

## 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, 10 March 2015

### PRESENT

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

Councillors:	D Bowater Mrs G Clarke Mrs B Coleman	Councillors:	Mrs R J Drinkwater P Hollick
Parental Co-optees:	Mr J Chapman Mr S Court		
Church of England Co-optee:			
Roman Catholic Co-optee:			
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	P A Duckett Mr T Hodey Mrs F Image D McVicar Mr D Morton R B Pepworth	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	P N Aldis	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	Mrs S Clark C C Gomm B J Spurr M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Community Services Executive Member for Children's Services
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt Mr R Parsons Miss H Redding	Scrutiny Policy Adviser Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning Assistant Director School Improvement	

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/14/74. **Members' Interests**

None.

CS/14/75. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their contributions at meetings that had taken place over the past four years. Members were reminded of the areas of work they had considered which had made a positive difference to children's lives.

CS/14/76. **Petitions**

None

CS/14/77. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

A Speaker raised his concerns with regard to the commissioning of new school places in Leighton Buzzard and Cranfield (item 14) that included the proposed expansion of Leedon and Clipstone Brook Lower Schools, Leighton Buzzard and the perceived detrimental effect on pupil numbers at St George's Lower and Beaudesert schools in Leighton Buzzard.

In response The Executive Member for Children's Services assured the speaker that the projected numbers were accurate and that the expansion of Leedon and Clipstone Brook would not undermine the numbers attending St George's school and Beaudesert. St George's school had also been identified for a maintenance grant in 2015/16 for the upkeep of the school building, which would help to attract parents and children to the school.

A further concern was raised regarding parental choice with some children attending schools outside the catchment area, which would exacerbate the car parking issues at both Leedon and Clipstone Brook schools.

CS/14/78. **Call-In**

None

CS/14/79. **Requested Items**

None

CS/14/80. **Executive Member Update**

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

- A visit by the National Working Group on Child Sexual Exploitation to the Council. A report on the findings of this working group was expected on 5 May 2015.
- Visits to schools in Amptill and Marston that had been expanded to meet pupil numbers.
- That all children (100%) in Central Bedfordshire had been allocated their choice of upper school.

A Member raised a question regarding the Government's proposal to increase the number of Free Schools and what impact this would have in Central Bedfordshire. The Executive Member advised that a limited number of applications for Free Schools had been received. However, the Academy of Central Bedfordshire was an example of a 'Good' Free School.

The Executive Member wished to record his thanks to the Chairman and the Committee for their help and support

CS/14/81. **An Introduction to the Chairman, Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LCSB)**

The Chairman welcomed Alan Caton, Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to the meeting. Mr Caton gave a short overview of his first 6 months in post.

In light of the update and clarification provided by Mr Caton, the Committee discussed the following issues:-

- Whether all partners on the LSCB cooperated fully in the work of the Board. In response Mr Caton advised he had been impressed with all partners who were keen to share their knowledge.
- Concern that the Data Protection Act was an impediment in sharing information. Mr Caton advised agencies had a duty to share information about a child and that partners must be clear about their role and be held to account.
- Whether training provided by the Police to recognise Child Sexual Exploitation could be delivered sooner. Mr Caton agreed to follow up this request and advised that the effectiveness of the training had been challenged to ensure it met the needs of all front line services.
- Whether all Local Safeguarding Board Chairmen met to share good practices. Mr Caton advised meetings did take place to discuss serious case reviews and intelligence sharing.

The Chairman thanked Mr Caton and offered the full support of the Scrutiny Committee in his role as Chairman of the LSCB.

**Noted the update.**

CS/14/82. **Exclusion from school**

The Assistant Director, School Improvement, introduced a report on pupil exclusion from schools. The report outlined the progress that had been made to reduce the number of school exclusions and the work undertaken by officers

and partners with pupils at risk of exclusion. The development of the Jigsaw Centre and Academy of Central Bedfordshire school had provided children who might otherwise have been excluded with the right support and had further reduced the exclusion rate. Officers monitored fixed term exclusions on a weekly basis and helped to support families and teachers involved.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following points in details:-

- The cost implications, especially for the Police, involved in school absenteeism. The Assistant Director advised that the Council provided a school attendance officer service for maintained schools that could also be purchased by academies.
- Whether the number of children excluded from school had been high achievers or low achievers. The Assistant Director agreed to look at whether this information could be gathered and report back to the Committee.
- Whether guidance was available to help schools deal with behavioural problems and whether a statemented process was required. The Assistant Director advised there was clear guidance provided to schools and it was important that schools followed the guidance and requested a statutory assessment if appropriate at the right time for a child.
- Concern that children and teachers affected by the behaviour of a child excluded from school should be offered advice and support. The Assistant Director advised that staff support was available and that schools are given clear advice, support and guidance when a child is at risk of exclusion.

**RECOMMENDED that a school exclusion report be provided on an annual basis to the committee including detail on profile of pupils excluded from schools.**

#### CS/14/83. **Educational Visits and Journeys Annual Report**

The Compliance and Risk Adviser introduced a report that detailed the development work and statistical summary of educational visits undertaken by all schools in Central Bedfordshire. Each school had an Educational Visits Co-ordinator, fully trained by the Council and visits were monitored remotely by officers.

In light of the report, Members discussed the following concerns in detail:-

- Whether visits, considered hazardous in nature, had taken place and where. In response the Compliance and Risk Adviser agreed to provide a case study of those visits that had been undertaken.
- Concern that every child was included on an educational visit arranged by schools. Members were advised that schools are required to comply with the Equality Act when planning visits.
- Whether outcomes of educational visits were recorded to ensure the initial aims had been met and had made a difference to the child. In response the Assistant Director advised that educational aims were required but a review was not always provided. One of the roles of School Governors was to challenge their schools around the purpose, outcomes, equalities and benefits of school trip.

**RECOMMENDED that a case study of visits demonstrating outcomes be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.**

CS/14/84. **Special Educational Needs (SEND) Reforms**

The Assistant Director, School Improvement, updated the Committee on the implementation of the SEND Reforms in the Children and Families Act. The reforms had given parents and students a greater voice and a Parent/carer Special Needs Action Panel (SNAP) was working closely with officers to co-produce guidance and plans. This work had produced a local offer that had been made available in one place on the Council website. In response to feedback received, the website now had much more information and included details such as leisure opportunities.

In light of the update, Members of the Committee raised the following concerns:-

- The need for officers to continue to raise awareness on the SEND Reforms with articles placed in Central Essentials and Governor Essentials. Due to the size of the code of practice, a Member proposed the provisions be broken down into bite sized headlines.
- That pupils continue to be engaged in the development process. The Assistant Director advised that officers had started work on an interactive website with SEN children and would continue to seek their input in that workstream.
- That mainstream schools continue to be provided with specialist support when dealing with SEND issues. The Assistant Director School Improvement advised that the Partnership Vision for Education and Children's and Young people's Plan include SEND.

The Executive Member for Children's Services advised a Development Workshop was planned for Chairmen and Panel Members on this important area of work.

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Members of the Committee receive an Overview of the progress on SEND Reforms that included case studies**

CS/14/85. **Commissioning of new school places in Leighton Buzzard and Cranfield**

The Executive Members for Children's Services introduced a report that outlined the need to expand Clipstone Brook and Leedon schools in Leighton Buzzard and the Cranfield Church of England Academy. A plan to carry out this work had been in the work programme for some time and was essential to meet the projected number of school places required.

In relation to the Cranfield site, all parties including planners, developers, the school and ward members had met to consider the constraints of the site's access through a small cul-de-sac. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning advised the Committee that public meetings would be held in

May to allow residents to view the proposed plans. A bespoke meeting would also be held with Town and Parish Councillors. A Member queried whether any other solution existed for Cranfield, however, due to budget and site availability, other options had proved to be untenable.

Members supported the suggestion that a travel plan be submitted with the planning permissions to Development Management Committee rather than the usual pre-condition of planning for the Cranfield school site.

With regards to the two Leighton Buzzard schools, parking was again of major concern because of the schools proximity in housing estates. The Head of School Organisation and Capital Planning reiterated the need for expansion at Clipstone Brook and Leedon and that schools places in St Georges Lower and Beaudesert would not be affected.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. **That the Committee supports the expansions of all three schools but that it has reservations regarding the lack of parking and drop-off points at the Cranfield Academy and Leedon and Clipstone Brook, Leighton Buzzard School sites;**
2. **That a travel plan for each site be considered in conjunction with the planning permissions at Development Management Committee;**
3. **That site maps for proposed school expansions be included in all future reports.**

CS/14/86.

**Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the current draft work programme and agreed that a date for the Annual Local Safeguarding Children Board report be identified in order that the Chairman was able to attend.

**RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.25 p.m.)

Chairman .....

Dated .....