

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 June 2012

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs D B Gurney (Chairman)

Councillors:	R D Berry D Bowater P Hollick	Councillors:	K Janes D Jones R B Pepworth
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Parental Co-optees: Mrs S Beattie
H Copley
D Landman

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

Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Mrs A Barker N B Costin I A MacKilligan Mrs F Image J Reynolds
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Substitutes:	Cllrs	N J Sheppard
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Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell B Saunders M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Children's Services
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Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter Ms E DeZoete Mr P Dudley	Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager Consultant in Public Health, NHS Bedfordshire Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)
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CS/12/1 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 April 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/12/2 Members' Interests**(a) Personal Interests:-**

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

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

None.

CS/12/3 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/12/4 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/12/5 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/12/6 Call-In

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

CS/12/7 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/12/8

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 continuing absence due to illness of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services and his thanks for the support received from officers temporarily acting on the Director's behalf. The Committee wished to convey its best wishes to the Director for a full and speedy recovery;
- The completion of the informal stage of school consultations and the beginning of the formal stage;
- The Foster Carers Awards attended by the Executive Member and his Deputy, Cllr Amanda Dodwell, and the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Angela Barker;
- The schools bid for an alternative Pupil Referral Unity (PRU), approval of which was still awaited from the Department of Education;
- The announcement by teaching unions to ballot for strike action and his hope that such action would be averted; and
- The visit of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to the Council in May.

At the end of the Executive Member's verbal update, the Committee raised two further issues regarding:-

- The disaggregation of the Adoption & Fostering Panels currently shared between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils; and
- The recent announcement by the government of proposals to revise the national curriculum.

The Executive Member agreed to provide a further update regarding these two specific items at the next meeting.

CS/12/9

Children's Health

The Public Health Consultant delivered a presentation, which provided the Committee with an update on the health of children and young people in Central Bedfordshire. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- What we are doing well;
- What needs to be improved; and
- The Health & Wellbeing Board, its four child health priorities (listed below) and the actions being taken to address them, both now and in the future;
 1. Childhood Obesity;
 2. Teenage Pregnancy;
 3. Improvement in mental health for children and parents; and
 4. Health of Looked After Children.

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

- How the Council and its partners intended to improve the social determinants of health. Related to this issue, the Assistant Director of Children's Services appraised the Committee about how children were assessed in terms of readiness for school;
- The work being done to improve the percentage of women breastfeeding and the need to promote not only its health benefits but its financial benefits too, particularly in our most deprived areas. Members also commented upon the worth of measuring not only short term take up i.e. at birth, 10 days and 6 – 8 weeks, but also at 6 months too;
- The difficulty of using the planning system to improve access to high quality and affordable food in deprived areas, although opportunities did exist and NHS colleagues were working with planning staff to explore these;
- The possible links between childhood obesity and the lack of open spaces, play areas and adequate gardens, particularly in deprived areas. In this respect, the Executive Member stressed the importance of the Council's Development Management Committee being aware of the issue and the need for the Committee to consider the density of future house building;
- The important role that schools can play as partners in tackling childhood obesity through parenting, health, childcare and sex education;
- The work being done to reduce teenage pregnancy including the delivery of relationship programmes across schools in hot spot areas; and
- The continuing prevalence of depression as the most common form of mental health.

In conclusion, the Committee thanked the Public Health Consultant for a most informative and comprehensive presentation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/10

Work Programme 2011 - 2012 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and agreed to the addition of the Children's Health Annual Report to the 24 July meeting. The Committee also agreed to the addition of a report to a future meeting (to be determined) reviewing youth service provision, which the Executive Member and Assistant Director of Children's Services supported.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.00 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated