

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, 22 January 2019

PRESENT

Cllr K Ferguson (Chairman)
Cllr D Shelvey (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs D B Gurney P Hollick A Ryan	Councillors:	B Saunders P Smith
Parental Co-optees:	Mrs V Hopkinson Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee:	Apologies		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Absent		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	N B Costin Cllr M Liddiard Mrs D Main Mr D Morton	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	Mrs C F Chapman MBE	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	D Bowater S Dixon Mrs A L Dodwell F Firth Mrs S A Goodchild T Nicols B J Spurr	Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children Chairman of Licensing Committee Executive Member for Health and Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Fraser	Assistant Director Education
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Mr C Kiernan	Head of School Improvement
	Ms J Piper	Strategic Manager, Domestic Abuse
	Mrs R Preen	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms P Scott	Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager
Others in Attendance:	Ms K Green	Parent/Carer Forum – SNAP
	Ms E Reade	CEO Autism Bedfordshire
Public:	0	

(The Chairman announced at the beginning of the meeting that due to the absence of several Parent Governor Co-optees the meeting was inquorate. It was decided to proceed with the agreement that any recommendations made by the Committee would be taken into account by the Executive Member.)

CS/18/61. **Minutes**

(Following the announcement of apologies Parent Governor Co-optee Vicky Hopkinson arrived at 10.05am and the Chairman declared that the meeting was quorate)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 November 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/18/62. **Members' Interests**

Parent Governor Co-optee Vicky Hopkinson declared an interest as a parent of a child who accessed services provided by Autism Bedfordshire and a member of the parent/carer forum SNAP.

CS/18/63. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman announced that two new Parent Governor Co-optees had been appointed and welcomed them to the Committee, thanking the previous incumbents for their hard work and dedication throughout their tenure. Due to the meeting having started inquorate Members were reminded of the requisite numbers in order that this be avoided, that being four Councillors and two Co-optees as a minimum requirement. In response to a Member query in relation to a report circulated for information only, the Director confirmed that the rationale for reducing the published admissions numbers (PAN) at Linslade

Lower School was to avoid a split class and ensure one teacher per class of 30 pupils.

CS/18/64. **Petitions**

None.

CS/18/65. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/18/66. **Call-In**

None.

CS/18/67. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/18/68. **Executive Members' Updates**

The Executive Member for Children, Education and Families advised Members that feedback had been received from the Council's housing team confirming that in order to enable foster carers living in social housing to support additional children, consideration was being given to the expansion of those homes as recommended by the Committee at a previous meeting. Members were advised that the criteria on the Ofsted judgement of schools would be included within the validated exam results report due to be delivered to the Committee in March 2019 and the results of a recent peer review of Children's Services had been very positive, with the directorate keen to build on this foundation. The Council had secured grant funding, matched by public health on the 'fizzy drinks tax' and this had enabled 40 schools within Central Bedfordshire to bid for funding which would be used to promote healthy choices in schools. In response to a Member query the Executive Member agreed that an item be added to the work programme in relation to the partnership vision for education and that the schools for the future programme would take into account the local plan and future housing growth.

(Cllr Chapman arrived at 10.17am)

The Executive Member for Health advised the Committee that a focus on those children with mental health issues who had been excluded from school was underway in order to consider whether more could have been done to support them and ensure lessons learned be applied in the future.

The Director confirmed that the foundation stage profile would be considered by the Committee at their next meeting and this would highlight behavioural issues and school readiness in early years. Members were advised that the schools for the future programme would require additional resource for a period of up to three years and that a business case would be put before the Executive in order to secure funding.

CS/18/69. **Short Breaks: Future Partnership and Grant Funding with Voluntary Organisations**

The Director for Children's Services (DCS) welcomed representatives from the voluntary sector and the parent/carer forum SNAP who had been invited to deliver a joint presentation with the DCS. Members were appraised of the joint partnership working between the Council and the voluntary sector, the governance structure and those issues and concerns impacting organisations and families following the introduction of changes to grant funding. The DCS and partners were committed to operating in a more effective and person centred way however they acknowledged that any changes must be of benefit to children and the families accessing services. Proactive steps had been taken to work with all partners in order to stabilise the situation and as a result funding had been secured for 2019 and 2020, with a clear operation model in place after that date in order to ensure a smooth transition to a different grant funding model in the future.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the scale for referral pathway would highlight user need and that tiers of support would not interfere with a clinical diagnosis.
- That the voluntary sector did not traditionally experience those with no need of particular services trying to access them.
- That activity planning for families was undertaken with an outcome focussed approach which enabled support workers to gauge need and that parents and carers were required to meet a clearly defined set of criteria.
- That the Council's wider relationship with the voluntary sector would be addressed by the Executive.
- That the Partnership Vision for Education would be refreshed and updated as part of the schools for the future programme and that the Council was working closely with schools to ensure that vacancies on the Special Education and Disabilities (SEND) Board were recruited to as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee acknowledge the recent activity on the short breaks programme, the decision to stabilise grant funding to voluntary organisations providing short breaks to March 2020 and the plan to deliver the personalisation agenda from April 2020.**
- 2. That an update be delivered to the Committee within six months.**

CS/18/70. **Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) annual report 2017/18**

The Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) highlighted key areas of focus for the board during the period 2017-18, including the performance and effectiveness of those agencies responsible for delivery. The safeguarding of children continued to be challenging and complex but with the LSCB recently judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' with clear governance arrangements and effective scrutiny in place, Members were assured that children in Central Bedfordshire were effectively supported. The report focussed on four key themes which were domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), neglect and mental health, working closely to prevent

escalation and ensure that as few children as possible entered statutory services. Monitoring private fostering arrangements was vital in order that vulnerable children were not hidden from professionals and the LSCB's ongoing work ensured that learning continued to be applied from serious case reviews.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The need for a preventative approach in relation to CSE.
- That despite resource pressures the police were facing, the protection of vulnerable children was a priority for the force and they were fully engaged in partnership working with the LSCB.
- The need to ensure statutory duties were met in relation to families moving in or out of the region, acknowledging some families struggled with little or no support network and no family ties to the area.
- That Gypsy and Traveller families were supported to the same levels as the settled community, with staff ensuring the most appropriate approach in order to meet a family's needs.
- Given the imminent changes to safeguarding arrangements for children, that future reports continue to be delivered to the Committee with the same level of detail as previous iterations.

NOTED the report and the positive outcome of a recent Ofsted inspection, acknowledging the excellent work of the LSCB.

CS/18/71.

Executive Response to the Pupil Attainment Task Force Recommendations

The Executive Member for Children, Education and Families outlined the response to the recommendations arising from a previous report, highlighting the need to prioritise those which Members felt required an immediate focus. The feedback from schools had been positive with head teachers recognising the significant and valued impact of the work to date, whilst at the same time acknowledging the pace at which change and improvements could be made.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The need for governing bodies to have the requisite skills in order to effectively scrutinise school performance and ensure their statutory functions were undertaken.
- The need for additional training and support for the chairs of governing bodies.
- The value industry professionals could bring to the role of school governor.
- Recognising the impact and the role of the teacher and the need for continuous professional development (CPD) of teaching professionals in order to safeguard the retention of staff.
- That regular government changes to the educational landscape did not support stability or consistency within the classroom which was acknowledged as a national challenge.
- That if Central Bedfordshire's educational attainment outcomes had not improved within a two year period following the implementation of the recommendations, that the Executive consider re-prioritisation of funds in order to support improvements.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee acknowledge progress to date and that a future report be delivered in July 2019 to include prioritised recommendations, a detailed timeline for delivery and Key Point Indicators (KPI's).

CS/18/72. **Schools for the Future - Commissioning new school places in the ward of Leighton Buzzard North**

The Assistant Director for Education delivered a report which outlined several school expansions which would be funded by the Department of Education (DfE) and Section 106 contributions, with no net cost to the Council.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- That the low response to the consultation was usual when a proposal was not deemed contentious.
- That any changes to the published admission numbers (PAN) would be supported under any future educational structure.
- That the proposals met the current need to 2020 but that additional pupil numbers would be required in the future due to anticipated housing growth.
- That it was the responsibility of schools to ensure they recruited the necessary teaching staff.

RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Committee support the new school places required in Leighton Buzzard in order to meet the Council's statutory duty under The Education and Inspections Act 2006.**
- 2. That the Committee acknowledge the positive responses received to the consultations by the governing bodies of Gilbert Inglefield Academy and Vandyke Upper School to expand each school by two forms of entry by September 2020.**
- 3. To support the proposed capital expenditure at Gilbert Inglefield Academy and Vandyke Upper School, Leighton Buzzard.**

CS/18/73. **Domestic Abuse Presentation**

The Strategic Manager, Domestic Abuse delivered a presentation detailing different forms of domestic abuse (DA), the impact on children and their families and highlighted that 41% of assessments carried out for children entering statutory services had the factor of DA within their family setting. Members were advised that officers were considering a needs assessment and current working practice within the service to ensure support services were fit for purpose and effectively supported families. The Council was developing managers' guidance in order that those staff experiencing DA within the home could be appropriately supported and ensure the Council met its statutory responsibilities as an employer. Members were appraised of the challenges, the need to alter perceptions and the three key areas of focus which were to protect, recognise and challenge instances of DA and the critical need to support those whose experiences then led them into the criminal justice system.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The importance of educating children and young people with regards to the definition of DA and the need to work with schools in order to promote awareness within Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lessons.
- The positive work within youth groups which focussed on healthy relationships, recognising that young people often perpetrated DA due to learnt behaviour and a need to work closely with all perpetrators in order that education brought about long term change.
- Anecdotal evidence from women's refuge centres reporting the proactive and effective support they received from the Council.
- The robust working relationship with the police and other partners whose priorities were closely aligned with those of the Council.
- The need to understand the scale of the problem within Central Bedfordshire given that nationally there were 2 million reported cases of DA every year.
- Recognising the impact of permanent stress on the brain development in young children as a result of DA within the home.
- Notwithstanding the impact of drug and alcohol abuse contributing to some instances of DA, there was a need to recognise that only 17 percent of reported cases involved substance misuse. The other 83 percent of cases were unrelated.
- The need for increased awareness of the signs in relation to coercive behaviour and control.

RECOMMENDED that the presentation be delivered at the next meeting of full Council and that it be promoted as an educational tool within the public domain.

CS/18/74. Work Programme 2018/19 & Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following amendments:-

- **Proposed change of age range for Templefield Lower School, Flitwick from 4-9 to 2-9 and merger with Windmill Pre-school – 12 March 2019**
- **Valuing Care: commissioning options appraisal – 12 March 2019**
- **Proposed change of designation to Church End Lower School, Marston Moretaine, from a foundation school to a voluntary controlled school via the closure of Church End Lower School and the establishment of Marston Moretaine Church of England VC School – 12 March 2019**
- **The impact of neglect – Date TBC**
- **That validated exam results due to be delivered in March 2019 highlight the results for disadvantaged children.**

CS/18/75. Children's Services: Customer Feedback Annual Report 2017-18

NOTED the report

CS/18/76. Consultation on the Council's Admission Arrangements, 2020-21

NOTED the report

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. and concluded at 2.15 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated