



Minutes

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 21 March 2017, in Large Dining Room, Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.33 am and concluding at 12.43 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

Ms J Blake, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mr P Irwin, Mrs V Letheren, Mrs W Mallen, Mr R Stuchbury and Ms K Wood

GUESTS PRESENT

Lin Hazell and Mr Z Mohammed

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms K Bhanja, Mr K Burrell, Ms C Douch, Mr D Johnston, Ms A Picillo, Ms G Shurrock
Mr N Wilson and Mr K Wright

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr D Babb, Ms P Birchley and Mr P Gomm.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

Mr R Stuchbury requested an amendment at item 7 of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2017 to better reflect that there had been questioning from Committee Members about teacher numbers and the impact on primary schools.

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman pending the change highlighted above.

In response to actions from the previous meeting, Mr Z Mohammed said that:

- 15% of schools would lose out in the new national funding formula, not 18% and the consultation on the formula would close on 22nd March after which the Government would decide whether to make changes before implementing and
- a more in depth report on bullying would be brought to the next Committee meeting.

Action: Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

The Chairman added that the funding formula item had been added to the work programme.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions received.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman updated the Committee on the following:

- There had been one nomination received for the role of Maintained Primary School Parent Governor on the Select Committee and therefore they were duly elected. Mr Kelvin Hamblin, a Parent Governor at Halton Community Combined School, would be joining the Committee after the County Council elections. There were no nominations received for the role of Maintained Secondary School Parent Governor.
- The Committee's Inquiry looking into permanent exclusions would be discussed at the next Committee meeting. Unfortunately, due to the forthcoming elections there had not been time to look into the subject before this time.

In response to Member's concerns around the timing of Committee meetings resulting in potential delays to improvements for young people who had been permanently excluded, Mr D Johnston confirmed that the Children's Safeguarding Board would look at Permanent Exclusions as a future agenda item from a safeguarding perspective, although the next Children's Safeguarding Board was not due for another 10 weeks or so.

Action: Mr D Johnston.

6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Mr R Stuchbury stated that he would be visiting a local grammar school on 24 March 2017 with Mr W Whyte to see if a solution could be found to the transport safety issues on the Chandos Road in Buckingham.

7 CABINET MEMBER UPDATES

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr Z Mohammed, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.
- Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services.
- Mr D Johnston, Managing Director for Children's Social Care and Learning.

Lin Hazell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services updated the Committee on staff changes, a visit to the Families First Team by Department for Communities and Local Government and a planned visit by Ofsted.

In response to a question about an upcoming report on historical child sexual abuse in Buckinghamshire, Mr. Johnston explained that the report was due to be published in around two weeks' time and officers would respond to the report. Mr Johnston would highlight the report's publication to Committee Members.

Action: Mr D Johnston, Managing Director, Children's Social Care and Learning

Responding further to questions about the visit by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Lin Hazell explained that

- She did not believe there was a grading given or written feedback provided.
- The work undertaken by the Families First Team may be considered as a good practice model for other local authorities.
- Publicity on the good outcome would be conducted through a press release and potential attendance at national conferences
- A presentation by the Families First Team to DCLG would be useful to include in the new Member Induction programme.

Action: Governance Advisor

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills updated the Committee on the National Funding Formula consultation, teacher recruitment and selection and staff changes - Mr Nick Wilson would be leaving his role as Director of Education and would be replaced by Ms Sarah Callaghan.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- Mr Mohammed along with other Local Authorities had written to the Secretary of State for Education and local MP's expressing concern about the National Funding Formula.
- There were a number of specific local issues affecting teacher recruitment and training. Strategies were in place to address, however this was also a national problem.

- The national policy changes in education were viewed by the Cabinet Member as positive and the mix and diversity of provision in Buckinghamshire would ensure that all children and young people reached their full potential.
- A Member had visited some of the Adult Education Centres and stated that the services provided were very much valued and had improved the quality of people's lives.
- There had been a great deal of change in the education sector with acadamisation and the Government's new policy on grammar schools. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills stated that change was welcomed and there was importance that Buckinghamshire did not get left behind.
- The proposals for grammar schools would see them working in disadvantaged areas which would be a positive move.
- Some of the non-selective schools have been producing outstanding results.

8 THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) STRATEGY 2017-2020

The Chairman welcomed:

- Ms Gill Shurrock, Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Ms Shurrock made the following points in summary:

- There had been a good level of engagement from children and young people as part of the SEND review.
- The Strategy would be monitored regularly through the SEND Board and leadership team.
- A specific version of the strategy for children and young people was being developed.

In response to a query about an apparent disparity in the figures relating to Education, Health and Care plan assessments for primary and national figures in different sections of the report, Ms Shurrock agreed to look into the issue and report back to the Committee.

Action: Ms G Shurrock

The following main points were made during the discussion:

- There had been an increase in assessments over recent years, partly because of national SEND reforms and a broadening of age ranges to include up to 25 year olds.
- The increase in early year's assessment was positive in being able to intervene at an early stage.
- SEND assessments were part of a graduated approach and provided pre-education so that recommendations for supporting children would be picked up as a priority.
- Systems were in place to ensure that children were placed in special schools only when necessary but there still remained a high dependency on special schools.
- Children and young people's views were always taken into account in assessments.
- Children with special educational needs were always placed in the nearest appropriate provision.
- A strategy priority was to help improve the confidence and skills of mainstream schools in supporting SEND children.

- An Implementation Plan would form part of the strategy monitoring. Information on this would be made available through the “Local Offer” pages on the Council’s website.
- A further breakdown of the number of different special needs categories for statemented young people would be provided to the Committee to help Members see more fully the funding requirements needed.

Action: Ms G Shurrock

- Ms G Shurrock would provide the Committee with the numbers of SEND pupils in Grammar schools.

Action: Ms G Shurrock

9 EDUCATION STANDARDS OVERVIEW 2016

The Chairman welcomed:

- Mr Nick Wilson – Service Director Education.

Mr Wilson presented the report and the following points were made during the discussion:

- Underperforming schools were targeted specifically for improvement. Leadership and management issues were usually the main reason for underperformance and the aim was always to improve outcomes for children.
- There had been a continuous rise in schools getting good or outstanding Ofsted ratings, although 5 schools were currently judged as inadequate.
- Schools lose their current Ofsted rating when they converted to Academy status.
- The Government had changed the term ‘Narrowing the Gap’ to ‘Diminish the Difference’ and reporting showed comparisons on a national basis on this.
- The key stages data at primary school level had been shown nationally not to be robust enough and required reviewing.
- There remained a greater attainment gap in Buckinghamshire than the national average between disadvantaged pupils and others which had been persistent for many years but which was reducing because of the work being done in this area.
- Some ethnic minorities and white working class children continued to perform at lower levels than others and there was a strong focus on addressing this.
- There had been discussions locally around reducing the pass mark for grammar schools to lower than 121 for children from disadvantaged backgrounds but this would have to be mandated at Government level.

10 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEARNING TRUST (BLT)

The Chairman welcomed:

- Ms Amanda Picillo – Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (BLT).
- Mr Kevin Burrell - Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.

The following points were made during the discussion of the report:

- Closing the attainment gap remained a high priority for the Trust.

- Results of a number of partners working together to support disadvantaged children at the early years stage were promising in showing that a child would achieve better outcomes later on and therefore reduce the attainment gap.
- The BLT are working closely with Buckinghamshire County Council to ensure a joined up approach from multi agencies when supporting schools.
- Ms A Picillo provided the Chairman with a case study of work done which had resulted in disadvantaged children outperforming advantaged children. The Chairman requested figures for the percentage of children whose lives had been turned round.

Action: Ms A Picillo

- Some children had now decided to choose to go to non-selective schools even if they had passed the 11+ exam because of the quality of education on offer.
- Grant funding for BLT was decreasing but standards would be maintained by, amongst other things, the Council taking some control over the Specialist Teaching Service so that maximum support was maintained.
- The Trust was aware of the need to continually engage with head teachers to promote their traded services.
- The BLT accounts would show a small surplus this year.
- There were robust governance measures in place which monitored performance and the financial position of the BLT.
- There had been an emphasis on digital transformation to ensure cost savings were met.
- The Trust remained focussed on its commercial / traded packages which had been aimed initially at schools bordering Buckinghamshire but which the Trust was keen to offer further afield.

11 CHANGE FOR CHILDREN (C4C) - 5 YEAR PLAN

The Chairman welcomed:

- Ms Carol Douch, Service Director, Children and Family Services

The Committee discussed the report and the following points were made:

- There was little flexibility in the budget and not supporting families at an early stage could increase costs later.
- The focus in the Plan remained on protecting vulnerable children.
- There were detailed plans now in place under each of the 4 strands and updates would be brought to the Committee when required.
- Once children became involved in the social care system there was a need to keep them close to home.
- There were plans to have a further 20 residential places in Buckinghamshire available and high cost placements should decrease by the end of the year.
- Buckinghamshire had a proportionately high level of SEND children compared to nationally but the Council had good provision.
- Part of the C4C Plan was to bring together the current SEN service and the Children with Disabilities service to provide a better experience for children and young people.
- Members were represented on the Change for Children Programme Board.

12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the future work programme.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee will be held on 18 July 2017, Mezzanine Room 1, New County Offices, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN