

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Tuesday, 26 July 2011

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)
Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: P N Aldis
A L Dodwell
P Hollick

Councillors: K Janes
I A MacKilligan
R B Pepworth

Parental Co-optees: S Beattie
H Copley

Church of England
Co-optee:
Roman Catholic
Co-optee:

Apologies for
Absence: Cllr Mrs S Clark
Mrs F Image
D Landman
J Reynolds
Cllr A Shadbolt

Substitutes: Cllrs D Bowater (In place of A Shadbolt)
N J Sheppard (In place of Mrs S Clark)

Members in
Attendance: Cllrs D Jones

M A G Versallion Executive Member for Children's
Services

Officers in
Attendance: Mrs E Grant
Mr P Storey

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Children's Services
Committee Services Officer

Others in
Attendance: Mrs J Chipperton

Chairman of SACRE

CS/11/22 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 June 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/11/23 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

Councillor N Costin declared a personal, prejudicial interest in agenda item 10 – Quarter Four Performance report 2010/11 (minute 30 below refers) when reference was made to Barnfield College as he was the Chairman of the Governing Body. He left the room during discussion on that part of the item.

(c) Any political whip in relation to any agenda item:-

None.

CS/11/24 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

CS/11/25 Petitions

No petitions were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Part D2 of the Constitution.

CS/11/26 Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Chairman confirmed that no questions, statements or deputations from members of the public had been received in accordance with Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/11/27 Call-In

Members were advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Committee under the Call-in Procedures set out in Appendix "A" to Rule No. S18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

CS/11/28 Requested Items

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration at the request of a Member under Procedure Rule 3.1 of Part D2 of the Constitution.

CS/11/29 Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)

The Chairman of SACRE, Mrs Jane Chipperton, gave a presentation on SACRE, which was a statutory body advising the local authority on matters related to religious education (RE) and collective worship in community and voluntary controlled schools. There had only been a SACRE in Central Bedfordshire for approximately twelve months and it was one of only two SACREs in the country to work collaboratively with several local authorities.

Issues raised during the presentation were:

- RE had not been included as a core subject in the English Baccalaureate and there would be time pressures in trying to teach subjects which had not been included;
- SACRE would be writing to schools to remind them that RE was still a required subject and had to be taught in schools;
- 862 schools had failed to sit anyone for RE at GCSE level in 2011. The National Association of SACREs and RE teachers were trying to build up a national picture of the teaching of RE in schools;
- SACRE ensured that comparative religion was taught in community and voluntary controlled schools;
- SACRE considered that the agreed syllabus for schools was very good but that there was a need to stress the importance of RE in schools;
- RE had to be taught in academies in accordance with the funding programme.

In answer to a question, Mrs Chipperton stated that the number of core subjects in the English Baccalaureate had been limited in an attempt to drive up standards by reducing the number of subjects studied.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the presentation be noted.

CS/11/30 Quarter Four Performance Report 2010/11

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, drawing attention to the financial pressures and changes in systems in Children's Services.

Issues raised following the report were:

- The marking of this year's Key Stage 2. The Director of Children's Services stated that this was a national issue. As yet, Key Stage 2 results were unvalidated and could not be published until November 2011;
- Academies could chose not to take Key Stage 2 and one in Central Bedfordshire had chosen not to do so, which would impact on the local authority's overall results;
- The school improvement strategy was now only to work with schools with amber and red ratings and action plans had been drawn up where required. Two schools were expected to be under close scrutiny;
- The Secretary of State would be raising the floor of the basic minimum level of achievement from the current 30% to 50% at GCSE by 2018 in an attempt to improve standards. It was stated, however, that educational attainment was only part of the service delivery of schools and that there were other skills taught in school, such as life skills;
- The Council's statistical neighbours were not considered directly comparable as they did not have areas of mass deprivation as in Dunstable and Houghton and were two tier rather than three tier, both of which skewed the comparators. It was considered, however, that some useful information might be obtained from statistical neighbours on how they addressed particular issues;
- The Council could now engage with local communities to help them develop the configuration of schools they wanted in their areas;

The Committee congratulated schools where performances had improved and noted that none of the schools judged by Ofsted to be outstanding during the year had suffered any slippage. The Director of Children's Services undertook to check and confirm this.

The Director of Children's Services also undertook to send Members a list of the Council's statistical neighbours for information and a copy of the letter written to parents of children in Dunstable and Houghton Regis schools by Councillor Versallion.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report and the quarter four performance be noted.

CS/11/31

Children's Services: The Future Role of the Council

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced this item and the Director of Children's Services gave a presentation on the broad principles of the Government's Structural reforms for 5-18 Schools. This would allow schools to reconfigure themselves in the way most appropriate to their local community and would necessitate changes in the way schools ran themselves. The Government would be consulting on a national funding formula for schools.

Issues raised from the presentation were:

- Academies would be allowed to change their admissions under the proposals. Local authorities could take their own decisions to change school age ranges;
- One application had been received for a free school in Central Bedfordshire and the Council is able to broker with the school for the provision of services;
- It was hoped that some schools in Central Bedfordshire could be validated as teaching schools. One strong bid had not been validated but officers would work with the school to take this further in the next round of bids;
- It was very probable that many more schools would become academies over the next few years and the Council could broker deals to provide services for them and all types of school at varying charges.

It was noted that meetings were held between officers and head teachers three times a year plus meetings with school governing bodies.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

CS/11/32

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and made the following changes to the Work Programme:

- 18 October 2011 – Director's briefing updating on school structures;
- 29 November 2011 – Quarter 1 2011/12 Performance Information and validated upper school results

Members would receive a scope for the review of disability provision at the meeting on 6 September 2011 and might wish to receive a report to a future meeting. The Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services would be leading on this issue and would welcome input from Committee Members.

The Executive Member for Children's Services requested Members to consider moving the meeting of the Committee later in the year, from 20 December to the afternoon of 15 December 2011. The Chairman asked that Committee Members be consulted on this request outside the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That the Children's Services OSC Work Programme be noted.**
- 2. That Committee members be consulted on the request to move a meeting of the Committee from 20 December to 15 December 2011.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.50 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated