

## 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, 20 October 2015

### PRESENT

Cllr Mrs A Barker (Chairman)  
Cllr G Tubb (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	K Ferguson Mrs J Freeman P Hollick	Councillors:	A Ryan T Stock B Walker
Parental Co-optees:	Mr S Court Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands		
Church of England Co-optee:	Mr D Morton		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs P A Duckett D McVicar  Mrs F Image		
Substitutes:	Cllrs J Chatterley B Saunders		
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs I Dalgarno  Mrs A L Dodwell  C Hegley  T Swain M A G Versallion	Deputy Executive Member for Education and skills Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  Executive Member for Education and skills	
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs P Everitt  Mr P Fraser  Mr D Galvin Mrs S Harrison Mr G Jones	Scrutiny Policy Adviser  Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement Head of Financial Performance Director of Children's Services Assistant Director Children's Services Operations	

CS/15/42. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 August 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the removal of Cllr Barker's interest for the Fostering Panel.

CS/15/43. **Members' Interests**

- Cllr Barker as a Member of the Adoption Panel
- Cllr A Dodwell as a Member of the Fostering Panel.
- Cllr M Versallion as a member of his family used the Music Service.

CS/15/44. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

CS/15/45. **Petitions**

None.

CS/15/46. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/15/47. **Call-In**

None.

CS/15/48. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/15/49. **Executive Member Update**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing reported on several meetings and events she had attended and advised Members that a briefing on Supported Families would be circulated. Members were also reminded of several scrutiny briefings currently being arranged.

A Member queried when the budget analysis would be completed. The Director of Children's Services advised that work on unit costs and income had been undertaken, however the full process had not yet been completed.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills commented on his attendance at the National Children's and Adults Conference and expressed the pessimistic mood of attendees regards funding. Members were also advised that the Education Partnership Vision had been successfully launched and several schools had already signed up.

The unvalidated GCSE results had been released, showing Central Bedfordshire was 4.4% above the national average. Concern was raised at the

slow progress of some CBC schools to improve and the question was asked what steps were taken to help coasting schools? The Executive Member advised that officers stepped in to help maintained schools, however the Regional Schools Commissioner is responsible for providing help to Academies. Progress would be shared with the Committee.

CS/15/50. **Quarter 1 2015/16 Performance Report**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Q1 performance report for April to June 2015 that showed an overall strong performance by the service. Members were reminded that the new 5-Year plan would give the Committee an opportunity to refresh the KPIs included in future performance reporting.

A Member raised concern regarding the timeliness of the performance report and requested that the Committee be circulated with up-to-date information at future meetings. Members also recommended a different reporting style to present performance data.

Members also queried whether the increase in the number of schools judged to require improvement was a result of the change in inspection criteria by Ofsted. The Director advised the increase was due to a more stringent framework introduced by Ofsted and noted that three schools in this Ofsted category are three Dunstable schools which are closing.. The Director agreed to circulate a list of all schools and their most recent Ofsted inspection judgement.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That updated performance information be provided at meetings in the future.**
- 2. That a new style of performance reporting be considered for future meetings.**
- 3. That a list of schools Ofsted judgements be circulated to Members of the Committee for information.**

CS/15/51. **Fees & Charges 2016**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the fees and charges that related to Children's Services. Arrangements for the Community Services Directorate to take over responsibility for school transport were proposed and additional information on income levels would be introduced in future reporting.

In light of the information and clarification Members of the queried: Whether a 1% increased in the school transport was sufficient to accommodate the known pressures for this service. The Director explained the school transport costs were one of the highest in the country and a benchmarking exercise to seek improvements was underway. The Executive Member for Education and Skills advised of plans to reconfigure the service which would be presented to Members.

Members also requested that the list of those services sold by the Children's Services directorate including the Teaching School be circulated to the Committee.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That all Children's fees and charges be submitted to the Committee for consideration in the future.**
- 2. That the School Charging Brochure 2015/16 be circulated to the Committee for information.**
- 3. That a report be included on the work programme regarding evaluation of the impact of the work of the Teaching School.**
- 4. That the Committee support the 1% increase for the School Transport Service and no increase for the Music Service.**

#### **CS/15/52. Private Fostering Annual Report 2014-15**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced a report outlined the Private Fostering Service and activity in 2014-15. The report formed part of the governance arrangements of the Private Fostering provision required by regulation.

In light of the report Members raised the following:

- What steps could be taken to ensure the Committee considered the Annual Report sooner. The Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations advised that reporting followed a similar pattern in other Authorities, however, the timing and scheduling of the suite of Annual Reports would be reconsidered. The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing advised she would look into the issue with the cycle of meetings which had caused delays in reporting.
- That the report did not address outcomes for Children in the Private, Fostering and Adoption Annual Reports. In response the Assistant Director agreed to include this information in future reports. The 5-Year plan would give Members the opportunity to recommend new KPI's that would support their scrutiny of this area.
- The current number of private fostering arrangements known to the directorate for which Members support in raising awareness within their Wards was welcomed.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That the timetabling of the Private Fostering Annual Report be reviewed to enable early submission to Committee.**
- 2. That performance measures and outcomes be outlined in future reports.**
- 3. That the role of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Panel to Scrutinise Private Fostering, Fostering and Adoption be examined to avoid duplication of roles.**
- 4. That cover-sheets of future annual reports include the month, review date and published date.**

CS/15/53. **Fostering Agency Annual Report 2014/15**

The Executive Member Social Care and Housing introduced the Fostering Annual Report 2014/15 that outlined the success in the placement of children referred for fostering and sought the support of Members to raise the profile of the Fostering Service .

In light of the report, Members queried the following:-

- The success rate in the placement of siblings into Foster Care. The Assistant Director advised that siblings were always placed together where possible although this was challenging.
- The trend in fostering breakdown. The Practice Manager advised that Social Workers worked with Foster Carer families and arranged support group sessions and activities to keep breakdowns to a minimum. All complaints received by the service were investigated and action taken where required.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That performance measures and outcomes be outlined in future reports.**
- 2. That each Member be sent fostering leaflets for distribution in their Wards.**

CS/15/54. **Adoption Agency Annual Report 2014/15**

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2014/15 that outlined the service activity and proposed development. The Assistant Director advised that of the seven children awaiting adoption placement, five had been successfully placed. A total of 29 children had been adopted in 2014/15, which was an increase on 2013/14.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That the Executive Member and officers consider how statistical information could be presented in the future.**
- 2. That lessons learnt and new ways of working be included in future reporting.**

CS/15/55. **Consultation on the Council's Admissions Arrangements for the academic year 2017/18**

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report on the Council's Admission Arrangements for 2017/18. The Executive on 6 October 2015 had approved the consultation process on admissions arrangements and the Committee comments and recommendations would be considered by the Director of Children's Services and Executive Member who had delegated authority to determine admission arrangements at the end of the consultation period.

Clarity was sought regarding the criteria for parental preference and catchment area that had caused confusion for some parents. The Executive Member advised that parental preference did not feature in the admissions criteria and would only be offered subject to capacity. The Director explained that schools

worked closely in localities to ensure the system worked fairly. Reassurances were provided that there was no scope for schools to 'cherry pick' students.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1. The Executive Member for Education and Skills update the Committee on the outcome of the Council's Admission Arrangements for the Academic Year 2017/18.**
- 2. That school catchment area criteria for all wards be circulated to the Committee.**

CS/15/56.

### **Securing Economic, Personal and Social Success with Young People – The Youth Support Service Annual Report (2014/15)**

The Head of Partnerships, Community Engagement and Youth Support introduced a report on Securing Economic, Personal and Social success with Young People – The Youth Support Service Annual Report. The report outlined the wide range of services delivered and managed to support youth in the Directorate. The report had also been circulated to partner organisations. The service fulfilled the council's duty to track the youth who are NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training). It had helped and had built good relationships with schools, colleges and youth offending teams. The service had been successful in the numbers of youth supported and engaged in further education, training, work experience and other activities.

In light of the report and clarification sought, Members raised the following queries:-

- What help was available to youth that had completed college but were unable to find work. The Head of Partnerships advised that Business and Regeneration Directorate took the lead in providing support to people over the age of 18 and there are strong links with the Youth Support Service to deliver this.
- Whether those children that entered a form of training, work experience or volunteering received a certificate to help them obtain work. The Head of Partnerships advised that all training and volunteering activities are accredited. Informal learning is measured using a national framework supported by the government's Centre for Youth Impact. It was noted that the long term cost to society of young people who were NEET is significant, both in financial terms and other ways such as: worklessness, drug and alcohol misuse, crime and premature mortality.
- What performance targets were used for the Youth Offending Service? The Head of Partnerships advised that the Youth Justice Board receives data on first time entrants to the criminal justice system, custodial sentences and re-offending rate, but do not set targets for any of these measures, however, local targets are on track. Local performance is better than national and regional averages for each of these measures.
- What volunteering opportunities existed for the youth. The Head of Partnerships advised that short, medium and long term volunteering opportunities were available and accredited using the V-Inspired framework.
- It was noted that services provided by the Youth Support Team are accessed by members of the Traveller community and that there had been

a recent significant increase in demand from the growing number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That the Committee continue to receive an Annual Report for The Youth Support Service.**
- 2. That a further report be submitted to the Committee that includes joint work with the Business and Regeneration directorate to provide information and advice and guidance to young people to inform their career choices and support them into employment, including those that transition into adulthood (i.e. those over 18).**

CS/15/57. **Work Programme 2015/16 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Chairman advised the following items would be discussed at the December meeting of the Committee and the Work Programme would be amended appropriately:-

- Q2 Budget report
- Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report
- 5-Year Plan
- Strategy for the provision of SEND places in Central Bedfordshire

Prior to consideration of the strategy for the provision of SEND places a Member suggested that the Committee visit Biggleswade and Dunstable SEND provision to inform the discussion.

**RECOMMENDED that the work programme be approved subject to the amendments detailed in the minutes above.**

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

Chairman .....

Dated .....