

## 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, 15 October 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: Mrs D B Gurney  
D Jones  
R B Pepworth

Parental Co-optees: H Copley  
Mr S Court  
D Landman

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

Members in Attendance:

Cllrs P N Aldis

A L Dodwell

Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services

Mrs S A Goodchild  
B Saunders  
M A G Versallion

Executive Member for Children's Services

Officers in Attendance:

N Carter

Chairman - Resilience Group

P Hardy  
J Partridge  
P Picton

Compliance and Risk Adviser  
Scrutiny Policy Adviser  
Chairman – Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board  
Acting Assistant Director, Operational Services, Children's Services

Mrs S Tyler

CS/13/58 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 03 September 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/13/59 **Members' Interests**

Councillor Costin declared an interest as Chairman of Barnfield College.  
Councillor Versallion also declared an interest as he knew one of the attendees for item 11.

**CS/13/60 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Committee that an election process was underway to appoint two parent governor representatives to the Committee from January 2014. The appointments would be confirmed in due course. A consultation was also underway in relation to transport to schools. Mr D Landman commented that parent governors of academies were not currently permitted to be co-opted to the Committee and suggested that the Council reconsider this position in the future. The Chairman commented that she was aware of other governors of local authority schools who were not parent governors who were also not eligible to be co-opted.

**CS/13/61 Petitions**

No petitions were received from members of the public.

**CS/13/62 Questions, Statements or Deputations**

No questions, statements or deputations were received from members of the public.

**CS/13/63 Call-In**

The Panel was advised that no decisions of the Executive had been referred to the Panel under the Call-in Procedures.

**CS/13/64 Requested Items**

No items were referred to the Committee for consideration.

**CS/13/65 Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Children's Services provided the Committee with an update, including the following:-

- The recent Looked After Children awards, which had been very positive.
- The opening of Greenleas School, which the Executive Member had attended.
- Dissapointment relating to Barnfield Federation recently pulling out as an academy sponsor at Brewers Hill Middle School.
- A recent Member development session regarding school performance data, which had been well attended.
- A Governors Forum meeting, which would be held the following week.

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

- Potential future parent governors were welcome to attend Governors Forum meetings.

- Whilst the public had expressed concern regards changes to schools in Dunstable it was crucial that results were improved. The Executive Member agreed to provide an update to the Committee on the proposed changes in Dunstable at the earliest opportunity.

CS/13/66

### **Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report**

The Executive Member introduced the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) and recorded his thanks for the Chairman's hard work and commitment. The Chairman of CBSCB informed the Committee that the annual report had been agreed by the Board but there were no fundamental changes to the version presented to the Committee.

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

- The need to reinforce work underway to increase the involvement of GPs and schools, especially academies. The Chairman of CBSCB explained he had attended several meetings to understand and advise on issues relating to safeguarding in schools. The CBSCB also provided training that had been attended by Headteachers and designated safeguarding persons in schools.
- The financial implications of disaggregating the joint business support arrangements for the Safeguarding Children's Boards of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough, which the Chairman of CBSCB did not consider to be significant to the work of the Board.
- Concerns that several online training courses were not listed in appendix C to the annual report. The Chairman of CBSCB explained that the appendix detailed only that training which had been organised by CBSCB, there was further training provided by individual agencies that had not been included.
- Concerns that the annual report had not been published until October. The Chairman of CBSCB explained that the report had been delayed due to the late publication of statutory guidelines and the development of a standard national framework for drafting the reports.
- CBSCB should be congratulated on the high feedback rates to the training that had been provided.
- The annual report demonstrated the increasing demand for children's services and the importance of budgets being allocated appropriately in order to respond to demand.
- The importance of engagement with and participation of children and the need to ensure that the Council responds to the outcomes of this engagement. It was also suggested that the Committee should try to engage with young people, for example with the Youth Parliament, more frequently.
- Concerns regarding the high numbers of children who have been the subject of a plan on more than one occasion. The Chairman of CBSCB explained that these figures were higher than expected and there were several possible reasons that he would investigate further.
- The importance of identifying children who were also carers. The Acting Assistant Director commented that this was a very pertinent issue for the Council and work was underway with schools to identify children. The

Chairman of CBSCB also commented on the importance of schools and GPs leading in this area.

- Whether the Council would be aware of any support provided to families who lived in Central Bedfordshire but received support in Bedford or Luton. The Chairman of CBSCB explained that he met regularly with the Chairmen of the other local Boards in order to discuss concerns although this was an ongoing challenge.

In addition to the issues raised by the Committee the Chairman of CBSCB was invited to raise issues with the Committee as appropriate. It was also suggested that an appendix be added to the report detailing the feedback that the CBSCB had received from those committees to which it had been presented.

**RECOMMENDED that the comments of the Committee as detailed in the Minutes be noted.**

(Meeting adjourned at 1109 and reconvened at 1114)

CS/13/67

### **Annual Report for the Resilience Group for Schools and other settings**

The Compliance and Risk Adviser introduced the annual report for the Resilience Group for Schools and other settings covering the period September 2011-August 2013. The Committee were advised that progress had been made in relation to each of the future priorities detailed in the report. In addition the Chairman of the Resilience Group, commented that he would like to present the annual report to the Committee each year in order to receive views from Members on where the group should focus their effort.

In response to the report and further clarification provided the Committee commented and discussed the following issues in detail:-

- Concerns regarding schools within the same area managing resilience in different ways. Nearby schools should be encouraged to collaborate and have similar resilience plans.
- The importance of schools providing sufficient notice to parents with regards to closures. It was commented that whilst schools tried to provide sufficient advance notice of closure they could equally be criticised for making a decision too early.
- Concerns that the automated system for alerting parents to school closures did not work after a certain time in the evening.
- Whether teachers who were unable to attend their normal place of work would attend other local schools during adverse weather. It was clarified that this was no longer a requirement for teachers.
- Concerns that the level of practical support information provided by the Resilience Group was insufficient for schools to undertake emergency/ business continuity planning. It was commented that the Group did provide templates for schools to use but the onus was on schools to develop their own plans.
- The benefit of undertaking a 'lessons learnt' exercise after an incident in order to develop future business continuity plans in light of experience.
- All Members should be made aware of the annual report.

- The benefit of schools negotiating to use local buildings, such as churches, in incidents where children and young people are evacuated from schools during adverse weather.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

1. **That the comments of the Committee as detailed in the Minutes be noted and that the final annual report be circulated to all Members.**
2. **That the Annual Report continue to be received by the Committee in future years.**

(Councillor Berry left the meeting during consideration of this item)

CS/13/68

#### **Customer Feedback - Complaints and Compliments Annual Report**

The Acting Assistant Director introduced the annual report of compliments, comments and complaints for children's social care for 2012/13. The Acting Assistant Director commented that the directorate always tried to learn from experience and although there had been an increase in complaints these mostly related to individual cases where persons did not agree with the action taken by the Council.

In light of the report and further clarification the Committee raised a concern that the level of compliments was low and queried how the Council would try to pick these up. Acting The Assistant Director commented that there was a mechanism for receiving compliments but there were differences between children's and adult's social care as the interventions in children's social care were generally unwelcome. The Committee requested that the customer services leaflet regarding comments, complaints and compliments be provided to all Members so that they could advise residents appropriately on submitting these to the Council.

#### **NOTED the report.**

(Councillor Drinkwater left the meeting during consideration of this item)

CS/13/69

#### **Capital Budget Monitoring**

The Executive Member introduced the projected full year forecast for the Children's Services capital budget and highlighted the successful bids for funding outlined the report.

In response the Committee commented and discussed the following in detail:-

- Whether the Council would expect the level of need for temporary units in schools to be greater than £400k. The Executive Member commented that the plan was flexible and if the level of need increased the amount of funding available could be reviewed.
- Whether the University Technical College (UTC) was viable based on the current numbers of students. The Executive Member commented that the UTC was an important part of the Council's education offer and given time to bed in the numbers of students would improve.

- The need to enhance the standards of middle schools in the East of Central Bedfordshire. The Executive Member commented that the Council was aware of the issues and was trying to resolve it.
- The need to clarify why information relating to Automatic Number Plate Recognition was applicable to Children's Services.

**NOTED the report.**

**CS/13/70 Revenue Budget Monitoring**

The Executive Member introduced the projected full year forecast for the Children's Services revenue budget and highlighted the challenges that were currently faced by the Council and particularly the concerns of how directorate would meet its budget.

In response the Committee commented and discussed the following in detail:-

- The importance of allocating appropriate funds to the directorate in the future in light of the growing demand on Children's Services.
- Concerns relating to the pressure resulting from disaggregating the adoption and fostering service.

**NOTED the report.**

(Councillor Pepworth left the meeting during consideration of this item)

**CS/13/71 Performance Monitoring Report**

The Executive Member introduced the quarter one performance of the Children's Services directorate. The Committee were also informed that Ofsted were much tougher in their inspections of schools, despite a national trend of falling performance Central Bedfordshire was performing well.

**NOTED the report.**

**CS/13/72 Work Programme 2013 - 2014 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its current work programme and the latest Executive Forward Plan and requested that an item be added to the meeting in December regards the changes to schools in Dunstable. It was agreed the meeting in December should start at 9.30am to provide the Committee with more time to consider the items on the agenda.

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.27 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....