

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 15 June 2015

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)

Councillors:	K Ferguson P Hollick D McVicar	Councillors:	A Ryan T Stock B Walker
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee:	Mr D Morton		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	P A Duckett Mrs J Freeman Mrs F Image G Tubb	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	J Chatterley (In place of Mrs J Freeman) B Saunders (In place of G Tubb) D Shelves (In place of P A Duckett)	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	R D Berry  I Dalgarno  Mrs A L Dodwell  C C Gomm C Hegley  M R Jones  M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Education and skills  Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Health  Executive Member for Education and skills
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt  Mrs S Harrison Mr R Parsons	Scrutiny Policy Adviser  Director of Children's Services Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning	

CS/15/1. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 March 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

CS/15/2. **Members' Interests**

Members of the Committee declared the following interests:-

- Cllr Barker (item 10) as a Member on the Adoption Panel;
- Mr S Court (item 12) as school governor of a Biggleswade School;
- Ms G Deans (item 12) as school governor at a Sandy Upper School and has children attending St Swithuns School Sandy;
- Cllr Shelves and Ms Rowlands (item 12) as school governors at schools in Arlesey;
- Cllr Hollick (item 13) as school governor at the Ardley Hill Academy; and
- Cllr Stock as school governor at Sandy Upper School.

Whilst not a Member of the Committee Cllr Dalgarno declared an interest in Item 12 as a school governor at a school in Arlesey.

CS/15/3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that a special Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 9 July would be limited to two hours and Members would be asked to consider the 5-Year Plan and Education Partnership Vision at this meeting.

CS/15/4. **Petitions**

None.

CS/15/5. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/15/6. **Call-In**

None.

CS/15/7. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/15/8. **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing provided the Committee with an overview of her new role that included the statutory Lead Member role for Children's Services and all Social Care services for Children and Adults.

Regular updates on activities, events and news would be provided at future meetings.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised the Committee on the specific area of focus on Education and Schools that now extended to adult learning and skills. The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Health also provided an overview of his new role that included Public Health and NHS liaison.

A Parent Governor Representative raised a question regarding the new requirement on schools from 1 July, under Section 26(1) of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to "have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" and what advice would be passed to School Governors and Headteachers to help them prepare. In response the Director of Children's Services advised this requirement had been considered at the Adult Safeguarding Board and a specific obligation in this matter had been referred to Children's Services for action. A briefing note would be prepared and circulated to the Committee, Governors and Headteachers through the usual channels.

A Member raised concerns on Education attainment and the issues faced by the Council. In response the Executive Member for Education and Skills outlined the main challenges. He also advised Members that the Education Partnership Vision report would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for Thursday 9 July 2015. The Executive Member for Health advised that Public Health services would see a reduction of 7% in their finances which would impact on Children's Services.

CS/15/9.

### **Quarter 3 2014/15 Performance Report**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Q3 Performance Report and advised that she would be working with officers to provide a new corporate template with revised indicators and scorecards.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills wished to extend his congratulations to Sandy Upper School and the Leadership Team for becoming the most improved school in Central Bedfordshire and in the country for the achievement of 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent in English and Maths in 2014.

The timely submission of performance data to the Committee was discussed and the Director of Children's Services advised that performance results had a number of rigorous challenges before they could be published and to rush this process would have a detrimental effect. Members of the Committee raised the following concerns:-

- Whether national and statistical neighbour information to show where Central Bedfordshire was ranked. The Director of Children's Services advised that where this information was available it could be presented as was the case with the GCSE results data
- Why there had been little change in the performance of children that achieved 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths. In response the Executive Member for Education and Skills advised that

changes made by the Department for Education had affected results and showed other authorities had moved down the ranking. CBC was now performing in the second quartile and has made progress from a low starting point of 4<sup>th</sup> quartile in 2009.

- Concern that 40% of children had not achieved and a concerted effort to help in the performance of these children was paramount. The Executive Member for Education and Skills acknowledged this was a good focus for the Council.
- That consideration be given to children whose abilities peak at a later stage and required skills based options to help them achieve their potential. The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised the Education Partnership Vision would include milestones to measure children's progress.
- Whether data was available on pass rates following exam resits. The Director of Children's Services advised this data had not been collected from schools to date.

The Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that the target to reduce the average time in days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family continued to improve. This target would see a drastic upturn, however, following the successful adoption of a 17 year old by a family she had been fostered by for a number of years. A Member raised concerns that this good news story would count against the Council in performance terms. In response the Director of Children's Services advised it was unusual for a foster child to be adopted.

**NOTED the update.**

CS/15/10.

**New middle school places in Leighton Linslade**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that sought the support of Members on the proposal for the provision of new Middle School places in Leighton Buzzard from September 2016. The Governing Body at Leighton Community Middle school would carry out a consultation if support for this proposal is agreed by Executive on 7 July, 2015. Members of the Committee were advised in detail on the process to expand school places. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning explained that a lengthy process had been undertaken and the 9 policy principles had been adhered to in the planning of the expansion. The policy principles had been provided to new members as part of their induction pack.

A Ward Member for Leighton Buzzard advised that a previous briefing provided to ward members by the school organisation team, had proved confusing splitting the Leighton Buzzard school place planning area into Leighton Buzzard north and south. Officers were asked again to look at the terminology used in such briefings.

In light of the report and clarification of the process the following concerns were raised:-

- Why the Committee had not been asked to scrutinise the consultation document or consider the business case. The Head of School Organisation

and Capital Planning advised the consultation document was currently being drafted and would be issued by the Governing Body of Leighton Community Middle School and would follow the national standard for the purpose of expanding a school. Arrangements to notify Members of the Committee when the consultation was available would be made.

- Whether the redevelopment of the Riverside Centre situated next to the school had been considered for redevelopment for the school's use. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised the Centre had been considered in detail and deemed unsuitable because of the costs involved to refurbish the building.
- Whether future proofing of new school place projects had been achieved. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised the expansion of Leighton Middle would resolve the shortfall of places for 2016 with a further proposal to be brought forward for 2017, ahead of new school provision to be provided to the east of Leighton Buzzard, the design of which would be future proofed with potential further expansion in mind.
- Concern that a travel plan had been considered as part of the expansion. A Member of the Committee advised that the school development programme was accurate, planned meticulously and included travel plans in his experience. The Head of Service confirmed that site access issues, although often challenging, were considered in high level initial options appraisals and would be covered in detail in design and subsequent planning applications.

## **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. To amend the second paragraph in recommendation 1 by removing the words 'decision to approve' and replacing them with 'consideration of'.**
- 2. Members of the Committee be notified of the publication of the school consultation**
- 3. That the Committee support the decision for Leighton Community Middle School to consult upon expansion**

Councillors Chatterley and Duckett joined the meeting.

CS/15/11. **Proposals to amalgamate Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre with Gothic Mede Academy and The Lawns Nursery, Biggleswade with Biggleswade Academy Trust**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that detailed the proposed amalgamation of Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre with Gothic Mede Academy and the amalgamation of The Lawns Nursery, Biggleswade with Biggleswade Academy Trust.

The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised these plans had taken longer than anticipated to bring to committee due to the election period and the inability to commence a consultation in one administration and to determine the proposals in another. Ward members present were unanimous in their support for the mergers. The date for legal transfer was proposed on 1 January 2016 and this would be stated in the Executive Report.

On this occasion the Council would undertake the consultation on behalf of the schools, in parallel with each Academy which would be consulting on expanding to accommodate the nurseries.

In light of the report and clarification sort by Members, issues of concern were sought:-

- What element of risk existed for the Council if the mergers were not successful? The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised all responsibility would transfer to the Academy with the exception of the building which would be leased by the Council and the Academies would be held to account for standards across the early years as part of their Ofsted inspections.
- Whether amalgamations of nurseries and academies had become more common place? The Director of Children's Services advised that amalgamations offered good continuity of education which in turn was good for a child.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **That the Committee support the proposals to amalgamation of Arlesey Nursery School and Childcare Centre with Gothic Mede Academy and the amalgamation of The Lawns Nursery, Biggleswade with Biggleswade Academy Trust.**
2. **That the Committee would look to support any school in Central Bedfordshire that wished to amalgamate year groups and provide continuity in the education of a child.**

Councillor Saunders and Ryan left the meeting.

## **CS/15/12. Proposal to recommission primary specialist provision for Autistic Spectrum Condition in Dunstable**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined the proposal to recommission primary specialist provision for Autistic Spectrum Condition in Dunstable and to seek support from the Committee to start the consultation process.

In light of the report Member discussed the following details:-

- The process undertaken by officers that had resulted in Ardley Hill Academy emerging as the only school to submit a business case for consideration.
- Whether specialist experience existed within the Council to ensure standards were maintained. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that there are specialist officers within the Directorate who offered advice to schools.
- Whether specialist staff based at Streetfield would be transferred to Ardley Hill or that new staff would be recruited. The Director of Children's Services advised that at the present time it is expected that staff would transfer to Ardley.

**RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the proposal to recommission primary specialist provision for Autistic Spectrum Condition in Dunstable and supported the start of the consultation process.**

CS/15/13. **Communications Framework**

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced the first formal Communications Framework and welcomed the Committee's feedback on the draft.

Clarification was sought on the objectives for the framework, what it would achieve and how outcomes would be measured. In response the Director of Children's Services advised that the framework had been written to compliment the Corporate Communications Plan and a specific Children's Services framework document was considered to be 'good practice'.

Regarding the process to engage more people a Member proposed that full details on who the Directorate should consult with be listed in the document, and that the following groups be included:-

- Parents
- Teachers
- Grandparents
- Youth Parliament

The Director of Children's Services would seek to benchmark the framework with lead authorities and incorporate the suggestions proposed.

**RECOMMENDED the Committee welcomes the idea of a Children's Services communications framework but needs to propose a clear direction as to its use; outcomes expected and it should include an emphasis on parents' roles.**

CS/15/14. **Work Programme 2015-16 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current draft work programme and noted the inclusion of the Education Partnership Vision report on 09 July 2015 and the Refresh of Foster Carer Fees and Allowance Scheme report on 18 August 2015.

**RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved subject to the additional items detailed in the Minutes above.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.30 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....