

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in The Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 28 June 2011

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell P Hollick	Councillors:	K Janes I A MacKilligan R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	S Beattie H Copley D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee:			
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs F Image J Reynolds Cllr A Shadbolt		
Members in Attendance:	Cllr Mrs S A Goodchild M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Children's Services	
Officers in Attendance:	Mr J Brown Mr B Carter Mrs E Grant Mrs C Parry Mr B Pearson	Head of Integrated Transport Corporate Scrutiny & Research Manager Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations Head of Children's Services Commissioning	

CS/11/11 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 May 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/11/12 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

(c) Any political whip in relation to any agenda item:-

None.

CS/11/13 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the new Parent Governor Representatives, who had recently been elected to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a period of four years.

CS/11/14 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/11/15 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/11/16 Call-In

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

CS/11/17 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/11/18 Corporate Parenting Annual Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced his report, which set out the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel during 2010/11. The report included the Panel's own Annual Report for the same year, which outlined the delivery of Looked After Children's Services and demonstrated that it had delivered its corporate parenting responsibilities for that year.

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

- The process of placing Looked After Children (LAC) into care;
- The Council's performance and achievements when compared with its statistical neighbours;
- The paramount importance of early intervention and the management of risk;
- The importance of good educational outcomes for LAC;
- The process of fostering/adoption and the need for mandatory training for members of the Corporate Parenting and Adoption Panels;
- The impact of homelessness;
- The impact of reduced public sector funding and organisational capacity on the Council's ability to meet its obligations with regard to LAC;
- The difficulties faced by LAC in their transition into adulthood and the support provided by the Council during this transition;
- The importance of improving access to health services for LAC; and
- The remuneration and support for Foster Carers.

Following the debate, Members of the Committee agreed to request the Council's Constitutional Advisory Group consider introducing mandatory subject specific training for members of the Corporate Parenting and Adoption Panels at the earliest possible opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSTITUTIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

That the Constitutional Advisory Group consider introducing mandatory subject specific training for members of the Corporate Parenting and Adoption Panels at the earliest possible opportunity.

CS/11/19

Children's Trust Annual Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced the Annual Report of the Children's Trust, which set out the progress made in delivering the priorities contained within the Central Bedfordshire Children and Young People's Plan.

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

- The importance of good parenting and the role of the Children's Trust in supporting and promoting this fundamental issue;
- The need for early intervention, if necessary;
- The need to review the work of Children's Centres;
- The importance of religious education within schools and the need to influence emerging government policy regarding this issue;
- Recognition of the excellent work of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE);
- The need to target limited resources at greatest need;

- Breastfeeding, and the need for Children's Centres to offer better advice regarding this issue; and
- The importance of promoting healthy lifestyles generally and the need to improve our performance in reducing childhood obesity and teenage pregnancy;

Following the debate, Members of the Committee felt it important that all of the above issues were relayed to the Children's Trust but specifically requested that it consider undertaking an in-depth and robust review of early intervention/parenting at the earliest possible opportunity. Members also agreed to invite the Chairman of SACRE to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the issue of religious education in Central Bedfordshire schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

- 1. That the Children's Trust take due regard of the key issues raised by this Committee (as outlined above) when working with partners to deliver the priorities contained within the Children & Young People's Plan; and**
- 2. That the Children's Trust consider undertaking an in-depth and robust review of early intervention/parenting at the earliest possible opportunity.**

RECOMMENDATION TO SACRE

That the Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education be invited to attend a future meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the issue of religious education in Central Bedfordshire schools.

CS/11/20

Post 16 Transport Consultation

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced his report, which proposed further changes to the Council's Post 16 Transport Policy for the academic year 2012/13. The report was supplemented by a presentation from the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services and the submission of an additional paper outlining the findings of a recent consultation exercise regarding the matter.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in some detail and debated the following key issues:-

- The need for the Council's Executive to make a decision regarding these proposals before the start of the next academic year to allow sufficient (one year) notification;
- The ability of schools and colleges to fund and support (via 16-19 Bursary Fund, etc) post 16 transport themselves and the need for the Council to work with these providers to find "joined up" solutions;

- The reason why differentiation on the basis of course content was not considered appropriate;
- The strict definition of “low income” and the impact this would have on the less privileged;
- The impact the cost of transport has on take up rates and the lack of relevant statistical evidence one way or the other;
- The impact these proposals would have on those with Special Education Needs (SEN);
- The impact these proposals would have on the Council’s ambition to promote sustainable transport; and
- In difficult times, the need to focus limited resources on the most vulnerable.

No consensus was reached during the debate however the following recommendation was moved and seconded:-

That the proposed changes to the Council’s Post 16 Transport Policy (as summarised in paragraphs 14 to 18 of the Executive Member’s report) be supported by this Committee and that the Executive be informed accordingly.

Upon being put to the vote, 6 Members supported the recommendation, 2 were against and there were 4 abstentions. Accordingly the recommendation was carried.

RECOMMENDATION TO EXECUTIVE

That the proposed changes to the Council’s Post 16 Transport Policy (as summarised in paragraphs 14 to 18 of the Executive Member’s report) be supported by this Committee and that the Executive be informed accordingly.

CS/11/21

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive, which provided details of the Committee’s current work programme and Executive Forward Plan. Members also noted and agreed a number of changes to the scheduling of items for their July and September meetings.

RECOMMENDATION

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated