

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, 15 March 2016

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	P A Duckett K Ferguson Mrs J Freeman	Councillors:	P Hollick A Ryan Mrs T Stock
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee:	Mr D Morton		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Mrs D Main		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs M R Jones D McVicar B Walker		
Substitutes:	Cllrs D Bowater		
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs R D Berry Mrs A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild C Hegley D Shelvey M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Education and Skills	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt Ms D Hill Mr R Parsons Mr J Partridge Miss H Redding	Scrutiny Policy Adviser Senior Finance Manager - Children's Services Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning Head of Governance Assistant Director School Improvement	
Public:	0		

CS/15/89. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment (Minute CS/15/82 refers):-

Deletion of the words "In the process of agreeing the recommendations it was not possible to reach a consensus with regard to the draft Revenue budget and particularly whether this was noted or accepted".

Addition of a recommendation stating "that the Committee received and recommended the proposed budget to the Executive in the understanding that full budget details were not presented and the Committee were not able to have a full debate. It was noted that Officers and the Executive Member could be relied upon to fulfil their role in this regard."

CS/15/90. **Members' Interests**

None.

CS/15/91. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

1. The Director had sent apologies due to the Ofsted Joint Targeted Inspection.
2. Debbie Main, Roman Catholic Diocese Representative, was welcomed to her first meeting of the Committee.
3. That the next scheduled meeting of the Children's Services OSC would be held in Dunstable due to the European Union Referendum.
4. That the Social Care Health and Housing OSC would consider the Excess Weight Strategy at their meeting on Monday 21 March and those Members interested were welcome to attend.

The Head of Governance also advised the Committee that work was underway to review the manner in which health items were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Following this review opportunities would be provided for the Committee to engage in scrutiny of health items such as mental health.

CS/15/92. **Petitions**

None.

CS/15/93. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/15/94. **Call-In**

None.

CS/15/95. **Requested Items**

The Chairman advised that the Corporate Resources OSC had requested to explore efficiencies with regards to debt recovery, pre payment methods and appropriate pricing of services as part of the Traded Services to Schools and Academies charges for 2016/17.

RECOMMENDED that this item be included on the work programme for a future meeting.

CS/15/96. **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised the Committee of several ongoing inspections. A Peer review of School Improvement had been completed and the letter of findings will be published and brought to OSC

Buildings work at schools in Leighton Buzzard and Cranfield had progressed well and the Executive Member reminded the Committee he would continue to brief them on school expansions on a ward by ward basis.

The Central Bedfordshire College had secured a Further Education site for the teaching of engineering skills in Leighton Buzzard, however, the University Technical College (UTC) in Houghton Regis was to close. A member raised concerns regarding the closure of the UTC and the impact it would have in Houghton Regis. The Executive Member explained it was not viable to keep the facility open because of a lack of pupil numbers. However, a significant opportunity had arisen to provide a community and educational facility on another site. The Executive Member agreed to provide a briefing note explaining the re-provision of further education facilities.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Panel reconsider their decision in relation to the provision of information updates by Executive Members at the Committee meetings.**
- 2. That an item regarding the gap in school provision for disadvantaged children be added to the work programme for a future meeting.**

CS/15/97. **Q3 Budget Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director School Improvement introduced the Q3 budget monitoring report. The Senior Finance Officer drew Members attention to the revenue budget overspends in Operations services that included Looked After Children (LAC). Savings had been identified to off-set the deficit that included the education services grant award. The Executive Member also advised that pressures on the LAC budget was a challenge, however, there had been no increased in the numbers of asylum seeking children since December. As part of the budget monitoring process a risk register would be introduced with the new budget.

A Member raised concerns as to why unaccompanied asylum seeking children had stopped appearing at Toddington Service Station and urged officers and the Executive Member to work with Police and investigate where the children could be found.

NOTED the update.

CS/15/98. **Strategy for Provision of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places in Central Bedfordshire**

The Assistant Director School Improvement introduced a briefing note that set out the background and significant developments made in the provision of services for pupils from 0-25 years with SEND.

To enhance services a collaborative piece of engagement was underway to inform and develop a draft strategy. There had been a marked increase in the number of health and care assessments and additional needs had been identified. One of the outcomes arising from the engagement work was the need for a leader in specialist needs in schools. The relaunch of the Central Bedfordshire website would make it easier for parents to discover and access services.

In light of the update members discussed the following:-

- Concern that some statemented children may not get the funding and support they need. In response the Assistant Director advised that funding was provided in three blocks. The outcome of the consultation on SEND funding from the Department for Education (DfE) was awaited, however, officers were working hard to ensure provision was in place.
- The level of training in place for teachers to support pupils with SEND in schools. The Assistant Director advised there was a qualification for Leaders in SEND. A professional study group existed as part of the Teaching School where good practice was shared, which was well attended by most schools. The Teaching School monitored and acted upon non-attendance by some schools.
- Concern that some children fell through a gap in provision because they did not meet the criteria for support. The Assistant Director explained the Council had invested in a number of schools to provide support, including Samuel Whitbread, Manshead and Ardley.
- The ways in which regular schools managed provision for SEN, including Mental Health, how this was measured and how best practice was shared. The Assistant Director advised that children with Mental Health issues were supported by a pastoral member of staff, however it was proposed that school SEN and pastoral leads should link up and share information where a bespoke education package could be prepared for each child.

RECOMMENDED that the draft SEND strategy be submitted to the Committee on 16 August.

CS/15/99. **Children's Services Transformation programme**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced a report that outlined the proposals to redesign Children's services. Members of the Committee were asked to prepare ideas on how they wished to see the service shaped as part of the pre-transformation process.

(Meeting adjourned at 11.30am and reconvened at 11.50am)

Members' views had formed an important part in the start of the process, however, a Member briefing was sort to look at the emerging model of service.

RECOMMENDED that a member briefing be arranged for a date to be identified providing Members with an overview of the next stage in the development of the transformation programme.

CS/15/100. **Commissioning of New School Places in Biggleswade and Arlesey for September 2017**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined the proposals for the commissioning of new schools places in Biggleswade and Arlesey. Both schools had met the criteria on requirement of places and student achievement and the proposal that Etonbury provide middle and upper provision had been welcomed.

In light of the report, Members raised the following concerns:-

- Whether the plans to expand Etonbury would provide enough school places because of housing growth planned in the vicinity. The Executive Member advised additional provision in the form of a free school model would be planned in the future.
- If officers were confident the new build would be delivered on time. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised that plans were well in advance and was confident the proposals would be delivered.

Members sought confirmation that improved provision for school drop offs and car parking at the schools had been included in the proposals. In response the Head of Service advised that he transport and highways implications of every proposal for new and expanded school provision were considered as part of associated applications for planning permissions and that there is no explicit Council policy regarding the provision of drop off points specifically. All related highways measures required as conditions to planning consents are funded through the Council's New School Places Programme.

Members were of the view that the provision of drop off points should be given enhanced consideration in the process of agreeing new school places. In response the Head of Service advised that he has recently requested the assistance of colleagues from several service areas, to review and consider the Council's current policy context in relation to school drop off points specifically.

In light of the discussion it was suggested that the Executive Member for Education and Skills should seek to ensure clarity of the Council's policy to provide effective and accessible drop off and pick up points at schools.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee endorse the recommendations in the report to Executive.**
- 2. That a formal policy regarding effective and accessible “drop off” and “pick up” point at schools be produced.**
- 3. That ownership of the policy proposed at (2) be given to the Executive Member for Executive and Skills**
- 4. That the Executive Member update the Committee on the proposals at a future meeting.**

CS/15/101. Partnership Vision for Education

The Assistant Director introduced a report on progress with the Partnership Vision for Education that outlined the journey of school improvement and proposals into 2017. A refresh of the Partnership Vision would take place in September 2016 and details of those areas that would be taken into account were outlined. Of particular concern were the results for disadvantaged children at KS2 who had not achieved as expected. However, it was noted that the model of Teaching School led improvement had worked at KS4. The Local Authority had provided locality data reports to schools and the professional study group and national leaders would provide a workshop for schools to support improvement.

A School Improvement Peer Review had taken place which covered all key stages in schools. The feedback would be used to inform the refresh of the Partnership Vision. The Assistant Director advised that less than 50% of schools had signed up to the Vision and a Member proposed that engagement work with parents and governors was necessary to establish the reason why. A joint meeting with Governors, Headteachers and Members would be arranged to discuss the proposals.

A Member proposed that in order for Governors to ask the right questions and challenge head teachers on performance, a dashboard training session for Governors should be arranged. It was also proposed that a best practice guide also be made available to help Governors create confidence in their role. In light of the discussion a Member requested that an item on the role of Governors be included on the work programme.

Officers were also requested to bring a report on skills based learning and achievement in Central Bedfordshire. Members suggested that not enough emphasis was evident in the work streams to ensure all children would achieve their aims and aspirations. The Assistant Director advised that joint working between the Children's Services team and the Regeneration Adult Skills team had produced positive results and a briefing on this area of work would be arranged.

The Committee discussed a number proposals for the recommendations that included:-

- a Governor and Headteacher briefing session
- a guidance manual for Governors
- a Governor dashboard training session, and

- that an update be provided on how skills based learning was delivered in Central Bedfordshire.
- that a briefing session be arranged on skills based learning jointly provided by Children's Services and Regeneration Adult Skills teams.

RECOMMENDED that there must be an emphasis in the Vision on skills based learning to meet pupil and local employer needs as well as preparation for advanced study for other pupils.

CS/15/102. **Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan**

Members of the Committee raised concerns regarding the date, time and venue of the next meeting that had been rearranged to accommodate the EU referendum.

The Head of Governance informed Members of a collaborative approach to setting the work programme for next year, focussing on the 5-year plan. It was proposed an event with Members, Co-optees and partners be arranged to discuss, influence and achieve a good balance of items.

RECOMMENDED that the following items be included on the work programme in the future:-

- **Traded Services to Schools and Academies charges for 2016/17**
- **School improvement and recommendations from the Peer review**
- **Employability and the skills agenda briefing**
- **Governor briefing**
- **Dashboard training for Governors.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 2.20 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated