

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, 11 December 2012

PRESENT

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

Councillors:	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

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

Apologies for
Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
Mrs F Image
J Reynolds

Substitutes: Cllrs N J Sheppard (In place of Mrs A Barker)
E Grundy (In place of J Reynolds)

Members in
Attendance: Cllrs P N Aldis
Mrs S Clark Deputy Executive Member for
Children's Services
A L Dodwell Deputy Executive Member for
Children's Services

Officers in
Attendance: Mr B Carter Corporate Policy & Scrutiny
Manager
Mr P Dudley Assistant Director Children's
Services (Learning & Strategic
Commissioning)
Mr R Parsons Head of School Organisation and
Capital Planning
Miss H Redding Head of Learning and School
Support

CS/12/49 Minutes**RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/12/50 Members' Interests

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

CS/12/51 Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman had no announcements.

CS/12/52 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/12/53 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/12/54 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/12/55 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/12/56 Executive Member Update

The Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on current activities pertaining to her portfolio, which were not already included on today's agenda. This covered the recent national publicity regarding Ofsted's primary school rankings throughout England, which confirmed that Central Bedfordshire schools were in the top 10%. Members of the Committee congratulated the Deputy Executive Member on this achievement but reiterated their concern over the performance of upper schools, which were not as good. The Assistant Director, Children's Services acknowledged the issue and confirmed that a related report would be submitted and considered by the Committee at its February 2013 meeting.

CS/12/57 School Funding Reforms

The Deputy Executive Member introduced this report, which provided the Committee with details of the changes being made to schools funding in response to requirements from the Department for Education introduced in Summer 2012 (with the changes coming into full effect in the 2013/14 financial year). The report was supplemented by a presentation delivered by the Assistant Director, Children's Services, which specifically addressed the following issues:-

- Background, covering the introduction of the current Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), its calculation and the Guaranteed Unit of Funding (GUF), which for Central Bedfordshire amounted to £4,658 (less than many neighbouring authorities);
- Arrangements for 2013/14, covering how DSG will now be split into 3 notional unringfenced blocks (Schools, High Needs & Early Years), with allocation of the Schools block delegated to schools;
- The funding of Free Schools, UTC, Studio Schools and FE Colleges based on local formula;
- The simplification of local arrangements for the distribution of funding to schools and other providers;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee in 13/14 and 14/15, which will be set at negative 1.5% per pupil;
- The key points impacting upon the Schools Block calculation, which will be pupil led, using only 5 factors (basic entitlement, deprivation, lump sum, split site and rates); and
- The key points impacting upon the Early Years and High Needs Blocks.

At the end of the presentation, the Assistant Director, Children's Services also paid tribute to the Schools Forum for its collaborative and positive approach to the allocation of schools funding to ensure a secure future for all schools.

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

- How the introduction of these changes affected individual schools. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that such information was available on the Council's website;
- Why Academies were included in schools funding. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that the local authority acted merely as a conduit for Academy Schools funding;
- The funding of places in Special Schools particularly with regard to those pupils who lived outside of the Authority's area. The Assistant Director, Children's Services confirmed that the Council was in discussion with the Department for Education and its neighbouring Authorities regarding the methodology for setting charges for such pupils.

Finally, Members of the Committee wished to record its thanks and congratulate all officers involved for sensitively managing what could have been a divisive issue.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the changes made to Schools Funding be noted.

CS/12/58

Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Council's Admissions Arrangements

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented this report, which outlined the Executive's approval of the commencement of consultation on proposed changes to the Council's Admission Arrangements, with specific reference to the Council's coordinated admissions scheme and admission arrangements for Community and VC Schools. The Assistant Director went on to explain the differences between the admissions policy as it currently stands and that which was proposed for the academic year 2014/15.

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

- With regard to pupils with siblings at a school, Members queried the definition of a "school" in this context when set against the changing educational landscape of federations and split school sites. The Assistant Director confirmed that the term "school" in this context could refer to a single federation of schools or a school with split sites;
- With regard to the principle of "straight line distance", Members expressed some concern over the difficulties this may create for pupils resident in Central Bedfordshire wishing to attend schools near county boundaries;
- With regard to parental choice, the difficulty some parents experienced when trying to realise such choice at good schools which were already over-subscribed and conversely, the difficulty less popular schools had in trying to ensure sufficient pupil numbers.

The Assistant Director acknowledged the complexity of these issues and the possibility of reviewing admission arrangements to reflect local circumstances following the consultation exercise. It was therefore important to encourage a good response rate to the consultation exercise, which would hopefully capture these issues in more detail.

In conclusion, whilst the Committee was generally supportive of the proposed admission arrangements outlined within the report, it acknowledged the need for Members to encourage parents, school governors and head teachers to respond to the consultation before final admission arrangements were determined.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee endorses the proposed school admission arrangements in principle, but requests all to encourage parents, school

governors and head teachers to respond to the consultation exercise before final arrangements are determined.

CS/12/59

Consultation on Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning in Schools

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented this report, which outlined the Executive's approval of the commencement of consultation on proposed Policy Principles for Pupil Place Planning in schools which, if adopted, would form the basis for the development of commissioning options for New School Places in Central Bedfordshire.

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

- The definition of a "new school" in the context of Department for Education guidance. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning confirmed that in this context, a new school meant a new legal entity and brand new provision;
- Concern over the description of Principle 9 regarding Special Educational Needs provision, which seemed to suggest provision in mainstream schools only. The Assistant Director confirmed that this was not the intention and would therefore revise the description to ensure place planning at Special Schools was also captured explicitly;
- Whilst Members were generally supportive of the principles outlined within the report, there was some concern over the difficulty in executing them in practice in a consistent and compatible manner.

In conclusion, the Committee was content to endorse for consultation the nine policy principles outlined within the report subject to the amendment of principle 9 to ensure place planning at Special Schools was also captured.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Committee endorses for consultation the nine policy principles outlined within the report subject to the amendment of principle 9 to ensure place planning at Special Schools is also captured.

CS/12/60

Q2 Performance Monitoring

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented the Quarter 2 Performance report, which highlighted performance within the Children's Services directorate for the second quarter of 2012/13. The Assistant Director commented that performance overall was good, with all but one indicator on track. He also confirmed that mitigating actions had been implemented to address this one particular indicator (designated as Amber), which would ensure the target would be achieved by year end.

Members of the Committee were content with performance and noted the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/61 **Quarter 2 Revenue Budget Monitoring**

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented this report, which set out the revenue position of the Children's Services Directorate to the end of September 2012 (the second quarter of 2012/13).

He further explained that the full year projected revenue outturn position for 2012/13 was a £1.602M over spend against a £33.112M net budget. He also discussed the continuing trend of pressures within Children's Services operations (safeguarding, looked after children, etc) mitigated by under spends within Learning, Commissioning and Partnerships.

Members of the Committee were content with the budgetary position outlined and noted the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/62 **Quarter 2 Capital Budget Monitoring**

The Assistant Director, Children's Services presented this report, which set out the capital position of the Children's Services Directorate as at 30 September 2012 (the second quarter of 2012/13).

Members of the Committee discussed the contents of the report and noted the position with regard to scheme slippage.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be noted.

CS/12/63 **Work Programme 2012 - 2013 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current Work Programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and were content with the agenda items proposed for consideration at forthcoming meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.40 a.m.)

Chairman

Dated