

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, 24 July 2012

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	R D Berry D Bowater P Hollick	Councillors:	K Janes D Jones I A MacKilligan
Parental Co-optees:	H Copley D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee:	J Reynolds		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Mrs A Barker Mrs S Beattie R B Pepworth Mrs F Image	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	N J Sheppard (In place of Mrs A Barker)	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild B Saunders M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Children's Services
Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter Mr P Dudley		Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)

CS/12/11 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

CS/12/13 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman announced the result of the recent Parent Governor Representative election, confirming that Stephen Court, governor at Ivel Valley Area Special School, had received the highest number of votes and would formally take his place on the Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2012.

The Chairman also wished to thank Sara Beattie, the outgoing Parent Governor Representative, for her valued contribution over the past year.

CS/12/14 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/12/15 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/12/16 Call-In

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

CS/12/17 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/12/18 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:-

- His recent meeting with Lord Hill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools and Andrew Selous, MP for South West Bedfordshire, when a number of issues were discussed regarding education and schooling in Central Bedfordshire. Specifically, the Executive Member impressed upon Lord Hill the need to consider an extension of the 2 year protection period proposed for the minimum funding guarantee for Central Bedfordshire due to its unique situation, particularly with regard to its 3 tier education system. In response to a question, the Executive Member confirmed that he would continue to lobby the government about this issue;
- The Department for Education's approval of Central Bedfordshire's bid to provide an Alternative Provision Free School; and
- The planned provision of a new 3G artificial grass pitch at Cedars Upper School, funded by grants from the Council and the Football Association;

The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) also provided the Committee with further detail regarding 2 issues, which had been raised at the last meeting:-

- The disaggregation of the Adoption & Fostering service currently shared between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils. A project team had been established to plan, manage and execute the disaggregation and the transition into a Central Bedfordshire adoption and fostering service in 2013. The scope of the project included all statutory functions and draft staffing structures had already been prepared (subject to consultation). Some business functions such as the Adoption Panel may however be maintained on a shared basis, which would have the benefit of retaining expertise and managing costs; and
- The recent publication by the government of draft orders to revise the national primary curriculum in September 2014. These draft orders are intended to inject greater rigour in the key primary subjects of English, maths and science and would now be the subject of informal consultation and public debate. The Department for Education will then consider the public debate before re-drafting the orders later in the year for formal consultation.

At the end of the verbal update, a Member raised two further issues regarding:-

- Reception class funding in Central Bedfordshire and how this compared nationally; and
- The regulations governing accounting periods for Academy schools.

The Executive Member agreed to investigate these issues and respond directly to the Member concerned.

CS/12/19 Safeguarding and Looked After Children Post Inspection Action Plan

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which set out the Council's action plan following the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children. The Executive Member particularly drew the Committee's attention to the record of main findings, which confirmed the Council's overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement was good. He did however acknowledge that health outcomes for looked after children were poor and addressing this issue would be the main focus of attention of our partners in NHS Bedfordshire, who would lead on this particular issue. The Executive Member went on to describe the phased approach of the action plan, which would ensure all issues had been addressed by the time of re-inspection in the autumn of 2013.

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

- The status of the actions contained within the plan, whose completion date had already passed. The Executive Member was happy to confirm that those actions had been completed according to plan;
- The Council's confidence in its ability to recruit additional health visitors. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) confirmed that the Council was on track to achieve its target; and
- The number of looked after children who go missing whilst in care. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) confirmed that although some children do go missing temporarily from time to time (sometimes necessitating police assistance), the Council had not experienced any long term disappearance of children in its care.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee endorses the action plan to support improvement following the inspection of services for Safeguarding and Looked After Children.

CS/12/20 Children's Trust Annual Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Children's Trust Annual Report for 2011/12, which set out progress in delivering the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail, concentrating specifically on educational attainment and examination rigour. It was Members' opinion that performance at Key Stage 2 and 4 needed to improve. The Executive Member confirmed that addressing this issue was his key priority and referred Members of the Committee to the list of activities that the Council was undertaking in partnership with schools to raise educational attainment.

RECOMMENDATION:**That the report be noted.**

CS/12/21

Quarter 4 Performance Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Quarter 4 Performance report, which highlighted performance within the Children's Services directorate for the final quarter of 2011/12. The Executive Member particularly drew the Committee's attention to those performance indicators judged to be good, and provided further detail regarding those judged to be poor.

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

- The Ofsted inspection judgement of Ashton Middle School and the performance of Ofsted generally in undertaking inspections and producing reports;
- The sponsor of Queensbury Upper School, confirmed as the CfBT Education Trust; and
- Performance at Key Stage 2, which had dropped. The Executive Member expressed his disappointment regarding this drop in standards and outlined the actions that had been taken to improve performance in 2012, including a number of successful middle school conferences. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) commented that, although results were not yet available for 2012, the initial view of head teachers was positive.

RECOMMENDATION:**That the report be noted.**

CS/12/22

11/12 Provisional Outturn Revenue Budget Monitoring Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which set out the revenue position of the Children's Services Directorate to the end of March 2012.

He further explained that the full year provisional revenue outturn position for 2011/12 was a £1.32M under spend against a £35.6M net budget. He also discussed the continuing trend of pressures within Children's Services operations (safeguarding, looked after children, etc) mitigated by under spends within Learning, Commissioning and Partnerships, a trend which was unsustainable in the long term.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of specific issues regarding transport (detailed below), which were noted by the Executive Member and officers in attendance:-

- The challenge of identifying efficiencies within transport, which was currently the subject of extensive review, the outcomes of which would be presented to a future Committee meeting;
- The need to consider the use of other providers of public transport (i.e. the third sector and charitable organisations) during the review;
- The opportunity such a review presented in terms of the provision of complementary health and healthy living education; and
- The need to consult ward Members and schools when undertaking walking to school re-assessments.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/23

11/12 Provisional Outturn Capital Budget Monitoring Report

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which set out the capital position of the Children's Services Directorate to the end of March 2012.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of minor queries, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/24

Work Programme 2012 - 2013 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan, and noted the inclusion of a review of Youth Services as requested at the last meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.45 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated