

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, 3 September 2013

PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)
Cllr N B Costin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	R D Berry D Bowater Mrs G Clarke Mrs R J Drinkwater	Councillors:	P Hollick D Jones R B Pepworth
Parental Co-optees:	H Copley Mr S Court D Landman		
Church of England Co-optee: Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Mr Reynolds		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Mrs D B Gurney Mrs F Image	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	B Saunders (In place of Mrs D B Gurney)	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	P N Aldis Mrs S Clark Mrs S A Goodchild A Shadbolt R C Stay M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for External Affairs and Lead Member for Troubled Families Executive Member for Children's Services
Officers in Attendance:	Mr P Dudley Mrs E Grant Mr J Partridge	Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning) Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services Scrutiny Policy Adviser	

CS/13/45 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 July 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/13/46 **Members' Interests**

Cllr Costin declared an interest as Chairman of Barnfield College. Councillor Barker also declared an interest in relation to Item 10 as it referred specifically to Holywell Academy and Haynes Lower Schools.

CS/13/47 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman congratulated students and those who supported them in relation to the recent invalidated exam results. The Chairman also informed the Committee she had attended the Social Care, Health and Housing OSC to discuss issues relating to the East of England Ambulance Service Trust and changes to paediatric services at Bedford Hospital.

CS/13/48 **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/13/49 **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/13/50 **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/13/51 **Requested Items**

The Committee noted that item 11 (Troubled Families Initiative) had been previously requested by a Member and included on the agenda for detailed discussion.

CS/13/52 **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update on activity pertaining to his portfolio. This included the following:-

- Congratulations for students on 2012/13 exam results, which although invalidated suggested a 1% improvement on 2011/12 and were positive in the national context.

- The recent announcement of the Education Secretary that young people who did not achieve a grade C in English or maths would be required to continue to study the subject.
- Changes in the age ranges at four schools that he had recently approved via delegated powers.

In response the Committee raised several questions, to which the following responses were provided:-

- The outcome of a consideration by the Portfolio Holder of literacy rates in Central Bedfordshire would be provided in writing to the Committee outside the meeting.
- There was currently sufficient capacity for school places at primary level in Central Bedfordshire, although there may be issues at secondary level.
- An announcement relating to SAT results would be made once they had been validated.

Following the discussion it was agreed that an item be added to a future agenda concerning the implications of the Education Secretary's announcement on the study of English and maths.

NOTED the update.

CS/13/53

Consultation on School Funding Arrangements for 2014/15

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced a report that provided the background and essential knowledge on the consultation on school funding arrangements for 2014/15. In addition the Assistant Director Learning, and Strategic Commissioning delivered a presentation that summarised the key changes in school funding reforms including a summary of the contents of the consultation. The Assistant Director also circulated a copy of the school funding reform consultation and associated papers.

In light of the report and further clarification the Committee commented and discussed several issues in detail as follows:-

- School budgets for 2014/15, which it was confirmed would be based on the most recent pupil numbers available, particularly for those schools where there had been a change of age range.
- The Council should consider whether amalgamated new schools could continue to receive additional funding beyond the first financial year.
- The system for high needs block funding, which would remain broadly the same for 2013/14 both nationally and locally.
- Whether a separate consultation regarding top up funding for special schools would be undertaken. The Assistant Director commented that due to the level of engagement that had been undertaken prior to the consultation a separate consultation was not considered to be necessary.
- It was currently envisaged that a consultation on setting the place value at £10k for special schools and academies with post-16 pupils would commence in December 2013. However, a consultation could not

commence until the Children and Families Bill had been further developed or enacted.

Following discussion the Committee agreed that in order to agree a view on the proposed changes to school funding they needed to be provided with a summary of the consultation responses. It was agreed that a summary of responses be provided to the Committee in October 2013.

RECOMMENDED that a report summarising responses to the consultation on school funding reform be presented to the Committee in October 2013 to enable the Committee to form a view.

CS/13/54

Troubled Families Initiative

The Executive Member for External Affairs and Lead Member for the Troubled Families Initiative delivered a presentation that set out the criteria for troubled families, the Council's approach, lessons learned and emerging issues so far. The Executive Member stressed the importance of the initiative demonstrating measurable change and making a real difference for families. The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services also circulated an early troubled families programme outcomes scorecard.

In light of the presentation and the information contained in the scorecard the Committee commented and discussed several issues in detail as follows:-

- The importance of sharing data in order to achieve successful outcomes. Issues in relation to data sharing included accessibility and organisations needing to develop a common approach. The Council worked with other local authorities to minimise duplication where possible.
- The manner in which the Council measured outcomes to ensure the initiative was adding value. The Executive Member commented that whilst it was early days the Council would benchmark itself against other local authorities due to funding for the initiative being provided on a payment by results basis.
- The value of involving the third sector, which the Executive Member agreed to consider and develop further.
- Whether the initiative could demonstrate value for money. The Executive Member estimated that £29k could be saved across agencies per year for each family engaged in the initiative.
- The importance of encouraging partners, such as private landlords, to engage in the initiative in order to achieve successful outcomes.
- Whether the Council could provide more information on the bid to the Department of Local Government and Transport to support a more integrated approach to domestic violence. Whilst further information was not presently available the Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services agreed to circulate information in writing outside the meeting when the outcome was known.
- Whether the Council felt it was necessary to lobby Government for benefits to be paid directly to landlords. In response the Executive Member commented that lobbying Government would not deliver

improved outcomes for families, it was important for the Council to work with the system that was already in place.

NOTED the presentation

CS/13/55 **Annual Report for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service**

As a Member of the Adoption Panel Councillor Barker left the meeting during consideration of this item and Councillor Costin chaired this item only.

The Executive Member for Children's Services introduced a report that outlined the statutory framework and summarised the contents of the annual reports of the Adoption Agency, Fostering Agency and Private Fostering for 2012/13. In addition the Executive Member highlighted that the Adoption and Fostering Service had previously been a shared service with Bedford Borough Council although it had recently been decided that it would be disaggregated. The service was subject to increased workload pressure and a new service model would be in place from January 2014. The Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services also commented that these were statutory reports that had also been presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

In response to a question the Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services advised the Committee that changes in relation to the process for taking cases through the courts would reduce the time taken for cases to be considered.

NOTED the 2012/13 annual reports of the Adoption Agency, Fostering Agency and Private Fostering.

CS/13/56 **Home to School Transport Policy Review**

The Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services delivered a presentation regarding home to school transport that set out the need to amend the Council's current policy, proposed changes/improvements and the proposed timescale for consultation in order to implement proposals in September 2014. In addition the Executive Member agreed to circulate a copy of the consultation document and proposed policy to Members by email outside of the meeting.

In light of the presentation the Committee commented and discussed several issues in detail as follows:-

- Whether the Council was proposing to review school catchment areas. In response the Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services clarified that the Council was not currently considering a review of catchment areas, it was important however that the Council understood the extent of catchment areas, for example for special schools the catchment area could be the whole of Central Bedfordshire.
- Whether the Council would consider a working group to discuss innovative ways of saving money in relation to home to school transport. The Chairman commented that the Committee would review the final proposals for the policy in December 2013. Following that further review the Committee could consider whether a working group was necessary.

- Safety criteria relating to home to school transport were defined in the proposed policy and were not proposed to be amended.

NOTED the presentation

CS/13/57

Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan. The Committee were informed of the following proposed changes:-

- The addition of an item on School funding to be received in October 2013.
- The postponement of the item on the disability review programme to December 2013.
- The addition of an item regarding the Home to School Transport Policy in December 2013.
- The removal of the item on New School Places to be implemented by September 2016, which was proposed to be received on 15 October 2013. The Committee were informed that this report would not be ready in October as a result of delayed planning applications. Proposals would be considered by the Executive on 10 December 2013 and it was proposed that the Executive report be circulated to Members of the OSC outside of the meeting to invite comment to be provided alongside the Executive report.

RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved subject to the changes detailed above.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.25 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated