



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report

Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

AGENDA ITEM 5

Title: Services for Schools project

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Recommendation: Members are invited to note the Services for Schools project.

1. The project began in January 2005, The purpose of the project is to define the County Council's role in supporting schools to be effective purchasers of services, including exploring alternative models of service delivery to schools including brokerage, supporting their management of the trading relationship with service providers and, in terms of Best Value criteria, supporting their assessment of service specifications and suitability of provision. It is expected that minor changes and modifications to the current processes will be implemented in April 2006, and the new Buckinghamshire model for service delivery to schools will be implemented in April 2007.
2. The project aims are:

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) - Strategic Role

- Provide clarity of respective roles and expectations
- Ensure that schools are supported in their role as effective purchasers of services, as determined by Best Value principles
- Explore brokerage/consortium options, determine their relevance to Buckinghamshire and decide whether to implement a brokerage or consortium model in Buckinghamshire
- Develop mechanisms to provide access to supporting information such as benchmarking data and comparison of specifications

Delivery by BCC

- Ensure that services offered to schools by BCC are appropriate, cost effective, of a high quality and meet schools needs in terms of content, responsiveness and timeliness
- Determine the most appropriate and effective delivery methods for services to schools, including exploring potential of the Customer First programme and examining electronic options.

Process for all services delivered to schools

- Establish mechanisms to support schools in dealing with unsatisfactory service provision
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that schools can influence the future development of services

3. The expected outcomes of the project:

- Clarity of respective roles and expectations
- BCC provides schools with the appropriate support, guidance and information to enable them to be effective purchasers of service (from BCC and external service providers) and to manage the client: provider relationship
- The service model for Buckinghamshire reflects the requirements/ implications/expectations of national guidance and legislation and the views of BCC staff and Members.
- Services offered by BCC to schools meet their needs in terms of the content of the service specification, delivery methodology (including responsiveness and timeliness) and the quality of service
- Improved partnership working between schools and the County Council

4. The project will take account of:

- the statutory guidance on LEA schemes for financing schools that requires schools to demonstrate that they are following Best Value principles,
- the expectations of the Ofsted Inspection framework for schools
- the area for development identified in the Ofsted report of the LEA – The “development of school’s capacity to act as informed purchasers of services”
- the development of the Customer First initiative
- the Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES)
- the recommendations of the Gershon report (July 2004)
- the introduction of the Sapphire Business system at BCC and the impact on schools,
- the impact of the National Procurement Strategy on schools.
- the experience of other LEAs
- the views of schools and other stakeholders

5. The Project Team is:

Project Executive	Dean Taylor (Strategic Director, Community Services)
Senior User	School staff, governors and BCC staff, with all represented on the Services for Schools Scrutiny Board
Senior Supplier	Nick Powley (Head of Policy, Planning and Performance)
Project Manager	Caroline Corcoran (Education Officer, School Management Support)
Project Leader	Tracy Savage (Project Leader)
Project Support	Amy Festa (Project Administrator)
Quality Assurance	Services for Schools Scrutiny Board

6. The project team are currently undertaking an audit of schools' needs, an audit of the views of County-based staff and undertaking national research.
7. It is expected that the broad elements of a service model for Buckinghamshire will be identified by July 2005. This will lead to further discussions during the Autumn term on the detail prior to consultation with stakeholders in January 2006. A decision on the way forward is expected in March 2006, leading to implementation in April 2007.