

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, 16 October 2012

PRESENT

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

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

Apologies for
Absence: Mrs F Image
J Reynolds

Substitutes: Cllrs

Members in Attendance:	Cllrs P N Aldis Mrs S Clark A L Dodwell J G Jamieson A Shadbolt M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive Chairman of Development Management Committee Executive Member for Children's Services
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Officers in Attendance:	Mr B Carter Mr P Dudley Mr B Pearson	Corporate Policy & Scrutiny Manager Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Head of Children's Services Commissioning
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Others in Attendance:	George Nodwell Amber Williams Max Hurst Helen Morley	Representatives of the Youth Parliament
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CS/12/39 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 September 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/12/40 Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest or political whip in relation to any agenda items.

CS/12/41 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman announced that she had received a letter from a member of the public relating to Agenda Item 10, Youth Services Provision. The letter listed a number of questions regarding said provision and the Chairman confirmed that she had requested the Assistant Director, Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) to respond in writing.

CS/12/42 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/12/43 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/12/44 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/12/45 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/12/46 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:-

- With reference to the minutes of the previous meeting (CS/12/32) regarding the impact of Academies on the performance of schools in

- Central Bedfordshire, the Executive Member confirmed that he would submit a report to a future meeting (tentatively February 2013);
- With reference to the minutes of the previous meeting (CS/12/36) regarding the Children with Disabilities Service, the Executive Member confirmed that he would provide an update to a future meeting early in the new calendar year;
 - The schools funding formula consultation, which had now closed and which would now be the subject of consideration by the Schools Forum. With regard to this issue, a Member requested a more detailed update concerning school funding reforms to a future meeting, which was agreed;
 - Key Stage (KS) results and the very good performance at KS1 and KS2, with the latter placing the Council's performance 6th best in England & Wales. GCSE results had however deteriorated, with the achievement of 5 or more A* to C grades (including Maths & English) down 2% to 57%. The Executive Member explained that these results still required final validation (by January 2013), and also needed to be considered in the context of the continuing controversy regarding the sudden drop in GCSE results across the country. He confirmed that the Council had recently agreed a motion regarding representations to the Secretary of State for Education about the issue and furthermore, he had recently committed the Council to a related joint legal challenge, led by Leeds and Lewisham Councils. Mention was also made of recent international surveys of educational performance, which had confirmed that the UK had fallen behind in English but had risen slightly in Maths & Science; and
 - Healthy eating in schools. The Assistant Director, Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) confirmed that all schools in Central Bedfordshire were currently meeting the required nutritional standards for school meals and had been since 2009, even though academies were exempt. He further confirmed that schools regularly improve and update their healthy eating policies and do so with the approval of NHS colleagues. The Assistant Director also referred to the excellent participation rates of the Making the Most of Me programme and his recent action in writing to the Secretary of State for Education regarding the ability of partners to share health data to help tackle obesity rates. Whilst Members acknowledged the good work being done in schools, they raised concerns about the need to educate children and parents about healthy eating at home and the eating habits of those children allowed to leave the school premises at lunchtime. Members also referred to the recent lowering of architectural standards for school building, which may have an indirect impact on the use made of school meals, and the need to encourage activities such as gardening clubs.

During the verbal update, Members raised two further issues regarding:-

- School organisation planning and the growth in places for children with special educational needs. The Executive Member agreed that this was a worthwhile topic for consideration at a future meeting; and
- The Council's policy and practice regarding CRB checks (given the recent news coverage regarding the late Jimmy Savile). Both the Executive Member and Assistant Director were able to reassure the Committee that

robust policies and procedures existed within Central Bedfordshire and individual schools regarding CRB checking of those persons (staff and volunteers) having contact with children.

CS/12/47 **Youth Services Provision**

The Executive Member introduced his report, which provided the Committee with an update about commissioned Youth Support Services and outlined proposals for meeting the new national requirements captured within 'Positive for Youth'. The report was supplemented by a presentation from the Head of Children's Services Commissioning and representatives of the Youth Parliament, which provided the Committee with an insight into the work of Youth Support Services and the Youth Parliament in the context of emerging national policy. Specifically, the presentation covered:-

- The policy context, particularly referring to "Positive for Youth", a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13 to 19;
- The key themes of this new approach;
- The local context;
- The work and achievements of the Youth Parliament; and
- Next steps.

At the end of the presentation, members of the Youth Parliament were allowed the opportunity to ask questions of the Committee and Executive Member present, which centred on raising awareness of the Youth Parliament and encouraging volunteering.

Members of the Committee then discussed the report and presentation in further detail and raised the following issues:-

- A lack of sufficient detail regarding the activities, locations, participation rates, targeted services and outcomes relating to commissioned youth services to enable the Committee to adequately scrutinise proposed changes. The Committee was concerned to ensure the service was reaching the most vulnerable and sought clarity regarding how the service had already changed and how it would change further under new proposals;
- The initial focus of Youth Parliament inspections and the advantage of beginning with the voluntary sector. The Head of Children's Services Commissioning confirmed that the initial focus would be the NHS and pharmacies although the voluntary sector would be considered in due course; and
- The benefit of involving representatives of the Youth Parliament in some of the consultations the Council undertook and the wish to invite them to future meetings of the Committee. Mention was also made of the possibility of formally co-opting a member of the Youth Parliament onto the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, although it was noted that this required full Council approval;

With regard to the first bullet point, the Executive Member acknowledged the issue and agreed that further information was required to allow Committee Members the opportunity to draw conclusions and generate informed recommendations concerning the effectiveness with which services were operating and reaching the most vulnerable. The Head of Children's Services Commissioning explained however that due to regulatory and contractual time constraints, comments and recommendations from Committee Members were required before 12 November (i.e. before the next scheduled Committee meeting). The Committee therefore agreed to request the Executive Member to direct officers to provide more detailed information as soon as possible to be discussed at a briefing session prior to 12 November. Committee Members could attend this session in order to discuss the more detailed performance information and strengthened commissions. The Committee also agreed to receive a full update regarding the outcomes of the commissioning process at a future meeting in the new calendar year.

Finally, the Committee wished to record its thanks and congratulate the members of the Youth Parliament for their excellent presentation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **That the Executive Member be requested to direct officers to provide more detailed information as soon as possible to be discussed at a briefing session prior to 12 November.**
2. **That the Executive Member submits a full update regarding the outcomes of the commissioning process at a future meeting in the new calendar year.**

CS/12/48

Work Programme 2012 - 2013 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and noted that consideration of the draft 2013/14 Budget, scheduled for the 11 December meeting had now been postponed to the 15 January. With this in mind, the Committee agreed to cancel the December meeting, moving any remaining items to the January meeting.

A Member also raised a query regarding the current level of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire and requested a verbal update at the next available meeting, which was agreed.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the revisions to the Children's Services OSC Work Programme outlined above be noted.

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

Chairman

Dated

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