



# Minutes

## *CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE*

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 24 May 2016, in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.33 am and concluding at 12.44 pm.

This meeting was webcast. To review the detailed discussions that took place, please see the webcast which can be found at <http://www.buckscc.public-i.tv/>  
The webcasts are retained on this website for 6 months. Recordings of any previous meetings beyond this can be requested (contact: [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk))

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr D Dhillon (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Gomm, Mr P Irwin, Mrs V Letheren (Chairman), Mrs W Mallen and Mr R Stuchbury

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr D Babb and Mr M Moore

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Mr C Adams, Ms L Eaves, Lin Hazell and Mr Z Mohammed

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Ms A Clemmett, Mrs P Cue, Mr D Johnston, Ms C McCarthy, Ms A Sayani and Ms S Sewell

## **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were noted:

- Mr D Dhillon - member of the Farnham Common Children's Centre advisory board.
- Mr P Irwin - member of a Children's Centre advisory board.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**



Apologies were received from Mrs M Aston, Mrs P Birchley, Mrs J Blake, Ms K Wood and Mr D Watson.

### **3 MINUTES**

Mr Z Mohammed requested a change to the wording in the draft minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 as follows:

- Item 10 – first bullet point to be changed from “The fairer funding consultation” to “The National Funding Formula consultation”

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were agreed as a correct record pending the change identified above.

### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

A written public question was put to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills from Mr J Hoggett as follows:

“Although grammar schools are great schools, the other secondary schools aren't receiving enough support. How does the council intend to deal with the deepening and inexcusable inequalities between secondary schools and grammar schools?

A review of the current system would benefit the community as it would possibly reform the way we do education in bucks and bring us into line with the rest of the country”

The Cabinet Member responded in writing as follows:

“We are really pleased with our grammar and non-selective schools that produce results at KS4 that are consistently more than 10% above the national average. This does not happen by accident but through a policy objective and excellent work by school leaders, Council, Governors with support from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT). I would not want to bring Buckinghamshire in line with the rest of the Country that results in a reduction in overall standards by 10 %, and instead to continue working to improve Buckinghamshire results across all our schools.

Our grammars are amongst the lowest funded schools in the Country. The non-selective schools receive considerably more support from increased funding e.g. per pupil Free School meals, Prior Attainment, English as an additional language and Pupil Premium etc and this can be quite significantly more than grammars. On top of that, Buckinghamshire County Council and BLT provide school improvement support to non-selective schools through various projects in e.g. High Wycombe and Aylesbury, and the Standards report shows improvement in results as a consequence.”

### **5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman informed Members that all but one of the Committee's recommendations in the Children's Workforce Inquiry Report had been agreed at Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

The Chairman also updated Members on her attendance at a recent Child Protection Conference. The Chairman confirmed that some issues affecting Buckinghamshire, such as social care workforce issues, were also impacting nationally.

Members received an update from the Chairman on her experience of shadowing a front line social worker. The Chairman expressed her appreciation of the work social workers do in difficult circumstances.

The Chairman confirmed the potential items for the Committee's work programme, which would be finalised and included in the published Select Committee Work Programme.

**ACTION: Committee Adviser to update the work programme for the next Committee meeting**

## **6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES**

Mr R Stuchbury acknowledged the good work of staff at The Buckingham School in improving its Ofsted rating to good.

Mr P Irwin informed the Committee of increasing difficulties of parking around schools which could get worse as schools increased capacity to take account of population growth.

Members noted that school place provision would need to take account of forecasted population growth and that this would require partnership working with District Council colleagues.

## **7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES**

**Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services updated the Committee on:**

- The improvement work being done in the Fostering Service including
  - Continuing programme of recruiting foster carers into the service.
  - The introduction of the Foster to Adopt scheme.
  - Allowing young people to stay with their foster carers beyond the age of 18.
- The increase in the number of children being adopted in Buckinghamshire
- The need to balance the length of time taken to place children for adoption with the need for good quality placements.
- The service's commitment to placing children and young people at the centre of decision making when new strategies and policies were being put in place.

**Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.**

The Cabinet Member confirmed that discussions were always ongoing with District Councils and others in respect of local area plans linked to school place planning. In respect of schools being built or extended, developers were responsible for correcting any snagging issues.

Mr Z Mohammed also updated the Committee on:

- His attendance at the Wycombe Local Area Plan meeting.
- The new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Local Area Joint Inspections by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- A County wide promotion of adult learning courses taking place between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June.

## **8 CHILDREN'S CENTRES & EARLY HELP**

The Chairman welcomed

- Mr D Johnston, Managing Director, Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit
- Miss C McCarthy, Interim Head of Children's Commissioning
- Mrs M Clemmett, Early Help Commissioning Manager

The following points were made during the discussion:

- Twenty Five Children's Centres were re-tendered last year and contracts awarded from September 2015.
- Contracts were currently with Action for Children (25 centres), Spurgeons (3 centres), 6 schools (running 7 individual centres).
- A review was going to be undertaken to ensure a focus on specific, targeted need and understand any disparity across Children's Centre provision.
- There was a need to meet both demand and savings targets whilst still focussing on early intervention to improve outcomes.
- Children's Centres were being closed nationally but Buckinghamshire were not planning on closing any centres at the moment but looking to remodel, although this could change in future.
- Consultation would be undertaken with users and providers and a wide range of feedback sought.
- The review had only just started and would be taking place over the summer. Findings would be reported during the autumn. There would be opportunities for Members to input to the review.
- Children's Centres were a separate workstream within a wider consideration and review of early help across Buckinghamshire.
- It was slightly too early to be able to judge the performance of the new contracts in place since September, although early indications showed that centres were reaching more vulnerable families.
- Providers were contract managed by Commissioners through quarterly performance monitoring meetings and other engagement.

- There were concerns from some Members about the Children's Centres Advisory Boards and the accountability of providers since re-commissioning.

**ACTION: The Interim Head of Children's Commissioning to address Members concerns with providers**

- Financial pressures were only part of the consideration of the review. There were other considerations including the growth in demand on social care services, the complexity of cases and the desire for Children's Centres to be able to respond to need and focus on early help with families before problems escalated.
- Assessments of need were made using established assessment tools and this and wider referrals would be closely monitored.
- In response to a question on projected population growth, The Managing Director of Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit agreed that there was a need to focus understanding on where growth was likely to happen, the nature of the growth and the needs of new communities. The business unit were working closely with health colleagues on this.
- Select Committee Members would visit Children's Centres during June to ask questions and gather opinion to support the review. They would attend a workshop during July with the review team to feedback what they had found.

**ACTION: Committee Adviser to liaise with Commissioners to arrange visits and workshop**

**SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT**

## **9 EDUCATION STANDARDS**

The Chairman welcomed

- Mrs A Sayani, Education Champion
- Ms P Cue, Consultant
- Miss S Sewell, Senior Information Officer

The Chairman thanked officers for a well written and informative report.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills gave a verbal summary of the report focusing on schools' Ofsted ratings, pupil attainment at Early Years, Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and post 16 year old.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The Chairman noted that there were some good attainment results overall, although some weren't as good, for example outcomes for disadvantaged children and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

- The Council worked collaboratively with the Regional Schools Commissioner's Officer and the Department for Education and had open and positive communications with leaders of all schools. This had allowed the Council and Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT) to help improve under performing schools, even those not under local authority control.
- The Non-selective Secondary School Improvement Plan commissioned from BLT was aimed at improving the performance of schools that required further improvements.
- Recruitment and retention of teachers was a problem in Buckinghamshire and a strategy was being drafted to enable the sharing of good practice.
- All of the recommendations in the Select Committee's earlier Closing the Gap Inquiry report were being used in the BLT's improvement work.
- It was acknowledged that there was still work to do on improving attainment for disadvantaged pupils and therefore disadvantaged pupils were a key priority for BLT in the coming year.at every key stage.
- The use of the Pupil Premium for disadvantaged pupils was audited and BLT were sharing good practice on the use of the premium.
- A Member asked whether the Committee could be given information providing a breakdown of grammar school results just for those pupils who were resident in Buckinghamshire. Mrs A Sayani agreed that this would be done.

**ACTION: Education Champion to look into whether this information was available.**

***Post meeting note.***

*Following the meeting, the Education Champion confirmed that this information was not available as data was not collated by Buckinghamshire County Council.*

- The BLT worked with all families and children where there was an identified need to improve attainment. No particular groups were singled out.
- Financial support from government to local authorities would reduce in future and so there would be a need to work differently by keeping the schools community together within a Buckinghamshire identity.

**SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT**

**10 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT Q4 AND END OF YEAR 2015/16**

The following points were made during the discussion:

Education and Skills Portfolio.

- The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills thanked officers for bringing the budget for his portfolio in on target.

Children's Service Portfolio.

- The Cabinet Member for Children's Services acknowledged the overspend in her portfolio which was due to agency staffing costs and increasing demand.

- Looking ahead, the senior management team was looking at the budget and managing it into a 5 year plan.
- Placement costs were an issue and key to reducing this would be to increase in-house foster care provision as well as looking at reducing residential placement costs.
- Historic work practices were impacting on the percentage of repeat referrals not being on target. This in turn was impacting on being able to meet the target for reducing the numbers of children on a repeat child protection plan.
- The percentage of contacts dealt with within 24 hours was below target due to some complex cases which had to be dealt with appropriately.
- There were officers within the Business Unit that worked with and supported parents, as well as those that worked with children themselves.

## **SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT**

### **11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016 10.30am in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury

### **12 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the press and public be excluded for the following item which is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)**

### **13 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

**CHAIRMAN**