



# Minutes

## CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 15 May 2018, in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at Time Not Specified and concluding at Time Not Specified.

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 A Collingwood, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mr M Hussain, Mr S Lambert, Mrs W Mallen, Mrs L Sullivan, Ms J Ward (Vice-Chairman), Mr G Williams and Ms K Wood

### CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs M Aston

### GUESTS PRESENT

Mr W Whyte and Mr M Appleyard

### OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms V Trundell and Mr T Vouyioukas

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr David Babb and Mr Brian Roberts.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.



### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions.

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

The Chairman informed the Committee that evidence gathering was continuing on the Permanent Exclusions Inquiry.

### **6 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES**

Mr G Williams and a few of the members met with the Head of Educational Psychology Service and discussed some of the preliminary findings from the exclusion inquiry. Mr Williams congratulated the Educational Psychology Service team on how they dealt with the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) plans.

### **7 CABINET MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Mr T Vouyioukas, Executive Director for Children's Services, Miss S Callaghan, Service Director, Education, and Ms G Hancock, Interim Service Director Children's Social Care, to the meeting.

Mr W Whyte informed the committee that the current week was the start of the Foster Care Fortnight and that he was grateful to the Council and the committee for their help with publicity.

The Cabinet Member also highlighted that one of the Council's Children's Homes had recently been rated 'good' by OFSTED.

Members sought clarification and assurance on the following:

- The timing of the new consultation process for the Early Help Service in light of the decision to not go ahead with the previous decision following a legal challenge.
- The length of time it would take before a decision was taken on future Children's Homes.

In response, it was explained that:

- A new consultation on an Early Help Service would be take place in the Autumn, after a pre-consultation engagement phase. The new service is aimed to go live in September 2019.
- There would be a pre consultation on the Children's Homes at the start of summer. The new service would go live in September 2019.

## **Ofsted Update**

Members raised questions in regard to the following:

- The deliverability of the current action plan given that a new senior management team had only recently been put in place.
- The timing of when a further OFSTED inspection would be expected.
- The staff morale within the service in light of the Ofsted rating and actions to address this.
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- Actions to measure and monitor improvements in preparation for the next OFSTED inspection.
- An update was requested in regard to the Safeguarding Services Realignment work which was set out in the update report.

In response, Mr Whyte and Mr Vouyioukas explained the following:

- The team working on the OFSTED report were all competent and experienced. The high level plan was presented to Cabinet.
- The Council has no timeline for a future Ofsted Inspection.
- Frontline staff were engaged in further developing actions to improving services.
- The pace of improvement works is picking up and 75% of the findings are currently being actioned.
- The Council is reporting on progress to the Improvement Board chaired by the commissioner, this is referred to on page 115 of the report.
- The Safeguarding Services Realignment work has been implemented successfully. Everything has happened that was planned, with the staff reporting that the new alignment is helping them practise better. The changes introduced were co-produced with the first line staff and managers.

## **8 EDUCATION STANDARDS**

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and Ms S Callaghan, Service Director, Education, to the meeting.

Ms Callaghan discussed the presentation and report on Education Standards Report.

The Committee raised the following issues and questions::

- The extents to which the Council can provide the same level of resources and provision for school improvement that BLT have bene providing.
- The details of what other authorities have used Side-by-Side project methodology.
- The resources that were needed to achieve the goals highlighted in the presentation.
- The reasons for why the number of permanent exclusions had increased.

In response it was explained that:

- The resources for school improvement sit within the schools themselves. Understanding where the expertise is in the system and sharing them with the schools will support the delivery of the Side-By-Side project.
- Other Authorities follow the Wigon Consortium which is a very similar approach.
- Having the support of the new leadership team will a great resource as well as the new Head of Service Mr Gareth Morgan.
- The number of permanent exclusions had reduced. This is due to the proactive support by schools to help the children stay in school and by being more alert to the profile of children who are likely to be excluded.

## **9 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

The Chairman welcomed Mr M Appleyard, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, and Ms V Trundell, Education Entitlement Manager to the meeting.

Ms Trundell discussed the report presented to the committee.

From the report the following issues were raised:

- The reasons behind the increase of home education and how the monitoring that these children are receiving the education takes place.
- How is the Council managing the spike in home education particularly in Year seven.
- The number of families that have chosen to home education and the reasons for this.
- The breakdown on the ethnicity and geographical area on home educated children and why so many Year11 females are being home educated.
- Best practice nationally

The following responses were provided:

- Buckinghamshire County Council does a home visit to the children who are home educated as soon as a referral is received. Staff will ask for evidence on the education provided, and if they are satisfied the Council will visit again in another year. If not, then staff will make recommendations and if these are not being adopted the Council will assist them in an application to a school. The main reason behind home education is lifestyle and culture. Parents have a right to home educate their children except where their child is on the role of a special school in which case they need to seek permission from the Local Authority.

- The council looks into all cases individually to understand the situation and to assess whether there is a history of poor school attendance or wither it's a lack of parental engagement.
- If the council is aware of a child at home without an education being provided then action would be taken.
- There is no national data registration system for home educating children which mean that it is difficult for the Council to accurately know the exact numbers of home educated children in the county and to respond to their needs.
- The Committee asked for a detailed report on the breakdown of home educated by ethnicity and geographical area.

**ACTION: MRS V TRUNDELL**

## **10 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SAFETY**

The Chairman welcomed back Mr Whyte to discuss an update summary of safeguarding actions, arrangements and protocols for looked after children and young people in Bucks.

From the report the following issues were raised:

- What is our percentage of the missing children and the repeat missing children cases?
- Can you comment on the partnership processes and any areas on where this can be improved?
- Does the Council have data on the length of time on how long these young people are missing for?
- What is the difference between Cuckooing and County Lines?

The following responses were provided:

- Reporting has now improved which means that the figures reflect higher number of missing children than previously.
- Preventing exploitation depends on multiagency safeguarding practise and the ability to share information at all levels from leaders to frontline staff on a day-to-day basis..
- The Thames Valley Police are using the new missing persons systems for adults' social care which will be coming to children's services soon. This is a real time system.
- These are phrases when children and young adults are exploited through criminality. County Lines is a term used to describe the situation where children are exploited in drug running across county lines, from example from London and Birmingham into Buckinghamshire. Cuckooing is at term used when the residents of a vulnerable person within a particular area that is taken over by those who are intent to supply and deal with drugs.

## **11 OFSTED UPDATE - ACTION PLAN PROGRESS**

**This agenda item was brought forward and discussed under Agenda item 7 as detailed above.**

## **12 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman informed Members that the Permanent Exclusion Inquiry was due to report to the Committee in July with its draft report. The HASC Committee would report on the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> June had been cancelled.

## **13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on the 10<sup>th</sup> July in Mezz 1

**CHAIRMAN**