

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, 11 September 2018

PRESENT

Cllr K Ferguson (Chairman)
Cllr D Shelvey (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs D B Gurney Cllr M Liddiard A Ryan	Councillors: B Saunders P Smith
Parental Co-optees:	Mrs G Deans Mrs E Rowlands	
Church of England Co-optee:	Mr D Morton	
Roman Catholic Co-optee:	Apologies	
Apologies for Absence:	Cllrs N B Costin P Hollick K Janes	
	Mrs D Main, Roman Catholic Diocesan representative	
Members in Attendance:	Cllrs S Dixon Mrs A L Dodwell B J Spurr Mrs T Stock M A G Versallion	Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children Executive Member for Health and Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board Deputy Executive Member for Health
Officers in Attendance:	Ms L Bartos Mr P Fraser Ms J Nason	Head of Service for SEND Assistant Director Education Head of Commissioning &

Performance

Miss N Phillips

Practice Manager Adoption

Mrs R Preen

Scrutiny Policy Adviser

Ms P Scott

Strategic Safeguarding Partnership
Manager

Public: 0

CS/18/34. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 July 2018 and the Special meeting held on 25 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CS/18/35. **Members' Interests**

None.

CS/18/36. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

None.

CS/18/37. **Petitions**

None.

CS/18/38. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

CS/18/39. **Call-In**

None.

CS/18/40. **Requested Items**

None.

CS/18/41. **Executive Members' Updates**

The Executive Member for Children, Education and Families highlighted a recent exercise to recruit foster carers in Central Bedfordshire and encouraged Members' involvement in the campaign. Members were appraised of the most recent outcomes of the Schools for the Future project and that progress

updates would be included in the Committee work programme. A recent decision to close Shelton Lower school had been called in to the school's adjudicator, with an outcome expected over the coming months. As a result of the decision to close the school the directorate were monitoring early warning signs in order to minimise any such impacts on other schools facing similar viability issues.

The Executive Member for Public Health outlined the findings of a recent report which suggested that resilience in children and young people was low and in order to help address this a toolkit would be shared with all schools in October 2018. The Health and Wellbeing Board was currently assessing a strategic approach to understand the GP surgery and health infrastructure requirements of new housing developments, highlighting the need for strong community links. The Health and Wellbeing strategy had a strong focus on Mental Health, recognising the need to effectively measure success and identify areas which required action for improvement. Children transitioning from children to adult services traditionally occurred at 18 years of age however providers were being asked to assess individual cases and provide support past the age of 18 where appropriate.

CS/18/42. **Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) annual report**

The Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) delivered the annual report of 2016-17, highlighting the performance and effectiveness of agencies to safeguard children across Central Bedfordshire. A recent Ofsted inspection had graded the Council's Children's Services directorate as good, with strong governance and robust processes in place to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. As a result of the inspection three recommendations had been accepted by the Council with the directorate working hard to address them.

As a result of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The importance of learning from the LSCB annual report and responding swiftly to the areas of concern identified.
- The need for improved information sharing between the Council and all partners, with particular concern around the rise in cases of unexpected deaths in children. The Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police had acknowledged concerns raised in relation to safeguarding vulnerable children and the impact of domestic abuse, with a renewed focus on those areas.
- The importance of the delivery of timely reports in the future.
- The measures undertaken to work with schools in relation to the reported lack of resilience in children and young people.
- The need for continued efforts in relation to suicide prevention.
- The importance of effective communication and the use of social media.
- The challenges around appropriately supporting the travelling community in relation to inclusion and education.
- The future of safeguarding children in light of new government regulations.

NOTED the report and RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the 2017-18 annual report be delivered to the Committee in January 2019.**
- 2. That details of new government regulations in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people be delivered to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.**

CS/18/43. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Vision and Strategy

The Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) delivered a presentation which set out the implications of the new Children and Families Act 2014. Almost all children with a statement of special educational needs had now transitioned to the new system of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Members were apprised of the service's current areas of focus, the effectiveness of processes and procedures and the impact and process of the area inspection. The Head of Service outlined the development of the SEND vision, its overarching principles along with the delivery and action plan.

As a result of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

- The change in age range and the associated impact on the service, numbers had initially increased but were beginning to stabilise.
- That those young people who had previously been discharged from the system had the opportunity to re-enter it between the ages of 18-25 if they wished to do so.
- The importance of preparing for a SEND inspection which could occur at any time.
- The importance of ensuring the transition period between 18-25 years of age was managed effectively and that the needs of young people were met, with all relevant commissioning arrangements in place.
- That the parent forum SNAP was an effective way of measuring feedback on the service provided.
- That overall the levels of children on EHCP's had risen.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee acknowledge and support the continued progress of the SEND vision and strategy and that the action plan be delivered to the Committee at a future meeting.

CS/18/44. Recommissioning Support Services for Children and Young People

The Head of Commissioning and Performance delivered a report which outlined the recommissioning process, the scope, approach and the need for effective analysis in order to meet the needs of those accessing services. Members were advised that all stakeholders had expressed positive and constructive feedback about the future arrangements and that changes would enable improved coordination across all services.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

The importance of effective information sharing between partners with greater emphasis on an innovative and flexible approach to the delivery of services. That service users were often unsure how to access that which was available to them.

The importance of working closely with schools and equipping them with the requisite skills in order that they understood the future challenges in relation to changes in structure and its associated impact.

The need to monitor contract management, assessing the performance of providers and ensuring measures were in place to bring services back 'in house' if necessary.

The structure and effectiveness of children's centres and targeted youth work.

NOTED the approach to date and RECOMMENDED that regular performance reports of those external providers commissioned to provide services on behalf of the Council be delivered to the Committee at future meetings.

CS/18/45. **Regional Adoption Agency**

The Practice Manager within the Adoption and Permanence team delivered a presentation which set out the Council's approach to formulating a regional adoption agency (RAA) which was expected to be live by April 2019. Locally the scope included Central Bedfordshire Council as the lead Authority, in partnership with Milton Keynes Council. It was envisaged other Councils would join the RAA in the future, provided that their vision and values aligned with those of the Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Councils.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:-

That the close working relationship between Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council would continue.

That the Government was satisfied that the current model incorporating Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Council could operate effectively.

Concerns around the timeline for delivery and that future projects be brought before the Committee at an earlier stage in their development.

Concerns regarding the future of the RAA's governance structure due to natural changes in officer responsibilities and roles.

The importance of ensuring that the quality of provision not be diluted when other Councils joined the RAA in the future.

NOTED the arrangements to date for the establishment of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and RECOMMENDED:-

- 1. That the Executive continue to monitor those Local Authorities wishing to join the RAA in the future.**
- 2. That additional detail in relation to the governance structure of the RAA be delivered to the Executive.**

CS/18/46. **Schools National Funding Formula**

The Assistant Director (AD) for Education provided Members with an outline of changes in relation to the national funding formula for schools. The Committee were advised that a three year 'soft' period would allow for the full implementation of the new formula under a graded system of transition. A further report detailing the allocation to local schools would be delivered to the Committee at a future meeting.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Concerns regards the reported overspend of the high needs block, which would be considered by the School's Forum.
- In response to a Member query it was confirmed that no school should fall below 1% negativity in funding.
- That the deprivation element and free school meals were now combined to provide a single figure.
- Whether the new funding formula would affect the viability of certain schools, conceding that finances were not the only factor to consider.

NOTED the report to date and that local figures would be delivered to the Committee in November 2019.

CS/18/47. **Work Programme 2018/19 & Executive Forward Plan**

That the Committee work programme be agreed subject to the following amendments:-

- **The Introduction of a Loans Policy for Foster Carers - 20 November 2018**
- **Local Schools Funding Formula – 20 November 2018**
- **The Executive Response to the Pupil Attainment Task Force Report - January 2019**
- **Validated Exam results – January or March 2019 (TBC)**
- **SEND Vision Action Plan – TBC**
- **Measuring the Progress of the School Improvement Team – TBC**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated