

Appendix B

Summary of the key issues discussed at Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny on the 28 February 2012

1. The Executive Member for Sustainable Communities (Strategic Planning & Economic Development) introduced the Council's draft All Age Skills Strategy, which set the strategic direction for the Council and its partners in addressing the skills needs of employers and individuals within the area. His introduction was supplemented by a joint presentation from the Assistant Director, Economic Growth, Skills & Regeneration and the Head of Joint Strategic Commissioning (Children's Services), which covered the following issues:-
 - The rationale for developing an All Age Skills Strategy
 - Strategic priorities
 - The skills link with Children's Services
 - The role of the Council, both internally and externally; and
 - Practical examples of successes to date

2. Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised the following key issues
 - (a) The Committee expressed some concern about the aspirational nature of the Strategy, which in its current form would benefit from a robust timeframe for delivery, SMART outcomes, performance indicators and greater detail regarding accountability
 - (b) The need to ensure effective business engagement on the borders of Central Bedfordshire by making full use of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP)
 - (c) The need to ensure the Strategy reflected the needs of all ages, particularly the over 60's and those people in their 40's and 50's requiring support and retraining as a result of redundancy
 - (d) The importance of recognising schools (and Children's Centres) as agents of adult education, for example when parents first join the PTA or undertaken some voluntary work and then move on to become a Teaching Assistant and potentially a Teacher
 - (e) The importance of recognising schools as community resources with valuable assets such as libraries and technical rooms, which could be made available to support education and training to the general public
 - (f) The need to encourage the community to educate itself via initiatives such as community skills exchange
 - (g) The Committee expressed the importance of supporting the University Technical College in delivering high quality practical, technically orientated courses of study

- (h) The need to ensure the Strategy linked with work regarding the needs of those children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), particularly those who find themselves not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- (i) The need to ensure the Strategy supported the work to encourage schools to strive towards the emerging political priority of educational attainment i.e. 5 A* - C GCSEs including English and Maths, as a base for young people to springboard into adulthood
- (j) The need to acknowledge the emerging major changes to the national curriculum. In this respect, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services confirmed her intention to bring a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee outlining these changes
- (k) The need to acknowledge the fundamental importance of parents in encouraging and supporting students through the education system and the difficulties experienced by children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing appropriate education
- (l) The importance of work experience schemes and the need to encourage and support the business sector to embrace such schemes