



Buckinghamshire County Council
Select Committee
Children's Social Care and Learning

Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 5 July 2016, in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.33 am and concluding at 12.51 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)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr D Dhillon, Mr P Gomm, Mr P Irwin, Mrs V Letheren, Mrs W Mallen, Mr R Stuchbury and Vacancy

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms P Camilleri, Ms C Douch, Mr D Johnston, Ms A O'Borne, Ms J Shakespeare, Ms G Shurrock and Mr N Wilson

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Mr P Gomm proposed that Mr D Dhillon be the Select Committee Chairman for the coming year. This was seconded by Mr R Stuchbury.

RESOLVED

That Mr D Dhillon be elected as Chairman of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee for the ensuing year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The appointment for Vice-Chairman was deferred until the next meeting.
Mr D Dhillon appointed Val Letheren as temporary Vice-Chairman for the meeting only.



3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

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

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were noted:

- Mrs V Letheren – husband works occasionally as an Appropriate Adult for the Youth Offending Service as a trained volunteer.
- Mr D Dhillon - member of the Farnham Common Children's Centre Advisory Board.

5 MINUTES

Mr R Stuchbury requested a change to the wording of bullet point 8, item 9 in the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2016 to more accurately reflect the response.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to amend bullet point 8 at item 9 of the minutes of 24th May.

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24th May 2016 were agreed as a correct record pending the change requested above.

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman welcomed by Mr D Berry to the meeting and invited him to present his question to the Committee. The Chairman then asked the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to respond.

Mr Z Mohammed responded and made the following points:

- The format of the Education Standards report to which the question referred had been changed this year to include clearer information, case studies and details of the impacts of school improvement work.
- It was important to read the detailed information in the report as well as the summary information.
- The attainment gap at Key Stage 4 (KS4) had reduced by 3% in Buckinghamshire compared to a 1% increase nationally.
- The gap needed to be looked at in the context of Buckinghamshire having an overall KS4 attainment of around 10% above the national average. The focus would remain on disadvantaged children.
- Four schools had improved from adverse Ofsted ratings and the most recent figures for non-selective schools showed 61% at good or outstanding.
- For schools overall, the percentage of pupils attending good or outstanding schools had risen from 74% to 83%.

- Buckinghamshire had 1.3% of schools that were rated inadequate compared to 2% nationally. All nurseries, pupil referral units and special schools were rated at least good.
- There was no information available for GCSE results with out of County pupils removed. The service aimed to ensure that anyone being educated in Buckinghamshire would get a good education.
- For pupils attaining 5 or more GCSEs including Maths and English in 2014/15: low attainers improved by 2% to just slightly below national averages and middle attainers were at national level.
- Improvement work included The Aspire project and the Bucks Learning Trust education advisers. There had been a focus on phonics which resulted in performance now being at the national average rather than below as it had been previously.

Mr R Stuchbury noted that it would be useful to have had advance briefing of Mr Z Mohammed's response.

Mr P Irwin requested that an item be brought back to the Committee's September meeting on the Committee's "Narrowing the Gap" Inquiry report to look at improvements since the report was first published in 2014.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to put on the Committee work programme for September.

7 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended the Improving Leadership and Partnership meeting and a Members briefing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

8 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mr P Irwin informed Members of a visit to a Children's Centre on the afternoon of 5th July and apologised for inappropriately mentioning an officer's name in a previous meeting.

Mrs V Letheren, the previous Committee Chairman thanked Members for their good wishes. She informed Members of a forthcoming visit to Farnham Common Children's Centre on 6th July.

Mr R Stuchbury informed Members of the following.

- His attendance at an informative safeguarding briefing at a secondary school.
- He had encouraged secondary schools to respond to the Vale Plan consultation to ensure future provision of school places would meet demand.
- Buckingham Town Council had given a joint award to the grammar and secondary school for their good work together on an art and drama project.

Mr P Gomm updated Members of the following.

- The offer of help from officers in resolving issues regarding communication with some of the Children's Centres Advisory Boards and Members was still outstanding. In his update at item 9 Mr Z Mohammed advised that he would take the issue forward in arranging help.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to liaise with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and officers to arrange help to resolve the issues.

- Recent visits to nurseries in the County and the work that they did in making sure children had a good early start to their education.

9 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills updated the Committee on the following:

- The national teachers strike taking place on 5th July.
- Problems with teacher recruitment and retention both locally and nationally. A Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy had been developed to help Buckinghamshire deal with the issue.
- The home to school transport consultation was ongoing and had been widely publicised. The consultation would end on 15th July.
- The second stage of the National Funding Formula Consultation had been delayed so there was still some uncertainty about school's funding arrangements next year. As soon as the second stage was announced, Buckinghamshire would be making representations.

Mr D Johnston, Managing Director of the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit updated the Committee on behalf of Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services in her absence.

- Buckinghamshire was progressing with other Local Authorities in developing a Regional Adoption Agency. Initial proposals would be put forward in the next month or so.
- Work was continuing with the Improvement Board. The Chairman of the Committee confirmed that he would be attending the next meeting.
- In response to a question about the Committee's recent Children's Workforce Inquiry and specifically the South East Regional Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), Mr D Johnson said that the MoC was showing positive results in managing the recruitment of agency staff and that 17 of the 19 local authorities had now signed up to the MoC.

Following the update, there was a discussion about recruitment and retention more generally across social work, teaching and health. It was noted that recruitment and retention was a problem for the area for a number of reasons including workload and cost of living in the South East and that initiatives were in place or being put in place where possible to help and support staff.

The Committee discussed key worker housing. They heard that options being discussed needed to take account of a number of different strategies and that it was important to make

sure key worker housing was included in development plans. It was acknowledged that this was a difficult area that would need further discussions with District Councils and developers.

Mr D Johnston informed Members that work was continuing in respect of the children's centre review. This was now being brought together with the wider Family Support review that was taking place to make it as comprehensive as possible. This meant that work could take a little longer than originally thought.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills was asked if he would provide a written version of his verbal response to the public question.

ACTION: Mr Z Mohammed to provide a written version of the public question response.

10 THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

The Chairman welcomed

- Ms P Camilleri – Head of Youth Offending Service
- Mrs C Douch – Service Director Children's Social Care

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The main aim of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) was to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people
- Buckinghamshire performance was slightly better than national averages against key performance indicators. There had been continuous improvement in performance over the past 5 years against the national indicators particular for the indicator "First Time Entrants"
- A further breakdown of performance data was presented to the Youth Offending Service Management Board.

ACTION: Ms P Camilleri to provide a further breakdown of performance for the Committee.

- There was very close partnership working in the YOS including with mental and physical health professionals.
- Work was being done to look at strengthening the speech, language and communication service for young people.
- There was a very stable workforce with an emphasis on training and development which helped staff deal with complex cases and ensured good engagement with families and young people.
- A core part of the YOS was information sharing between partners. A national assessment tool was used to identify specific needs for individual young people so that the relevant professionals in specialist fields were brought in and worked together with the young person.
- There was a close working relationship with social workers to provide additional support to looked after children. However, it was more difficult for the service when dealing with those Buckinghamshire children who were looked after outside of the County. The YOS of the county in which they were placed was responsible for delivering the plan for that

child. An audit of looked after children placed out of county had been done to try to improve practice in this area.

- It was expected that there would be some major changes affecting YOS nationally from a report due to be published by the Ministry of Justice. The service was waiting for this delayed report before making decisions on how to deal further with reducing funding.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to include a future meeting agenda item on the changes once known.

- The service worked closely in transitioning young people to the probation service when they became 18.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

11 FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME

The Chairman welcomed

- Mrs J Shakespeare – Head of Early Help.

Mrs J Shakespeare explained that the Families First report included a brief summary of phase 1 of the programme together with an update on phase 2 which was a longer term programme continuing the work of phase 1 but using broader criteria.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The outcomes for families were tracked during and after leaving the programme using 31 different measures. Oxford University had been commissioned to conduct a 3 year study with families that worked with the programme.
- There were wider positive impacts of the programme such as reducing numbers of first time entrants to the youth justice system and an increase in school attendance rates.
- The wider criteria for phase 2 included families with children in need and children on a child protection plan as a result of neglect. It was hoped that the new criteria would help reduce the numbers of children in need and/or on a child protection plan in future.
- Reduced funding for phase 2 would not have any implications for resourcing or capacity because of the way the programme was originally structured. There was a sustainability plan under development to beyond 2020.
- The majority of funding had been used to train and support staff and on specific projects. There was a small co-ordination team that would not be funded beyond 2020.
- It was hoped that by tracking outcomes longer term, this would help indicate how many families had been diverted from having to access more intensive services. It was acknowledged that this was a difficult area to monitor.
- The early help panels had been successful in enhancing partnership working. It was too early to assess the outcomes of the panels on children and families but the annual report due out later in the year would include an assessment of outcomes.

- Checks were made to ensure that families that need help are worked with. The agency that identified the family needing support had the responsibility to refer them in line with the referral process. 7.9% were self-referrals.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

12 THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

The Chairman welcomed
Mrs A O'Boone – Head of First Response.

Mrs C Douch explained that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) aimed to ensure children received the right services at the very start of their journey within social care. She also thanked Members for visiting the MASH and reported that the visits had been well received by staff.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- The percentage of referrals to the MASH had fallen over the past few months but this was expected as there were peaks and troughs during the year. Schools tended to refer more to MASH when there were school holidays imminent.
- There was now an improved picture on staffing capacity with only limited vacancies and a much reduced reliance on agency staff with many previous agency positions now filled by Council officers.
- The agencies within MASH still had their own IT systems and databases but they were able to share information on referrals as part of the comprehensive data sharing protocols in place. Audits of referrals showed positive results in decision making.
- A manager would make an initial decision on a contact within 24 hours but a full decision at MASH would take longer as individual agencies contributed information. The delay over the 24 hours was seen as positive in enabling good quality decisions.
- New accommodation for the MASH has meant that two health professionals and education support officers were able to join the MASH. A domestic abuse officer was also to be located at the MASH. It was hoped that drug and alcohol team officers would be able to join in future.
- Analysis was being undertaken to understand the reasons for repeat referrals. The trend in repeat referrals was positive reducing from around 40% at one point to about 23%. Around 20% of repeat referrals would be classed as normal.
- There was an aim to send a positive message about seeking early help. Information was available on the website and schools and other partner agencies re-inforced a positive early-help message.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

13 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES - LOCAL AREA INSPECTIONS

The Chairman welcomed

Mr N Wilson – Service Director Education

Ms G Shurrock - Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Ms G Shurrock took Members through a short presentation on the new local area special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) inspections.

The following points were made during the presentation:

- That the inspection would be on the local area and not just the Local Authority.
- Parents and carers would take part in the meetings with the inspectors.
- There was lots of performance data on the SEND scorecard to provide as evidence to the inspection.
- Partners had put together a “readiness” document setting out how the local area were meeting the criteria set out in the Inspection Framework and an action plan on areas of improvement. .

The following points were raised during a discussion after the presentation:

- Buckinghamshire had a higher percentage of children and young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan than the national average. However, Buckinghamshire schools identified fewer children with SEND at SEN Support.
- The current SEND review provided an in depth look at SEND provision in Buckinghamshire. Mr R Stuchbury asked whether the Committee could have early sight of the report.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to include agenda item on a future meeting

- There was a lot of support in Buckinghamshire in the area of speech and language therapy. The decision on what support to provide was made by a panel and tailored to individual need.
- A SEND Board including Members, parents, carers, social care workers and others looked at strategic issues.
- Special schools in Buckinghamshire were only for children and young people with the most complex needs. All special schools were rated as good or outstanding. There were processes in place to make a decision on the provision that each young person needed.
- Ms G Shurrock was happy for Members to sit in on the decision-making meetings.
- The inspectors would not take account of finances when making judgements.
- The wide spectrum of need meant that SEND budgets were not set for individual children or young people.

- The increase in demand on SEND services was as a result of a number of factors including medical advancements, rising population and better identification of SEND than in the past.

SEE PAPERS AND WEBCAST FOR FULL CONTENT

14 INQUIRY OUTLINE - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICE

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED the inquiry outline in principal and that a planning workshop was needed to scope out the inquiry further.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to arrange a planning meeting during July.

15 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed the work programme

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED the work programme and that the following be added:

- Update of work undertaken as a result of the Narrowing the Gap report
- A report to understand the impacts of integrating health and social care on children's services including the NHS England Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

RESOLVED

The Committee AGREED to look at co-opting School Governors and lay members onto the Committee.

ACTION: Committee Adviser to investigate the process for co-opting onto the Committee.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 20th September 2016 10.30am, Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN