which set the strategic direction for the Council and its partners in addressing the skills needs of employers and individuals within the area. His introduction was supplemented by a joint presentation from the Assistant Director, Economic Growth, Skills & Regeneration and the Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning (Children's Services), which covered the following issues:-

- The rationale for developing an All Age Skills Strategy;
- Strategic priorities;
- The skills link with Children's Services;
- The role of the Council, both internally and externally; and
- Practical examples of successes to date;

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

- The Committee expressed some concern about the aspirational nature of the Strategy, which in its current form would benefit from a robust timeframe for delivery, SMART outcomes, performance indicators and greater detail regarding accountability;

- The need to ensure effective business engagement on the borders of Central Bedfordshire by making full use of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP);
- The need to ensure the Strategy reflected the needs of all ages, particularly the over 60's and those people in their 40's and 50's requiring support and retraining as a result of redundancy;
- The importance of recognising schools (and Children's Centres) as agents of adult education, for example when parents first join the PTA or undertaken some voluntary work and then move on to become a Teaching Assistant and potentially a Teacher;
- The importance of recognising schools as community resources with valuable assets such as libraries and technical rooms, which could be made available to support education and training to the general public;
- The need to encourage the community to educate itself via initiatives such as community skills exchange;
- The Committee expressed some concern about the recently published prospectus of the Committee of the University Technical College, which seemed to cloud its primary role in delivering practical, technically orientated courses of study;
- The need to ensure the Strategy linked with work regarding the needs of those children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), particularly those who find themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET);
- The need to ensure the Strategy supported the work to encourage schools to strive towards the emerging political priority of educational attainment i.e. 5 A* - C GCSEs including English and Maths, as a base for young people to springboard into adulthood;
- The need to acknowledge the emerging major changes to the national curriculum. In this respect, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed her intention to bring a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee outlining these changes;
- The need to acknowledge the fundamental importance of parents in encouraging and supporting students through the education system and the difficulties experienced by children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing appropriate education;
- The importance of work experience schemes and the need to encourage and support the business sector to embrace such schemes;

(Note: Due to the cross cutting nature of the Strategy, the Chairman of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee allowed the Chairman of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (whose Members had also been invited to attend) to lead discussion on this item.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the draft All Age Skills Strategy (and related Member comments outlined above) be endorsed by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration by the Executive, subject to the inclusion of a robust timeframe for delivery, SMART**

outcomes, performance indicators and greater detail regarding accountability.

- 2. That a progress report be submitted to the Children's Services and Sustainable Communities Committees (as a joint Committee) within one year, allowing Members to comment on the delivery of the Strategy against stated objectives and outcomes.**

CS/11/105 **2011 Test and Examination Results**

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced his report, which outlined the 2011 test and examination results for Central Bedfordshire schools compared against national indicators and statistical neighbours. The Executive Member drew the Committee's attention specifically to the actions to support improvement, particularly in relation to Key Stage 2 performance. The report was supplemented by a presentation from the Assistant Director, Learning & Strategic Commissioning, which covered the following topics:-

- Early years and Key Stage 1 results;
- Key Stage 2 results;
- Key Stage 4 and 5 results;
- Actions for improvement; and
- The Ofsted Local Area Assessment;

Members of the Committee were pleased to note the improvement in performance at Key Stage 4 and 5 and acknowledged the strategies in place to improve performance at Key Stage 2, which was currently not where it should be when compared to peer authorities and national indicators. There was also an acknowledgement from Members that, whilst educational achievement was crucial and quite rightly a political priority, pupil attitudes, values and behaviours were also a key component of the education system.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the action to support improvement in educational attainment be endorsed.

CS/11/106 **School Organisation Plan: New School Places Programme 2011/12 - 2016/17**

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced his report, which outlined the proposed rolling programme to provide new school places in Central Bedfordshire from 2012/13 to 2016/17. The report was supplemented by a presentation from the Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning, which covered the following topics:-

- The Council's duties with regard to pupil place planning;
- An overview of the School Organisation Plan (SOP);
- Funding arrangements;
- The new places programme; and
- The options available for new places;

A further presentation was delivered by the Senior Education Officer (Planning), which used satellite imagery to map sites forming part of the SOP 5 year rolling programme.

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

- Specific concerns regarding growth in and around Houghton Regis and the need for the new school places programme to accommodate such, be delivered in a timely fashion and have regard to existing catchment areas;
- The need to ensure decisions regarding new places were taken on the basis of the most up to date information available (i.e. real time data);
- The criteria for selection/admission to Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools and the impact on local children;
- Financial considerations regarding new schools, the use of S106 monies and the obligation on the Council to fund any shortfall;
- The need to consider cross border issues; and
- The support and advice available to academies when establishing new schools.

At the end of the debate the Committee unanimously agreed to endorse the Programme and all four recommendations contained within the draft Executive report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the New School Places Programme 2012/13 to 2016/17 be endorsed for consideration by the Executive.

CS/11/107

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

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

With regard the 12 June meeting, the Committee agreed to receive a report regarding the draft outcomes from the Ofsted inspection, and a presentation covering the key issues in children's health.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated