



# Minutes

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

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 6 December 2016, in Mezzanine Room 2, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 2.00 pm and concluding at 3.55 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**

Mrs M Aston, Mrs P Birchley, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mr P Gomm, Mrs V Letheren, Mrs W Mallen, Mr R Stuchbury and Ms K Wood

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

Mr D Babb

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Mr Z Mohammed and Mrs J Teesdale

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mr K Burrell, Mr D Johnston, Ms S Sewell, Ms G Shurrock and Mr C Tribe

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Ms J Blake, Mr P Irwin and Mr M Moore.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### 3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In response to a question about an update on the high number of foster carer resignations during 2015/16 the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services stated that she would provide a written answer to the Committee.

**ACTION: Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

### 4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Skills and Learning
- Mrs G Shurrock, Head of Special Educational Needs

Written public questions had been received from Mr P Miller and Ms J Creasy in relation to the development of a new SEND strategy for Buckinghamshire County Council:

- a. Please provide the data to show how a balanced SEND budget will be achieved resulting from the implementation of the proposed strategy.
- b. How will the BCC SEND leadership achieve better cross-system collaboration (including Social Services, all SEND providers, the RSC and other local LAs)?
- c. Why has BCC failed to respond to the Regional Schools Commissioner's invitation for an Expression of Interest relating to the development of regional special schools?

Mr Mohammed explained that a written response to the questions had been provided to the Committee. The response was noted as follows:

- a. The SEND Strategy will take into account both the priorities identified and the budget that is available. Further financial modelling will be undertaken once the SEND Strategy is finalised and published to ensure we can meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- b. The SEN Strategy is being finalised to ensure that it takes into account responses from the recent priorities consultation. This area has been identified as one of the priorities and the strategy will set out clearly the actions of how we will achieve this. Once the SEND Strategy has been agreed it will be published on the Bucks Local Offer Website.
- c. The LA has chosen at this time not to submit a bid for a new special free school, as it is aware that bids for a free school have been submitted for a site in Buckinghamshire. The LA needs to await the EFA's decision on these bids and to assess, subject to the outcome of these bids and as part of the SEN Review, the need for additional provision in the future which will be subject to either suitable sites being available or expanding existing provision.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee:

- The Chairman explained that Mr Miller and Ms Creasy had been invited to attend the meeting but had been unable to do so.
- Mr Zahir confirmed that there were no planned reductions in SEND provision in the County at this point in time.
- Ms Shurrock advised that some data being requested was currently being collated as part of the SEND review and not currently available.

There was a request that the Cabinet Member provide a fuller response to questions raised once all information was available.

**ACTION: Committee and Governance Adviser to follow up.**

A Member suggested that the SEND Strategy should be brought to the Select Committee once it had been to Cabinet on 9 January 2017.

**ACTION: Committee and Governance Adviser to add to the work programme.**

Mrs Shurrock updated the Committee on the continuing development of the new SEND Strategy and made the following points:

- There had been a good level of engagement with parents and carers as well as young people with Special Educational Needs to help develop the strategy.
- The review was timely given the pressures that Local Authorities were currently under.
- The general opinion was that the strategy had identified the correct priorities.
- There would be outcomes within the strategy with an explanation as to how they would be achieved.
- The strategy would be brought to Cabinet on 9th January 2017 and published on the Council's website.

## **5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman confirmed that the Voice of the Child and Young Person Inquiry report had now been agreed following the Committee's meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and that it would be going to Cabinet to get a response to the recommendations on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

Parent Governor Elections onto the Select Committee - the Committee had not received any nominations from Parent Governor's by the deadline of 18<sup>th</sup> November; however; there had been some expressions of interest since then and so the election process would be re-opened.

## **6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES**

Mr P Gomm thanked Mr Zahir for his help in resolving the previous issues regarding communication with some of the Children's Centres Advisory Boards and Members. He also reported that he was receiving an increasing number of emails about bullying in schools and he considered this might be an item for future consideration.

## 7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

Mrs J Teesdale, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services provided an update on the following:

- Ms Aarushi Bahl who had attended County Council on 24 November 2016 had now joined the Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire Youth Parliament and she wished to congratulate her.
- There had been a second Ofsted visit between 30 November and 1 December 2016 and a verbal summary of initial findings had been provided. A letter would be received from Ofsted in due course. The initial feedback noted:
  - There was evidence that Social Workers knew children well and they had good relationships.
  - There was a clear commitment to keep children at the centre of what Children's Services did.
  - Clear management oversight and supervision
  - Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) were good advocates for children.
  - There was progress on the timeliness and quality of health assessments.
  - Social Workers were seeing children regularly.
  - Assessments for Looked after Children still needed to be updated regularly.
  - Public Law Outline meetings and Court tracker needed to be used consistently.
  - Legal services needed to provide a more timely and efficient service to all children.
  - Interviews with children returning from going missing needed to be more timely with greater management oversight.

Committee Members also congratulated Ms Aarushi Bahi on her appointment to the Youth Parliament.

In response to Members' questions Mr D Johnston, Managing Director – Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit made the following points:

- The written response from Ofsted's findings would arrive on 10 January 2017 and would be forwarded on to the Committee.

**ACTION: Mr D Johnston**

- A small amount of funding was needed from across the whole Council to help support the Youth Parliament at the national level.
- There were still elements of children's services that needed to improve but three of these could be dealt with quickly as they were processing issues.
- A child entering the social care system started with the First Response Team and moved to the Children in Need Team. Every effort was made to ensure that the same Social Worker remained with the child throughout the process; however, there were occasions when this might not be possible.

Mr Johnston was told of compliments received by Members from families involved with Social Care as to how their cases had turned around with new systems in place.

Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills provided an update on the following:

- The Council was awaiting the second stage of the National Funding Formula consultation.
- Buckinghamshire schools had been mentioned specifically in a report by Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Service and Skills. Highcrest School was noted for identifying and tracking the progress of the most able pupils and Bradley Taylor, Headteacher of Chiltern Gate Schools was recognised as an exceptional leader.
- There would be a grading change for GCSEs from the current 'ABCD' system onto "Progress 8" measures.
- The Council had lobbied hard in respect of the National Funding Formula and was optimistic as to what funding would be received. Buckinghamshire had one of the lowest funded secondary schools per pupil in the country at £4,000 per year; the lowest in Tower Hamlets by comparison was £7600 per pupil.

It was agreed that the Chairman write to Nick Gibb MP, Education Minister to invite him to speak to the Committee.

**ACTION: Mr D Dhillon, Chairman**

## **8 NARROWING THE GAP INQUIRY. RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
- Mr K Burrell, Head of Schools (Primary) – Bucks Learning Trust
- Ms S Sewell, Senior Information Officer

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- The attainment gap at Key Stage 4 had narrowed by 3% last year as a result of better attainment by disadvantaged pupils, whereas the gap had widened nationally by 1%.
- There had been a reduction in the gap in Phonics at Key Stage 1 and was now comparable to the national figure for the first time in a number of years.
- The inequality gap at Early Years Foundation Stage was lower than the national average.
- 88% of all schools in Buckinghamshire were rated as good or outstanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils were performing well compared to statistical neighbours at Key Stage 4.
- Attainment for non-disadvantaged pupils in Buckinghamshire was particularly good which made the gap bigger.

Mr K Burrell explained that:

- Funding for narrowing the gap went directly to schools
- Bucks Learning Trust (BLT) had worked with a range of agencies including governing bodies to help schools use their funding in the best way.
- BLT used both national and local good practice guidance and case studies to help schools gain the most impact from the funding.
- There was now more of a focus on tracking the progress of able disadvantaged pupils.

Mr Mohammed agreed to follow up the reasons for BLT not applying for funding to undertake an independent peer review on narrowing the gap projects – recommendation 9.

**ACTION: Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

The following points were made during the discussion:

- There were two ways currently of measuring attainment for disadvantaged pupils either through the Pupil Premium or through those receiving Free School Meals.
- Some families eligible for the Pupil Premium did not apply which meant that the schools did not receive the funding. It also meant that it was more difficult to get a true picture of the number of disadvantaged pupils.
- The gap at Key Stage 1 and 2 was widening.
- The low numbers of disadvantaged pupils in some schools made it more difficult to use the pupil premium effectively.
- Some early years provision was focused on making sure children had the basic skills needed to get a good start in years 1 and 2.
- There was no separate data available to check whether attainment for pupils attending combined primary schools was better than non-combined.

Mr Burrell was thanked for his continued hard work in improving outcomes for young people in Buckinghamshire.

## **9 EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr C Tribe, Principal Educational Psychologist

During discussions Mr Tribe made the following points:

- One member of staff had taken voluntary redundancy followed by a large number of resignations from the service which now left a difficult situation with staffing levels.
- The per person costs shown in the report were to give a comparison of Buckinghamshire County Council's (BCC) costs compared to others providing Educational Psychology services.
- As well as dealing with reduced staffing levels, there had been an increase in statutory work which had meant moving staff away from traded services to the statutory work. As

a result there had been much less income generated by the service so far this year compared to previously.

- There was a national shortage of Educational Psychologists and two posts remained vacant which, if not filled, could cause some problems with fully delivering the action plan to address recruitment and retention and increase income generation.
- Some staff were still allocated to traded services work to help maintain a variety and improve staff retention.
- There was a clear line of career progression for Psychologist from trainee through to a senior and principle role which was more strategic.
- There was a waiting list of schools looking to buy services meaning a number of children were not receiving services that they would normally receive from BCC.

Mr Tribe agreed to provide information on how many assessments are undertaken

**ACTION: Mr C Tribe**

Members asked Mr Tribe to return to the Committee when he has an update on the situation.

**ACTION: Committee Adviser to add to the work programme**

## **10 QUARTER 2 2016/17 CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE - EXCEPTION REPORTING**

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mrs J Teesdale, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services
- Mr D Johnston, Managing Director to Children's Social Care and Learning

Mrs Teesdale introduced the report and explained that the report set a high benchmark for Children's Services to achieve:

There was a discussion about the report and Mr Johnston made the following points:

- There were a number of red indicators and targets had been set very high.
- For some indicators, the Council was performing below the challenging target it had set itself but was performing better than local and national averages.
- Stretching targets were set to drive improvement but some targets would need to be reviewed by the Improvement Board to make sure they remained realistic.
- To achieve good performance for some indicators meant relying on partners to undertake work and provide information back to the Council.
- There were some issues around how data for the indicator about repeat referrals was calculated, for example, if both a school and separately a Health Visitor contacted Children's Services about the same child on the same day then this would count as two referrals.
- There had been a large increase in child protection conferences being held and so the target for holding them on time was not met. It was important to focus on the quality of conferences as well as timeliness but additional resource would be brought in if needed.





- There were some issues around the quality of data recording which was affecting the indicator about the number of staff supervisions completed.
- The restructuring of the Children in Need service would provide increased management and assistant management resource for teams.
- In order to bring more children in care placed out of county back to within Buckinghamshire, agreement had been reached with three foster providers in the County that as placements became free they would be used for Buckinghamshire children.
- Work was being undertaken to identify around 15 or 20 residential beds within Buckinghamshire that could be used to bring children in care back into the County.

## 11 PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION INQUIRY 12 MONTH UPDATE

The Chairman went through the progress of recommendations. The following points were made:

- Recommendation 4. The Committee would need to have sight of the report to be able to decide if the recommendation had been met.
- Recommendation 6. Further information was needed to be able to agree whether the recommendation had been met.

Determination on progress was made using a red, amber green (RAG) rating system as follows:

-  Implemented  
  On track  
  May not be fully implemented  
 not delivered/implemented

- Recommendation 1 – Tick
- Recommendation 2 – Tick
- Recommendation 3 – Tick
- Recommendation 4 – Amber
- Recommendation 5 – Tick
- Recommendation 6 – Amber
- Recommendation 7 – Green
- Recommendation 8 – Tick
- Recommendation 10 – Tick

### RESOLVED

**The Committee agreed the status of implementation of recommendations from the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry (12 months on) as above.**

## 12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the future work programme.



### **13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting to be held at 10.30am on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017 in the Large Dining Room, Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury.

**CHAIRMAN**

