

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, 8 December 2015

PRESENT

Cllr (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		
Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Mrs F Image		
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs	Mrs A Barker P A Duckett D McVicar	
Substitutes:	Cllrs	J Chatterley	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs	M C Blair Mrs A L Dodwell C Hegley J G Jamieson P Smith M A G Versallion	Chairman of Audit Deputy Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Executive Member for Social Care and Housing Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive Executive Member for Education and skills
Officers in Attendance:	Mrs S Branagan Mrs P Everitt Mrs S Harrison Mr G Jones Mrs K Oellermann		customer relations manager Scrutiny Policy Adviser Director of Children's Services Assistant Director Children's Services Operations Assistant Director - Commissioning & Partnerships

- CS/15/58. **Minutes**
Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 October 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Vice-chairman as a correct record subject to the following additions to Minute CS/15/50:-
- Recommended that
- 1) A simple KPI dashboard be made available to scrutiny alongside "plans on a page" against the core drivers of these KPI's. This would allow scrutiny more visibility on the information required to set an independent agenda ie scrutiny members would understand better what items it would like to increase focus on to maximise the value of the meeting.
 - 2) A member identified that whilst the national position on GCSE results was positive for CBC, against our Statistical Neighbours we had fallen 2 places to 9th out of 11.
- CS/15/59. **Members' Interests**
None.
- CS/15/60. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**
The Chairman reminded Members of the LGA Scrutiny Training on Friday 11 December, 2015 and requested all Members of the Committee attend this event. Members were asked to note the change of the next meeting date to take place on Thursdays 28 January 2016.
- CS/15/61. **Petitions**
None.
- CS/15/62. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**
None.
- CS/15/63. **Call-In**
None.
- CS/15/64. **Requested Items**
None.
- CS/15/65. **Executive Member Update**
The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing reported on several meetings and events she had attended including budget preparations. Members were advised that budget papers would be available on 23 December 2015 and drop-in sessions for Members to meet with officers and Executive Members and raise any concerns were planned. A Member briefing on Children's Services performance was also planned early in the New Year.
- A Member queried how the Executive would resolve tension where the Council could no longer financially support services. The Executive Member advised that opportunities to review other ways of funding services were being explored, which included opportunities to jointly commission services.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills commented on concerns regarding the capital schools programme and advised the Committee that the Board of BEMAT had appointed a new Chairman and Chief Executive. He also advised the Committee that the Regional Schools Commissioner had recruited staff to lead on school improvement and that 47 of the 158 schools in Central Bedfordshire had signed up to the Education Vision. A letter would be sent to those schools who had not yet indicated their support. An update in relation to the Education Vision and its work streams would be presented at the next Committee meeting.

A report on Skills, Vocations and GCSE's was also being placed on the Executive forward plan and the Committee would be invited to comment on the proposals before Executive. A Member Briefing on the changes to GCSE and A levels would be provided to Committee Members before 28 January 2016.

A Member stressed the importance of dovetailing education and skills and the Council having its own strategy to ensure students developed the core academic skills required by employers. The Executive Member advised that guidance had been provided on the manner in which the Council works in partnership with schools and more details would be provided to the Committee in the Spring.

In response to a query the Director reassured the Committee that Department for Education Regulations in relation to the sharing of schools data were strictly adhered to.

NOTED the update

CS/15/66.

Q2 Children's Services Budget Monitoring

The Director introduced the Q2 budget monitoring report and drew attention to the current forecast revenue outturn for Children's Services, which was £1.282m overspent.

In response to questions from Members regarding the overspend of Agency Staff and the desire to recruit more in-house social workers, the Director advised that the Council had been successful in its recruitment of social worker staff which had seen vacancy rates reduce from 50% to 18% with a significant saving of £1.5-£2m. In response to a query regarding retention of social workers, the Assistant Director advised that a career development programme had been successfully implemented. Central Bedfordshire had achieved a good reputation and was confident for the future.

In response to a Member query the Assistant Director advised it was hard to evidence a correlation between the supporting families programme and the numbers of children taken into care. The Director also advised that the health and wellbeing of staff was paramount and reasons for absence were monitored.

NOTED the update

CS/15/67. **Annual Safeguarding Children's Board Report (LSCB)**

The Chairman of the Safeguarding Children's Board introduced the LSCB Annual Report 2013/14 and explained the functions of the board.

The Chairman drew the attention of Members to several key aspects of the report including the excellent working arrangement of partners in seeking out vulnerable children. The East London Foundation Trust had been given a place on the Board and an audit had been undertaken on the mental health referral hub. An on going challenge was to ensure the voices of children were heard and that lessons from national and local serious care reviews were shared and improvements implemented. Performance in relation to child assessments had been monitored and sought reassurance that those children placed outside of the Central Bedfordshire area were safeguarded.

The numbers of private fostering arrangements remained low and was a concern to the Board. A new sub group of the Board had been set up to specifically to collect the views of children. Also of concern were delays in setting up a single point of contact for service users. Some partners had been slow to sign up to new arrangements.

Learnings from three serious case reviews would be published in the New Year and the Board would ensure actions were implemented. The Board would also focus on the readiness of the Police to deal with reports of cultural abuse and children in other dangerous settings.

In light of the report Members queried the following:-

- Whether an assessment had been undertaken of the training delivered to other agencies. The Chairman advised that LSCB training was shared with all board Members and their agencies and full details were outlined in the annual report. A performance sub group looked at key measures including Police and Health data and early help had been key in reducing the numbers of looked after children.
- The joint working arrangements that existed with adults and the supporting families programme existed and if vulnerable children at risk were known to the Board. The Chairman advised the key strategic boards communicated regularly and information was passed on regarding children at risk.
- Whether a children's charter had been considered. The Assistant Director advised that a children's pledge existed, however, there was a need to refresh this. The Corporate Parenting Panel would undertake this piece of work.
- Whether a Key Performance Indicator could be introduced to capture the happiness or effectiveness of safeguarding a child in care. The Safeguarding Board's Voice of the Child sub group had been tasked with finding a measure for this. Through Public Health, schools survey young people about their resilience and wellbeing and it was feasible to collate information on children on protection plans and in care.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Children's Pledge be circulated to the Committee.**
- 2. That the Committee's thanks be extended to the Safeguarding Children Board.**

3. That the Board's Annual Report 2014/15 be submitted to the Children Service OSC in October 2016.

CS/15/68. **Customer Relations Annual Report**

The Customer Relations Manager introduced the Customer Relations Annual Report 2013/14 that enabled the Council to review important customer feedback identify how practices might be improved. In light of the report a Member queried whether complaints were received about agency staff and how they compared to CBC staff. In light of a Member query the Customer Relations Manager advised that data did not distinguish between CBC and agency staff but all complaints were followed up.

RECOMMENDED that the report be welcomed and future reports be provided to Committee in a more timely way.

CS/15/69. **Overview of the Ofsted Inspection Process**

The Director of Children's Service delivered a presentation that outlined the framework used by Ofsted to inspect services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.

In light of a query the Director advised that preparations in readiness for inspection were continually reviewed and audits of services had been carried out. A peer review had been programmed for next year to challenge the Council's view and predicted inspection outcome.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the key performance indicators identified in the presentation be considered by the Committee separately.**
- 2. That a dashboard of key performance indicators be created to allow Scrutiny to identify good and poor performance and be a critical friend.**

CS/15/70. **5 Year Plan Performance Monitoring**

The Leader of the Council delivered a presentation that outlined the 5 Year Plan key priorities agreed by Members. Views were specifically sought on key performance metrics for Social Care Health and Housing that would open into Key Performance Indicators, targets and milestones. In the first instance a lead metric had been proposed and the Leader welcomed feedback on these or suggestions to improve them.

Members discussed the following points in detail:-

- The importance of measuring the quality of jobs and improved earnings of residents, this had a knock on effect on family life and whether Central Bedfordshire was a great place to live and work.
- The importance of demonstrating plans were in place to achieve driver or lead metrics followed by a lag metrics dashboard.
- The benefit of including a skills metric for schools and colleges on the variety and quality of courses on offer and reputation.
- The addition of a measure for the support provided to disabled young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to measure NEETs for 16-24 years.

- The addition of an overarching measure on protecting the vulnerable.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the Committee fully support the key measures for Education to achieve:-

- a. Top 25% quartile nationally for GCSE 5A*- C grades; and**
- b. Top 15% nationally for Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEETs), subject to the inclusion of a measure for children with a disability or learning disability.**

2. That a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members of the Committee.

CS/15/71. **Work Programme 2014/15 & Executive Forward Plan**

The Vice-chairman invited Members to propose items for the work programme and advised the following items would be added:-

- Partnership vision update (Jan)
- Regional Schools Commissioner (March)

A briefing was requested before the next meeting to consider good practice in schools that achieve excellent outcomes for children.

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

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 2.05 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated