

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Thursday, 28 January 2016.

PRESENT

Cllr G Tubb (Chairman)

Cllrs P A Duckett
Mrs J Freeman
P Hollick

Cllrs D McVicar
A Ryan
T Stock

Ms G Deans (co-optee)
Ms E Rowlands (co-optee)
Mr S Court (co-optee)

Apologies for Absence: Cllrs Mrs A Barker
K Ferguson
Mr D Morton
B Walker

Members in Attendance: Cllrs R D Berry
Mrs A L Dodwell Deputy Executive Member for
Social Care and Housing
Mrs S A Goodchild
C Hegley Executive Member for Social
Care and Housing
M R Jones Deputy Leader and Executive
Member for Health
B Saunders
T Swain
M A G Versallion Executive Member for
Education and Skills

Officers in Attendance: Mrs P Everitt – Scrutiny Policy Adviser
Mr D Galvin – Head of Financial Performance
P Hardy – Compliance and Risk Adviser
Mrs S Harrison – Director of Children's Services
Ms D Hill – Senior Finance Manager - Children's
Services
Miss H Redding – Assistant Director School Improvement

Others in Attendance Dr G Lamb Clinical Director Children's Services
Mr J Wilkins Managing Director ELFT & Deputy Chief
Executive Beds and Luton Mental Health
and Wellbeing Services

Public: 0

CS/15/72. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 08 December 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/15/73. Members' Interests

Mr S Court as a Member of the Schools Resilience Panel.

CS/15/74. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The Chairman made the following announcements:-

1. That a new Roman Catholic Diocese representative had been appointed to the Committee. Debbie Main would attend her first meeting of the Committee in March. The Committee passed on their thanks to Frances Image for her contribution to the work of Children's Services OSC.
2. That the School exclusion update and Schools Visits and Journey's annual report be removed from the Committee's work programme and circulated for information outside of the meeting.
3. That the Committee be invited to send their questions arising from future any Children's Services agenda ahead of the meeting to enable a full response to be available from officers at meetings.

CS/15/75. Petitions

None.

CS/15/76. Questions, Statements or Deputations

The Chairman announced the receipt of an anonymous letter that raised concerns about the Children's Disability Hubs in Biggleswade and Dunstable. The Director announced the letter coincided with a formal review of the two hubs and a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee. The Committee requested that this opportunity be reviewed at an upcoming Scrutiny meeting.

CS/15/77. Call-In

None.

CS/15/78. Requested Items

None.

CS/15/79. Executive Members Updates

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing reported on a number of activities and meetings she had attended. Pressure on the Looked after Children service had increased with the number of unaccompanied asylum children now at 42.

Due to the length of time taken for this update, including questions relating to the national picture, the Chairman requested that a separate session with separate updates be created.

Member briefings on performance and budgets had taken place and Members were reminded of the briefing on domestic violence scheduled on 12 February.

The Executive Member advised that a Children's Services Transformation Plan was being developed to ensure the continuous improvement of services and details would be submitted to the Committee in March 2016.

The Executive Member for Education and Skills referred to the Education Vision and visits made to schools to encourage their support. A refresh of the Skills Strategy was underway and would be included on the work programme.

The Executive Member for Health advised the Executive would be asked to extend the contract for the 0-5 Health and Family Visiting service to allow time to work on a new specification. Arrangements for the Executive Member to shadow a health visitor over a day had been arranged. It was agreed to remove the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy from the work programme.

A Member raised concern that Toddington Service Station had become the main location where children seeking asylum had been found and queried what mechanism was in place to care for them. The Director advised that social worker teams worked in partnership with the Police and arranged for the children to be cared for by foster carers. Children arriving in the past 6 months had settled well in the community, to date no refugee families had been referred to the Council although teams were ready to support them as necessary.

Members raised concerns regarding the slow response from schools to sign up to the Education Vision, which it was suggested might be improved by the publication of a best practice manual for school governors. In response the Assistant Director Education advised Members would receive an update on the Education Vision and work streams at their next meeting and Governors would continue to be advised of good practice.

CS/15/80. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The Managing Director of the East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) Bedfordshire and Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist/Clinical Director of Children's Services ELFT, introduced a presentation that outlined the work undertaken by ELFT as the new provider of CAMHS.

A Member welcome the update and the introduction of a single point of access for patients along with the other priorities outlined in the presentation. Concern was raised regarding the current referral waiting timescale of 10-11 weeks and Members queried the targets ELFT would implement. The Clinical Director advised urgent referrals would be seen on the same day, a priority referral within 2 weeks and routine referral in 5 weeks.

In response to a Member query it was agreed that a list of those schools that had taken part in the specialist schools link project would be circulated to the Committee.

A Member asked how ELFT would know how the new service had improved outcomes for residents. The Managing Director advised that some key goals had been set, acknowledged that this was an area that needed more attention and Members of the Committee would be provided with a 6 month performance update.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee support early discussions with schools taking place to provide improved services Mental Health services.**
- 2. That a performance update on key targets be submitted to the Committee in 6 months.**
- 3. That the Committee expressed their thanks for the impressive Mental Health services provided by ELFT available to children and adolescents in Central Bedfordshire.**

CS/15/81. Quarter 2 (July - September) 2015/16 Performance Report

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the quarter 2 performance report and congratulated the Academy of Central Bedfordshire and Oakbank on their Ofsted ratings. Following a system change there had been an improvement in the number of assessments carried out in 45 days.

A Member raised a concern that 18 schools were rated as 'needing improvement', which the Assistant Director Education explained was due to changes in wording in the new Ofsted framework. The old 'satisfactory' judgment had been replaced by 'Requiring Improvement'.

Members were advised that maintained schools causing concern shared their improvement plans with the local authority and received support with their school improvement planning process. Academy schools do not receive this level of support from the Regional School Commissioner, who does not have capacity to provide it. A recruitment drive from the Regional Schools Commissioner to appoint people to support academies was underway. Where an academy school requests support in school improvement planning from the local authority this support is provided.

Noted the report.

CS/15/82. Draft Budget, MTFP and Capital Programme Reports 2016/17

The Executive Member for Social Care and Housing introduced the Draft Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Plan for Children's Services that had been presented to Executive in January 2016.

The Head of Finance advised the Government Financial Settlement had been significantly worse (-5.6%) than anticipated for the Council and exacerbated the substantial efficiencies and pressures contained in the draft budget and MTFP.

The proposed 2% precept proposed by Government for Social Care would not make up for the shortfall in funding.

The Council Tax precept was discussed and it was the view of the Committee that in the light of a 5.6% worsening of our budget position from national Government action, the maximum increase of 3.95% was not unreasonable.

A Member requested greater precision in the commentary in the budget papers as they felt the assumptions quoted did not provide sufficient explanation for the stated budget numbers and provided an example. It was acknowledged that children's services was the most difficult service to predict.

The Executive Member commented that cutting back on services was not the answer, however, transformation of services and working in a different way would deliver the efficiencies required.

The Committee focussed on pressures in Special Guardianship Orders, Foster Scheme allowances and reduced funding to voluntary services. The Director advised that quality services would be delivered to children at the right level and there was no intention to diminish the current services provided.

A member requested accurate additional information on the financial and quality risk of the proposed efficiencies and pressures detailed in the Executive report. It was also requested that the Committee be provided with information of any key performance indicator that diminished as a result of the proposed cuts.

In consideration of the Capital Budget, Members had no comment on the proposals given cuts in Government funding.

In the process of agreeing the recommendations it was not possible to reach a consensus with regard to the draft Revenue budget and particularly whether this was noted or accepted. The recommendations will be discussed in public by Members at the next Committee meeting in March. The Committee did however recommend the following:-

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Executive apply the maximum Council Tax rise of 3.95%**
- 2. That the Committee be provided with a risk register highlighting material risks to the quality of service provided to residents and risks to our ability to provide those services at the budgeted costs.**
- 3. That the Committee be informed of any diminished Key Performance Indicators.**
- 4. As a result of implementing the planned efficiencies the Capital budget be noted.**

CS/15/83. Traded Services to Schools & Academies – Proposed charges for 2016/17

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined proposed charges for Traded Services to Schools and Academies for non statutory services not previously considered by Scrutiny. The Committee

accepted the proposal increase of 1% and noted that opportunities to explore the market would be undertaken.

Noted the report.

CS/15/84. Education Outcomes (Provisional) 2015

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined an overview and analysis of the 2015 education outcome data. The validated KS4 data had been received and the Council had improved its position for this key stage. Schools were to be congratulated on this achievement.

A Member raised a concern that there did not appear to be a Governor representative on the Partnership Vision for Education Board. The Director advised that two Governors had been appointed, both of whom are national leaders of governance. A joint meeting with Head Teachers and the Governor Forum would be arranged to discuss the results and a School Improvement Peer Review would take place in March to examine the processes followed by the Council.

Progress on the Partnership Vision and work streams would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

Noted the report.

CS/15/85. New Lower School Places in Stotfold

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that sought the support of Members on the proposal of new Lower School Places in the Fairfield Ward from September 2017. It was noted that the name Stotfold should not have been published in the report.

A Member proposed that the achievements of the school be included in this and future reports. It was also proposed that a policy of “drop off points at schools” be considered for inclusion in all future Travel Plans, however Cllr McVicar wished it to be recorded that he was not in favour.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the Committee supported the provision of new lower school places in Fairfield Ward.**
- 2. That the achievements of a school seeking approval for expansion be included future reports.**

CS/15/86. Annual Report of The Resilience Group for Schools and Other Settings (2014 -15)

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced a report that outlined the work undertaken by the Schools’ Resilience Group and asked Members to consider the proposed objectives for 2015/16 detailed within the document.

A Member sought clarification on the biggest risk faced by the Resilience Group, which the Compliance and Risk Adviser explained was delivering the Council's duty to promote compliance in schools and schools taking their responsibilities seriously.

Members extended their thanks to the volunteers for their work in this area and endorsed the report.

RECOMMENDED that the report be endorsed.

CS/15/87. Work Programme 2015/16 & Executive Forward Plan

The Committee considered the current work programme and were advised that the Health and Wellbeing report would be removed. The Executive Member for Education and Skills reflected on the imbalance of items and work to address this would be undertaken by officers.

RECOMMENDED that the items noted in the Minutes be added to the work programme and that it be reviewed further to ensure a balance of items across the areas of the 5-year plan.

CS/15/88. Schools Budget (2016/17)

The Executive Member for Education and Skills introduced an Executive report that set out the proposed distribution of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block for 2016/17. The report outlined an imbalance of funding from the Government and would see Central Bedfordshire schools receive a minimum figure.

RECOMMENDED that The Committee fully understood the imbalance in the schools budget formula and supported the Executive in their endeavours to resolve the issue.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 2.17 p.m.)