

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, 18 August 2015

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)
Cllr G Tubb (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	P A Duckett K Ferguson Mrs J Freeman	Councillors:	A Ryan T Stock
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee:			
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	P Hollick D McVicar M A G Versallion B Walker Mrs F Image Mr D Morton	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	D Bowater (In place of P Hollick)	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	R D Berry I Dalgarno Mrs A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild C Hegley J G Jamieson M R Jones	Deputy Executive Member for Education and skills Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Health
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs D Broadbent-Clarke Ms A Coleman Mrs P Everitt	Director of Improvement and Corporate Services Partnership and Performance Officer Scrutiny Policy Adviser	

Mrs S Harrison
Mrs B Rooney
Mrs C Shohet

Director of Children's Services
Head of Public Health
Assistant Director of Public Health

CS/15/24. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 July 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to apologies for absence for Mrs F Image being removed from the list of apologies for Councillors and recorded elsewhere on the Minutes.

CS/15/25. **Members' Interests**

Cllr A Barker as a Member of the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

Although not a member of the Committee Mrs P Everitt registered an interest at item 13 as a member of her family worked at St George's Lower School, Toddington.

CS/15/26. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed Mr J Yule, a work experience student, to the meeting.

CS/15/27. **Petitions**

None.

CS/15/28. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/15/29. **Call-In**

None.

CS/15/30. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/15/31. **Executive Member Update**

The Deputy Executive Member for Education and Skills advised Members that 70.7% of students had achieved passes in their 'A' Level results (3 or more A levels A*-E) provisional results – an increase of 0.1% on the previous year. This initial figure matched the national trend and a further update would be provided to Members at their October meeting.

Following the announcement at the last meeting, Bedford Borough Council issuing an application form to schools in their area regarding transition to the two tier system, this would be followed by a consultation. The consultation

would be assessed in November and implications for Central Bedfordshire would be reported to Members.

It was also commented that apprenticeship scheme figures were down by 4.6% which mirrored the national trend.

In light of the update, Members asked for an indication of those Central Bedfordshire schools that wished to move to the two tier system and the costs associated with such a move. In response the Deputy Executive Member advised no requests had been received to date and that Bedford Borough Council would meet transition costs from grant intended to fund new school places.

A Member also requested details on the number of young people to take up apprenticeships and details on the schemes themselves. The Deputy Executive Member agreed to circulate details to the Committee.

The Executive Member for Health advised the Committee that the Department of Health would be cutting the Public Health budget by 6.2%. A letter had been sent to Ministers asking them to reconsider their decision not to cut the budget.

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing reported on a variety of meetings she had attended and advised Members of a scrutiny briefing on the Children's Services budget which would take place on Friday 11 September, 2015. Other Briefings were planned and details would be published in the Members Information Bulletin.

CS/15/32. **Public Health Briefing**

The Executive Member for Health introduced an overview of the work of the Children's Public Health service. The specific areas included responsibility for good mental health in children and adolescents, wellbeing and giving every child the best start in life.

In light of the report and clarification sought, the following queries were raised by Members:-

- Why the 16-18 age group did not feature in the data sets for children that suffered with mental health illness. The Assistant Director Public Health advised that the age ranges were national data sets and assured Members that support for children of 16-18 years was provided. The new provider for Mental Health services in Central Bedfordshire had been commissioned to provide rapid access to their services and young people were also accessing the School Nurse provision.
- Whether Government reductions in the Public Health budget would effect service provision. The Executive Member for Health advised the amount of money to be provided to the Council was not yet known. However, there were reserves available to help meet any shortfall. The re-provision of the Drug and Alcohol Services contract would realise savings and help balance the budget.
- The current target to reduce the number of pregnant mothers that smoke in Central Bedfordshire. The Assistant Director of Public Health advised the target was 13% for the whole of Bedfordshire. Currently the percentage of

mothers that smoked in the south of Central Bedfordshire was 18%. Public Health, in partnership with GP's and Midwifery services, provided help to mothers and partners to quit smoking. A 'kick ash' campaign was also aimed at year 10 pupils in schools to prevent smoking.

- What provision was available to engage and help vulnerable mothers at risk of having multiple children taken into care? The Director of Children's Services advised that this was an issue nationally and that she was looking to share good practice from a London Borough who had received additional resources to run an innovative pilot scheme aiming to reduce multiple removals of children at birth.
- Concern that nationally and locally the number of children overweight and very overweight continued to rise. In light of the cost to the NHS of treating diabetes and a threat to cut budgets, Members supported the Executive Member in his efforts to retain all Public Health monies. Members were assured that children who were underweight were monitored and parents made aware of any concerns.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the provider for Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee to outline the new provision.**
- 2. That a report outlining provision for vulnerable mothers at risk of having more than one child taken into Care at birth be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.**

CS/15/33.

Transfer of the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme to the Council

The Head of Public Health delivered a presentation that outlined the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme that would be delivered by the Council from 1 October 2015. The programme met the National Health visiting model and the number of Health Visitors had doubled in number since 2011. Central Bedfordshire had an allocation of 50 places funded by the Department of Health of which 13 had been assigned under a set of strict criteria. Those on the programme could expect three times the number of visits from a health visitor in the first two years of the scheme that aimed to improved outcomes for parents and children.

In light of the presentation and detailed discussion Members raised the following:-

- What specific metrics were linked to the national service specification? The Head of Public Health advised there were 5 key measures and specific achievements included: The number of 6-8 week assessments carried out (95%); the number of breastfeeding mothers (49%) and the number of 2½ years old reviews undertaken (50%)
- The arrangements that were made to review a child that did not take up a nursery provision at 2½ years. The Head of Public Health advised that Health Visitors would continue to visit the parents of a child not accessing a nursery. A joined up approach with the Early Years Support Service was a priority going forward.
- Whether the service could cope with the maximum of 50 places allocated to vulnerable mothers. The Head of Public Health advised that additional

resources would be met to ensure the service could cope. The Director of Children's Services advised that the service had received very moving accounts from those benefitting from additional help.

- Whether officers had concerns regarding the transition of services from 1 October, 2015. The Head of Public Health advised that subject to the smooth transition of IT systems, there were no concerns to report at present.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That set of Public Health metrics for the 0-5 year old Health Visiting service and Family Nurse Partnership programme that included before and after results and outcomes be included and reported to the Committee.**
- 2. That the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and ELFT be invited to speak at a future meeting of the Children's Services Committee on the provision Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.**
- 3. That the Committee support the Executive Member in his quest to seek full Public Health budget provision.**

CS/15/34. Central Bedfordshire's Five Year Plan: 2015-20

The Director of Improvement and Corporate Services introduced a report and presentation on the proposed vision and 5 Year Plan. Members' views were sought on the positioning of each element in the plan.

In light of the presentation and detailed discussion, Members raised the following comments:-

- The need for more distinction and weight on the sustainable growth and heritage priority.
- The need to rephrase the title "poor parenting" within reducing childhood vulnerability.
- That skills and education be prioritised equally. There was a need for the Committee to understand what the killer metrics were that would help to prioritise effort. In particular there was a need for a measure around skills and meaningful employability.
- That under taking care of the vulnerable further emphasise be placed on the promotion of healthy lives for everyone, including leisure and active lives.
- The importance of colleges delivering courses to address the skills shortages in Central Beds and anticipating demand for skills in the future.
- The Plan must focus on those things the public have told us are important. That drive our metrics and subsequently the plan that is structured around these.
- A suggestion that the five key drivers be prefixed with the word "strong" residents, strong communities etc., so they become more memorable for the public.

The Deputy Executive Member for Education and Skills advised that there was a lack of skills in the building industry, and the Local Government Association had supported a proposal for training that enabled partnerships of councils,

schools, colleges and employers to both boost opportunities locally and to ensure youngsters get the skills, experience and advice to thrive.

RECOMMENDED that the views of the Committee be reported to the Executive in October.

CS/15/35. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Capital Programme 2015/16**

The Deputy Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined proposals for capital expenditure on projects to provide special provision for hearing impaired pupils at Parkfields Middle and St George Church of England School, Toddington and special provision for social, emotional and mental health provision at Oak Bank School, Leighton Buzzard. An interim feasibility study had been undertaken and the cost had been met by an underspend in the capital budget.

In light of the presentation and detailed discussion, Members queried:-

Whether the same schools would have been allocated capital expenditure if the Council had been able to start planning from a clean sheet. The Deputy Executive Member advised other specialist schools and provisions existed in Biggleswade, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable for children with other types of need. The schools identified for capital investment are the established providers for the types of need that require expansion of places and improvement in facilities.

The Deputy Executive Member advised that significant work had been undertaken on the forecasting of SEND places and this had confirmed the need for all three projects outlined in the report. Members of the Committee would receive a paper on the Council's new Special Educational Needs and Disability Vision at their meeting in December and that this would inform a capital strategy specifically for SEND provision

In addition it was reported that all future reports on projects include a time line on the delivery of the projects.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee support the recommendation set out the report to provide specialist provision at Parkfields Middle and St George Church of England School, Toddington and Oak Bank School, Leighton Buzzard.**
- 2. That the Committee expressed interest in the Council's Vision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities that was being developed with stakeholders and would be submitted to the Committee in December 2015.**

CS/15/36. **Children's Trust Board Annual Report**

The Director of Children's Services introduced a report that provided details of progress of delivering the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan, June 2013 to March 2015. The Plan from March 2015- March 2017 had been agreed and work would begin shortly to prepare a plan from 2017.

In light of the report and detailed discussion, Members raised the following queries:-

- That home tutored children feature in a future plan.
- Whether all local authorities in England had a Children's Trust Board and Children and Young People's Plan and how did this compare? The Director of Children's Services advised that a Children's Trust Board was a statutory requirement, however, the Children and Young People's Plan was not. The Board was the best forum with all partners represented in one place and involved young people too.
- There was a need for further understanding as to the impact of partnership working on performance and that some detail provided on measures contained within the Plan be clarified.
- That details of the partners involved in the Children's Trust Board be circulated to the Committee for information.

RECOMMENDED that the comments of the Committee as detailed above be referred to the Children's Trust Board for consideration.

CS/15/37. **Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers**

The Head of Fostering and Adoption introduced a report that outlined revision to the fees and allowances for the placement of looked after children with council foster carers and independent foster agency placements. The report detailed the drive to provide more in-house foster carers, whilst recognising the need to retain agency foster carers who provided specialist clinical care and occasional 'out of area' care when required.

In light of the report and clarification sought, Members of the Committee raised the following queries:-

- The need to ensure that the two tiered payment structure was professionally set out, subject to the usual safeguards being put in place.
- The need to clearly explain the rationale for sourcing in-house foster carers and Independent Foster Agencies (IFA).
- Whether the proposed spend of an additional £300k would achieve the target of 50% of in-house foster carers rather than appointing an additional 15. In response the Head of Fostering and Adoption advised that fees paid to carers was one element of consideration and fostered children would not be moved in order to save money if they were thriving in their placement. We need to ensure there are sufficient placements to meet the wide range of children's needs which will not all be met by in house foster carers.
- Whether the IFA would be forced to increase their fees to retain their staff and maintain their position in the market place following the Council's action. The Head of Service reassured members that a Framework Agreement was in place with Bedford Borough and Luton local authorities to manage the local market.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Executive Member take the concerns of the Committee on board as outlined above.**
- 2. The Committee note the revised scheme.**

CS/15/38. **Quarter 4 2014/15 Performance**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Q4 performance report for Children's Services for the months of January to March 2015.

NOTED the update.

CS/15/39. **Q4 Budget Presentation**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Q4 budget presentation for Children's Services for the months of January – March, 2015.

NOTED the update.

CS/15/40. **Q1 Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Update 2015/16**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Q1 budget presentation for Children's Services for the months of April to June 2015.

Members raised concern regarding the continued overspend, the Director of Children's Services was investigating the current position and would circulate an update to Members. Members also requested that details of the budget available for schools be included.

Members were informed by Cllr Hegley that an information session on the Children's Services budget was planned for 11 September. She urged members to attend. School funding will be covered as part of Children's Services budget in this session.

NOTED the update.

CS/15/41. **Work Programme 2015-2016 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current work programme and requested that the following items be included:-

- Marketing of skills (October)
- Special Schools capital provision and time line (December)

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 2.25 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated