

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, 26 February 2013

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)

Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs A Barker R D Berry P Hollick	Councillors:	K Janes D Jones R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	H Copley Mr S Court D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee:	J Reynolds		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	D Bowater Mrs F Image	
Substitutes:	Cllrs		
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Children's Services
Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter Mrs E Grant Ms F Mackirdy Mr R Parsons	Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services Head of Adoption and Fostering Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning	

CS/12/78 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 January 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/12/79 Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest or political whip in relation to any agenda items.

CS/12/80 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/12/81 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/12/82 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/12/83 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/12/84 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/12/85 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. This covered the following issues:-

- A new video outlining changes in education in Central Bedfordshire, accessed via <http://www.youtube.com/centralbedfordshire>;
- The joint legal challenge relating to GCSE results, led by Leeds and Lewisham Councils, which had failed. No decision had yet been made by those Councils leading the challenge regarding any appeal;

- The Fostering and Adoption shared service, which the Council currently managed on behalf of both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough. The Executive Member confirmed that negotiations regarding an agreed way forward had now concluded and the service would be disaggregated by a target date of 14 February 2014;
- The Government's recent decision not to implement a national performance related payment framework for providers of Children's Centres, although it was the Council's intention to continue to investigate the implementation of such a framework locally.

CS/12/86

Attainment at KS2 and Ofsted Inspection Outcomes

The Executive Member introduced this report, which summarised the 2012 results in KS2 for schools in Central Bedfordshire and outlined some of the actions that contributed to the improvement on the 2011 results, as well as the challenges that remain in reaching national average results. The report also summarised the outcomes of Ofsted school inspections so far for the current school year and made some preliminary comparisons with the inspection outcomes regionally.

The Executive Member drew the Committee's attention in particular to paragraph 17 of the report, which described the new Ofsted framework for the Inspection of Schools, effective from September 2012 and which very much focussed on education quality and pupil progression. Whilst acknowledging that work still remained to be done to improve Key Stage results, the Executive Member was pleased to note Central Bedfordshire's improvement thus far and good direction of travel.

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

- The impact of diet on children's educational attainment and how the Council and Ofsted measure, monitor and manage such impacts. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that although data is not explicitly collected on diet, data on free school meals and, more recently, the allocation of the pupil premium, is collected and used as a proxy indicator to measure educational attainment against deprivation;
- The use of educational experts from well performing schools outside Central Bedfordshire. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that such expertise was used when considered necessary and was just one of many levers available to the Council in support of any school improvement programme. She further stated that a clearer explanation of the levers to be used by Councils in school improvement would be written soon;
- The promotion by schools of long lists of optional study books with little guidance provided concerning recommended choice. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that this was a matter for individual schools and the governing body;

- The impact of changes to the school curriculum on educational attainment. It was the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services' opinion that so long as school management was of sufficient quality to adapt to and incorporate change, the impact was minimal. In this respect however, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services agreed to bring forward a presentation to a future meeting regarding changes to the school curriculum;
- The Government's decision to withdraw its proposal to introduce an English Baccalaureate, and the ability of the secondary curriculum to retain its width/breadth; and
- Clarification of the descriptions used in Table 10 (on Page 17, paragraph 19). The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that she would provide further clarity regarding this table via email in that there did seem to be an error, and an appendix was referred to that was missing.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services bring forward a presentation to a future meeting regarding changes to the school curriculum.

CS/12/87

Commissioning New School Places for Implementation from September 2014

The Executive Member introduced this item, which provided the Committee with the opportunity to comment upon a draft report to be considered by the Council's Executive on the 19th March 2013 which provided the annual refresh of the Council's New School Places Programme 2013/14 – 2017/18 and outlined five projects within the programme where local pressures of demographic growth required new school places to be provided from September 2014.

The Executive Member drew the Committee's attention in particular to paragraph 23 of the report, which confirmed that each proposal in the New School Places Programme would be evaluated against the Council's recently approved Policy Principles on Pupil Place Planning in Schools and more over, had to be supported by a robust business case establishing the guarantee of the quality of the new places being added to the system.

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

- The approval process for the business case. The Executive Member confirmed that officers worked closely with schools in the preparation of each business case, which was ultimately approved by the Executive;
- The funding of new school places. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning referred Members to Appendix A at page 36, which outlined the funding arrangements of each scheme, being a mix of Basic Need DfE grant, S106 monies and the Council's own capital funds. A

number of projects could also be supplemented with a financial contribution from schools and Academies within the programme that had chosen to invest school resources in addressing existing suitability issues. With regard to a question regarding the indicated shortfall in funding in years 2015/16 and 2016/17 illustrated in Appendix A to the report, the Head of Service further explained that the Council is awaiting the DfE announcement of Basic Need grant for 2013/14 and 2014/15 and the cashflow set out in the report will therefore be amended. However, any shortfall in funding of the programme will be managed as part of the Council's overall corporate capital programme through borrowing or use of reserves .

- The performance of contractors in delivering projects on time and to budget. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that post implementation reviews were always undertaken of such projects to ensure that only contractors of an acceptably high standard were used in the future and relevant lessons learnt to improve future projects and management arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee endorses the proposals outlined within the report for consideration by the Executive.

CS/12/88

Children's Health and Children's Health Commissioning in Central Bedfordshire

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

- Details of the various bodies within Central Bedfordshire who commission public health services;
- The Healthy Child Programme 0-5 Years, covering universal services, Universal Plus and Universal Partnership Plus;
- The Healthy Child Programme 5-19 Years;
- The School Entry Health Review in Year R/1;
- Statistics outlining the performance of Central Bedfordshire, particularly with regard to childhood obesity participation rates, HPC vaccinations for girls and Diphtheria, Tetanus & Polio Booster.

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 adequacy of communication with parents and children regarding the availability and location of public health services. In this respect, the Director of Public Health referred to the importance of good commissioning arrangements, which were evidenced based and effective. The Director also mentioned the intelligent use of school nurses and school nursing

teams and the need to ensure commissioners worked in partnership to deliver services where they were most needed;

- The need to encourage healthy eating due to its impact on educational attainment. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that, in terms of the provision of effective education, health and social care, a key determinant was early intervention and prevention, and this was very much an issue at the forefront of commissioner's minds;
- The importance of providing sufficient support to parents of children with special educational needs. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed that her directorate was currently re-focussing its work strands, and this would include a specific strand covering SEN and the new legislation.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Director of Public Health for an informative presentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CS/12/89

Outcomes of Ofsted Fostering Service Inspection

The Head of Adoption and Fostering delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with details of the outcomes from the Ofsted Fostering Service inspection. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- The context and background to the inspection;
- The methodology and framework;
- The overall effectiveness of the service, which was judged to be good;
- The 8 specific recommendations concerning foster carers awareness of the role, their flexibility to take decisions, their training & support, the information provided, supervision and the recording & management of incidents & allegations; and
- The new arrangements from 1 April 2013, which would replace the current three separate inspection regime (of adoption services, fostering services and looked after children services) with one unannounced ten day inspection of all services.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Head of Adoption and Fostering for an informative and comprehensive presentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CS/12/90

Progress Report on the Implementation of the Post Inspection Ofsted Action Plan

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services introduced this report, which advised the Committee of the operational progress of the Ofsted

action plan concerning safeguarding and looked after children. She drew the Committee's attention in particular to paragraph 10 of the report, which confirmed that although the overall effectiveness of safeguarding services was judged to be good (with capacity for improvement also judged to be good), the overall effectiveness of services for looked after children were judged to be adequate and Health was judged to be an inadequate in terms of provision for children. The action plan was therefore specifically designed to address improvement in these areas.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services also introduced Ann Murray from the NHS, who was present at the meeting to talk about the health aspects of the action plan.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services talked further about the national context and Ofsted's new proposed arrangements for a more robust, framework for inspection (which meant that if one element of a service was judged inadequate then all would be judged inadequate), before providing the Committee with an honest assessment of her service and the specific issues affecting Central Bedfordshire Council. Her 3 recent personal priorities were to recruit an outstanding Assistant Director to manage the development and embedding of the action plan (which had now been achieved), to resolve a number of specific issues at middle management level (which were now being addressed) and to focus on excellence in social care practice at all levels of the directorate. With respect to the plan, some of the issues were amber because the long term impact had not yet been evidenced even though work had been done to some extent on all of the recommendations.

From a health perspective, Ann Murray confirmed that her organisation was taking the challenge of addressing the action plan seriously and was scrutinising operational practice, making changes and sharing data more effectively to ensure the plan was delivered.

Members of the Committee discussed the content of the report in detail and thanked the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services for her full and frank assessment. The Committee also raised the following issue:-

- The difficulties experienced by looked after children in moving into adult life and integrating effectively with their communities. In this respect, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services agreed to bring forward a presentation to a future meeting, which would explain where the Council placed its looked after children and how it supported them into adult life;

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services bring forward a presentation to a future meeting which would explain where the Council placed its looked after children and how it supported them into adult life.

CS/12/91 **Work Programme 2012 - 2013 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and were content with the agenda items proposed for consideration at forthcoming meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

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

Chairman

Dated