

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, 17 April 2012

PRESENT

Cllr N B Costin (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors:	P N Aldis D Bowater Mrs S Clark	Councillors:	P Hollick I A MacKilligan R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	Mrs S Beattie H Copley D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee:	J Reynolds		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	A L Dodwell Mrs D B Gurney K Janes Mrs F Image	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	Ms C Maudlin	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	Mrs A Barker A D Brown Mrs S A Goodchild J G Jamieson M A G Versallion J N Young	Chairman of the Council Deputy Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Strategic Planning and Economic Development
Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter Y Corden Ms G Dent Mr P Dudley		Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations Project Manager Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic

Ms S Scholey

Commissioning)
Team Leader for Looked after
Children TeamCS/11/108 **Minutes****RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to an amendment to CS/11/97, Members Interests, to reflect the fact that not all Members were Chairmen of Governors.

CS/11/109 **Members' Interests**(a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

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

None.

CS/11/110 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/11/111 **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/11/112 **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure as set out in Annex 1 of Part A4 of the Constitution.

CS/11/113 **Call-In**

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

CS/11/114 **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/11/115 **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on current activities pertaining to his portfolio, which were not already included on today's agenda. These covered the following issues:-

- The recent publication by the Government of statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services. The Executive Member agreed to circulate a summary of this guidance to the Committee in due course;
- The implementation of the new Children's Case Management System (Framework i), which was going well;
- His disappointment regarding the Government's delay in reviewing the funding formula for schools and his resolve to continue to lobby for fairer funding via such mechanisms as the F40 group of local authorities – a group who represented the worst funded authorities in England
- The recent announcement by teaching unions to ballot for strike action;
- The Ofsted inspection of the Council's provision for safeguarding children and supporting "looked after" children, which had concluded that the Council's overall performance was adequate. Within this overall assessment however, safeguarding had been deemed good and looked after children's services adequate. However services for the health of looked after children were found to be inadequate. The Council would now work with its NHS partners to devise and implement an improvement action plan;
- The decisions reached regarding the four Age Range applications from lower schools in the Houghton Regis area, all of which had been approved thereby allowing each to extend their age ranges to include years 5 and 6. This particular update prompted a discussion regarding the wider implications of such an extension and the impact on educational organisation within Central Bedfordshire generally, with some Members expressing concern over the potential future impact on thriving and successful middle schools and the diminishing influence the Council possessed regarding the issue as a result of the increasing prevalence of academy schools. The Executive Member acknowledged the issue and assured the Committee that one size did not fit all and parental choice/preference was paramount. In this regard, the Executive Member further confirmed that the Council was doing all it could to support parents (and schools) with impartial advice and information.

CS/11/116 **Medium Term Objectives Consultation**

The Leader of the Council presented his report, which afforded Members of the Committee the opportunity to consider the emerging Medium Term Plan prior to its adoption by full Council on 21 June 2012. The plan set out the Council's proposed priorities for the next 4 years and had been informed by a survey of residents in Autumn 2011.

Members of the Committee discussed the Plan in detail and made a number of comments and observations regarding issues affecting Children's Services. In particular, Members discussed the Council's ability to achieve its educational attainment targets when set against its diminishing influence as a result of the increasing prevalence of academy schools. The Executive Member for Children's Services acknowledged the issue but assured the Committee that new models of partnership working, peer to peer support and the teaching school concept, amongst other initiatives, would help ensure the Council met this ambitious target. Members also discussed the Council's ambitions relating to NEETs and education & training opportunities and expressed some concern regarding the lack of any quantifiable targets to measure these ambitions.

At the end of the debate, the Committee endorsed the approach for adopting the Plan by full Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses the approach for adopting the Medium Term Plan 2012-16.

CS/11/117 **Children's Social Care**

The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations and the Team Leader, Children in Care & Leaving Care delivered a joint presentation, which provided an overview of the outcomes flowing from the Munro Review of Child Protection and their implications for Central Bedfordshire Council. Specifically, the presentation covered the following issues:-

- The rationale for reviewing the current system;
- The process used;
- The assessment regime; and
- A detailed analysis of each of the 15 recommendations contained within the final Munro report and their impact on the Council.

Members of the Committee thanked the officers for their detailed presentation but given the important issues that it raised, were disappointed to note that it had not been shared earlier. The Committee therefore agreed the matter was worthy of further consideration at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That a further report regarding the recommendations flowing from the Munro Report of Child Protection and their implications for Central Bedfordshire Council be submitted to a future meeting.**

CS/11/118 **Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring**

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the Quarter 3 Performance report, which highlighted performance within the Children's Services directorate for the third quarter of 2011/12. In doing so, he wished to

thank the Director and her team for the hard work thus far in achieving good performance across many of the key directorate indicators despite increasing workloads and the adverse financial environment.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised the following issue:

- Concern over the fall in performance regarding the percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year. The Executive Member explained that although performance had fallen, it was still in line with statistical neighbours. Of paramount importance however was the need to ensure decisions regarding alternative placements for looked after children were only taken to improve outcomes for said children rather than meet any perverse incentives such as this target. The Committee concurred with this viewpoint.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/119 **Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring (Revenue)**

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which set out the projected revenue position of the Children's Services Directorate to the end of March 2012, based on the information available as at the end of December 2011 (being the third quarter of 2011/12).

He further explained that the full year projected revenue outturn position for 2011/12 was a £1.362M under spend against a £35.5M net budget and congratulated the Directorate on its good financial management, albeit recognising the very challenging financial environment in which the organisation still found itself.

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of queries regarding the following issues, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance:-

- The financial implications of the increasing prevalence of academy schools;
- Progress regarding debt recovery; and
- The rationale and monitoring of licensed school deficits.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/120 **Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring (Capital)**

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented his report, which set out the projected capital position of the Children's Services Directorate to the

end of March 2012, based on the information available as at the end of December 2011 (being the third quarter of 2011/12).

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report in detail and raised a number of queries regarding the following issues, which were addressed by the Executive Member and officers in attendance:-

- The statutory role of the Council in providing adequate school places; and
- The receipt of S106 monies to fund new school places.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/11/121 **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**

The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which identified the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population. In doing so, he further explained that the JSNA would lead to agreed commissioning priorities that would improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities, and whilst it had a key function in relation to the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy being developed by the Council and its partners, it also played an important role in the development of the Children & Young People's Plan.

Members of the Committee praised the document as an important evidence base and endorsed its further development and use.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment be endorsed for further development and use.

CS/11/122 **Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and agreed that the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Executive Member and Director meet before the next meeting to revise the work programme in light of discussions regarding today's agenda items and any future workload.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Children's Services OSC Work Programme be noted.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.15 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated