

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, 12 March 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:	Mr D Morton	
Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Mrs D Main - Absent	
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs N B Costin K Janes Cllr M Liddiard Mrs D Main	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs R D Berry S Dixon Mrs A L Dodwell Mrs S A Goodchild B J Spurr Mrs T Stock	Vice-Chairman of Development Management Committee Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children Executive Member for Health and Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board Deputy Executive Member for Health
Officers in Attendance:	Ms T Badnall-Neill Mr P Fraser	Strategic Commissioning Officer Assistant Director Education

	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Mr C Kiernan	Interim Head of School Improvement
	Mrs R Preen	Scrutiny Policy Adviser
	Ms P Scott	Strategic Safeguarding Partnership Manager
	Mr V Wan	Head of School Organisation
	Ms L Willis	Commissioning Manager
Others in Attendance:	Mr A Caton	Chairman, LSCB
Public:	0	

CS/18/77. **Minutes**

NOTED that Cllr Berry had been in attendance at the last meeting and;

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/18/78. **Members' Interests**

Co-opted Member Mr D Morton declared an interest in relation to item 13 as the Diocesan Director for St Albans.

CS/18/79. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

CS/18/80. **Petitions**

None.

CS/18/81. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

The Chairman read out a letter which had been received from the Chair of Governors of Edward Peake Middle School, which supported the proposals set out under item 13 of the agenda in relation to the expansion of the school by two form entry.

CS/18/82. **Call-In**

None.

CS/18/83. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/18/84. **Executive Members' Updates**

The Executive Member for Children, Education and Families advised the Committee that a presentation in relation to domestic abuse would be delivered at the next full Council meeting and requested that Members champion the important work of the council in this regard. Members were advised of a school governor recruitment drive aimed at encouraging council officers and external businesses to apply for the positions in order to strengthen the role by bringing in the requisite expertise. In addition, the schools for the future programme was progressing well, briefings would be delivered to Members as appropriate and officers recognised the need to effectively support school clusters with their differing needs and complexities. The Executive Member extended his congratulations to the directorate for several awards they had recently been nominated for and to the young person within the team who had won the national award for Best Apprentice.

In response to a Member query in relation to the government's commitment to address 'period poverty', the Executive Member confirmed that it was unclear where funding for the initiative would be sourced from and acknowledged the possible financial pressure on schools and the local authority.

The Deputy Executive Member for Health advised Members that the response to schools bidding for funds arising from the 'fizzy drinks tax' had been overwhelming and that all funds had been allocated to the successful bidders. In response to Member queries it was confirmed that funding had been assessed on a needs basis, outcomes of the initiative would be assessed in 2020 and that the scheme was aimed at those children not currently receiving intervention and services, but instead was designed to promote a healthy lifestyle.

The Executive Member for Health advised Members that the imminent School's Health Education Unit Survey (SHEU) would reflect key aspects of children's lives such as healthy eating, attitudes to school and emotional wellbeing for all children in Central Bedfordshire and urged all Members to encourage their local schools to take part in the survey.

CS/18/85. **Central Bedfordshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements**

The Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) delivered a presentation which set out the measures to implement the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) which had been introduced following a change in Government legislation. Members were appraised of the duty placed upon the local authority, the police and the Clinical Commissioning Group as the three local partners to 'work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area', also the key principles of the new approach, independent scrutiny, the governance and reporting structure and changes to the monitoring of serious case reviews.

The Director of Children's Services highlighted the strengthened links to education settings in the new arrangements, thanking the independent Chairman for his work, support and challenge in championing the welfare of children over the lifetime of the LSCB and that it was reassuring he would continue to bring his expertise under the new arrangements.

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

- The need for progress to continue to be made on issues such as child sexual exploitation.
- Concerns that the new structure had no specific lead responsible for delivery, highlighting the need for effective partnership working.
- Reassurance that robust training and learning arrangements were in place.
- A need to engage vulnerable families at an earlier stage using resources within the early years and social work teams in order to address issues such as County Lines.
- A need to recognise the increased vulnerability of children excluded from school in relation to external manipulation or abuse.
- That independent scrutiny be given a strictly defined function which the three local partners responsible for the safeguarding arrangements could not overlook and to be empowered to make the necessary recommendations in the best interests of local children.

NOTED the report and welcomed the work which had been undertaken to introduce the new arrangements, also highlighting the need for the new board to examine more closely the links between the increase in school exclusions and safeguarding risks to children and to ensure that partners were willing to readily divulge information with each other in the best interests of the child.

CS/18/86.

Options Appraisal for Placements Commissioning Aligned to the Valuing Care Project

The Commissioning Officer delivered a report which set out the Council's statutory duty to accommodate children in care, that consideration within the new proposals included foster care, semi-independent accommodation for those aged 16+ and care homes for children and that an options appraisal would be developed in the future, with a phased approach to service development.

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

- Reassurance that the proposals supported the scheme to allow foster carers to extend their homes in order that they were able to support additional children.
- The need for an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out as a matter of urgency in order to support those children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and asylum seeker children. In response it was confirmed that an EIA and full impact analysis would be developed as part of the consultation.
- That 'in house' foster placements were preferred but at times it was necessary to source external provision due to specialist needs.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the recommended options for future commissioning and service development and that a report be delivered at a future meeting following the results of the consultation, to include the Equalities Impact Assessment.

CS/18/87. **Validated Exam Results 2018**

The Interim Head of School Improvement delivered a report which detailed validated exam results from 2017/18, highlighting a renewed focus on the progress of the child as well as academic attainment. With 88% of local schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted, it was important to understand why attainment in Central Bedfordshire was in the bottom quartile, with a need to analyse and address the gap in attainment for disadvantaged pupils which grew steadily wider as they progressed through education. The Executive Member for Children, Education, and Families highlighted that a recommendation made by the pupil attainment task force to extend the school improvement team from two years to five would help address a historic lack of investment in education in Central Bedfordshire and that despite the lack of Government funding, the Council would continue to work closely with and support academies.

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

- That within the disadvantaged cohort it was important to recognise the high number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils.
- The importance of recognising that some schools had not received an Ofsted inspection for many years and the need to monitor them closely as a result.
- That many children experienced difficulties at home which often created barriers to learning, reinforcing the importance of engaging with parents at the earliest possible stage.
- A need to analyse and understand the inconsistent outcomes between Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The need to address those schools identified as coasting.
- The importance of a focus on vocational subjects and careers guidance within schools, also raising the profile of apprenticeships.

The Committee formally welcomed the new Head of School Improvement to his role and thanked the Interim Head of Service of for his hard work over the past year, noting the level of transparency which had been conveyed to the Committee and the wider council.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Executive formally adopt the Children's OSC recommendations that Central Bedfordshire Council work with Job Centre Plus in order to identify future jobs available to young people leaving education.**
- 2. That an interim progress report be delivered in the Autumn of 2019 with indicative results for 2018/19, also detailing efforts on reducing the disadvantaged pupil gap.**

CS/18/88. **Schools for the Future - New School Places, Biggleswade North**

The Executive Member for Children, Education and Families delivered a report which set out proposals to expand Edward Peake Middle School in Biggleswade by two forms of entry by September 2020. The proposals would enable the Council to meet a forecast deficit of school places and safeguard educational provision against future growth in the area which would be supported under any educational structure.

In light of the report Members highlighted a need for the service to consider the size of the school if it became a primary provision, to which it was confirmed that all possibilities would be taken into account and effectively analysed before agreements on future structure were reached.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee support the new school places required in Biggleswade to meet the Councils statutory duty under The Education and Inspections Act 2006 by 2 forms of entry (60 places in each year group) for Edward Peake Church of England VC Middle School, Potton Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0EJ, by September 2020.**
- 2. That the Committee support proposals to authorise the Director of Children's Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children to approve the commencement of capital expenditure as set out in the report, subject to the granting of planning permissions under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act.**

CS/18/89. **Work Programme 2018/19 & Executive Forward Plan**

AGREED the Committee Work Programme

CS/18/90. **Traded Services to Schools and Academies 2019/20**

The Assistant Director for Education introduced a report which set out recent increases in traded services to schools and academies, highlighting that concerns had been raised by Members of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding those prices which were above the rate of inflation. Members were advised that the method of reporting would change in the future and they would be appraised of any changes as necessary.

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

- A need to consider costs as well as income, ensuring that appropriate detail be provided within future reports.
- The importance of music provision in schools and whether all schools could provide musical instruments given the high costs involved. In response it was confirmed that the uptake of music lessons was high among pupils across the region and grants were available to schools if they wished to apply.
- That many traded services to schools were statutory and there was a need to meet the costs involved whilst not making a profit.

NOTED the report and that Members were reassured that those items above the level of inflation were justified.

At the end of the meeting the Chairman thanked outgoing parent governor co-optee Mrs E Rowlands for her exemplary attendance record and invaluable input to the Committee over her four-year tenure.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.32 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated