



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

Minutes

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 27 November 2018, in Mezzanine Room 1 - County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 10.43 am and concluding at 12.23 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

Mrs P Birchley, Mr A Collingwood, Mrs I Darby, Mr D Dhillon (Chairman), Mr S Lambert, Mrs L Sullivan, Ms J Ward (Vice-Chairman) and Ms K Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

GUESTS PRESENT

Mr M Appleyard and Mr W Whyte

OFFICERS PRESENT

Miss S Callaghan, Ms K Collier, Ms T Lawrence, Mr R Nash, Mr P Robson, Mrs K Sutherland and Mr T Vouyioukas

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr D Babb, Mr M Hussain, Mrs W Mallen and Mr B Roberts.

A change of membership was noted. Mrs M Aston is no longer a Member of the committee.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST



Mr S Lambert stated that he had two non-pecuniary interests. He was a member of the review group for early help and the Home to School transport working group.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 2nd October 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the chairman with two amendments:

- Miss Callaghan gave a verbal update on an agreed action – she stated that they had investigated whether reported technical issues had any impact on recent 11+ test results. The provider had confirmed that all tests were fair and equitable, so no further action was required.
- The chairman reported that an internal staff member had contacted the committee and informed that EHCP assessments don't have to happen consecutively, but that they can happen concurrently. Mr Appleyard agreed this to be the case.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The chairman informed that there had been a recent attempt to gain Parent Governor Representatives from maintained Schools and from Roman Catholic Schools, which had been unsuccessful. He encouraged parent governors to apply. There would be another attempted election in the New Year.

Members of the Committee had recently visited the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The chairman was pleased to report that all Senior Management posts appeared to be occupied by permanent staff and there were positive efforts to improve working practices. He noted that the committee had only spoken to the Head of Service and hadn't yet spoken to front-line staff. A series of visits to front-line staff across the county would be set up and attended in the New Year.

5 COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

There were none, however, Members requested that they received adequate notice to be able to attend meetings with front-line staff in the New Year and that they would like to speak with the full multi-agency team at those meetings. The chairman

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A local parent asked two questions:

- Why drop in sessions for the home to School transport had not been held during the day, which had restricted attendance for parents who struggle with childcare issues?
- Why subsequent dates for SEND children had not been included initially and had not been well-advertised?

In response to the questions, Mr Appleyard and Miss Callaghan informed:

- That they believed they had good representation from parents of SEND children.

- That no changes would be made to statutory home to school transport arrangements.
- That they would facilitate more drop-in sessions if there was demand for them.
- Parents could send ‘free text’ comments through the current online consultation, which would be considered prior to decision-making.
- That more drop-in sessions were planned for different representative groups of parents in the near future.
- That all consultation drop-ins would be advertised through the website and various partnerships, such as Schools and FACT (Families and Children Together).
- That concerned parents could contact Mr Appleyard and Miss Callaghan directly in order to receive a response.

7 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT CONSULTATION

Mr Appleyard informed that there had been 11 meetings and that he believed parents understood the need to reduce the current spend on non-statutory home to School transport. He assured that they would continue to listen to parental concerns and take them into consideration. Public decisions were due to be announced in March 2019. He reiterated that only post-16 SEN transport would be considered within the consultation and that parents would be likely to be asked for a contribution towards cost. He stated that Buckinghamshire County Council provide extremely generous help with home to School transport in comparison to other Local Authorities. In response to questions from Members of the Committee he informed:

- That they were aware of parental concerns and had sight of many emails alerting them to issues with public transport routes
- That there would be a careful and phased transfer of services which will be monitored over a period of years
- That Buckinghamshire County Council would be happy to accommodate parents organising their own combined transport arrangements, however, based on experience these had been unsuccessful and led to urgent interventions when the arrangements fell apart
- That Buckinghamshire County Council’s own transport provision had experienced the same level of mechanical issues and reliability as public bus services
- That all changes to arrangements would be made carefully

In response to committee Member questions Miss Callaghan reassured that:

- The statutory transport for SEND children would not be changed and wasn’t part of the consultation
- Buckinghamshire County Council would be promoting children’s independence and assisting to develop life skills by offering travel training, encouraging use of available college bursaries for travel and improving the needs assessments
- That they aimed to reduce the vast amount of route duplication between public and School transport routes, reduce child safety issues and increase cost efficiency

The Chairman welcomed Mr Robson, Head of Integrated Transport, to the meeting. Mr Robson informed Members that all public and School transport routes had been mapped out

and that they would be creating a more robust system which reduced duplication and dealt with existing transportation problems experienced by both School children and the general public. He stated that stakeholder events had been positively received and that they would focus on a phased approach which considered safe collection and drop off points.

Mr Vouyioukas encouraged Members of the Committee to be involved with the Members group which shapes the consultation, to ensure the offer is right for all School children within Buckinghamshire.

8 CABINET MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Miss Callaghan delivered an update on behalf of the Educational Psychology service. She informed that they had dealt with twice the number of EHCP's, that they had issued contracts to transfer agency staff to the associate model. In response to Member questions she stated that:

- There had been ongoing capacity issues but they would shortly be appointing an interim Principal EP
- The service could be more proactive in anticipating periods of high volume referrals
- The service's priority had been to catch up with statutory assessments and there would be a shift to preventative work once this is completed, which would alleviate pressure on the service
- Many EP's were part time due to the fact BCC was a flexible employer
- They had quality-checked assessments which locum EP's submit and that they had distributed clear SLA's and expectations of quality
- They intended to transfer the existing 9 locum EP contracts to associate contracts by January.

In response to concerns about BCC not being an attractive place for EP's to work, Mr Vouyioukas reassured that it was an attractive place to work, that agency staff were low and that the service was fortunate to have an interim Principal EP starting soon.

Ms Wood asked for an update about Penn School and was informed that BCC had not contributed to the free School application due to not wanting to put additional strain on existing budget pressures.

Mr Whyte provided an update about Youth voice's representation at a recent full council meeting and looked after children's representation on the corporate parenting panel, which had given the Council insight into issues affecting these groups. He encouraged participation in the current early help and short breaks consultations and discussed national challenges to deliver children's services. He told Members that he had informed the Children's Minister of current demand and demand pressures.

Members of the committee commended Mr Whyte on his consultation, stating that it had been well-publicised and they had listened to the general public. In response to questions Mr Whyte stated that:

- Children in care and care leavers' NEET figures had been good compared to neighbouring authorities. The social care and transitions teams would be ensuring that these children accessed all opportunities available to them
- National Adoption week had assisted the service to inspire interest in finding forever homes for children who needed them

Mr Vouyioukas informed that in-house capacity had risen and, where possible, the service placed children with connected people as children tended to do better within these placements.

9 OFSTED IMPROVEMENT PLAN PHASE 2

Mr Whyte, Mr Vouyioukas and Mr Nash updated Members about the actions which had been completed during phase 1 of the Ofsted improvement plan and of intended actions during phase 2. Mr Whyte informed that phase 1 had consisted of auditing and implementing urgent improvements, while phase 2 would focus on driving changes and improving outcomes for children in Buckinghamshire.

Mr Vouyioukas stated that a high level action plan had been devised and the senior management team had been in place for 6 months. His focus would be on assisting and improving performance and competencies of front-line managers, which would ensure that they deliver good supervision to workers beneath them. The new quality framework would produce learning opportunities for all staff across various divisions and would deliver on recommendations from Ofsted. Mr Lambert commended them for the clear report which had been provided to the committee.

In response to questions from Members, they confirmed:

- A current review of CATCH would improve the prospects of children remaining with their families where it was safe to do so.
- Hampshire's involvement equated to fresh eyes and guidance. That it had provided challenging as well as support
- That there would always be an opportunity to learn, work cooperatively and information share between Local Authorities, regardless of Ofsted rating, as this improves working practices.

Members thanked children's services for all of their hard work

10 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the future work programme. Future agenda items for the meeting on 15th January 2018 were agreed to be:

- The Q2 performance report
- Ofsted monitoring report update
- Buckinghamshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (BLSCB) annual update

A work programming workshop is to be held in the New Year to develop the annual work programme for 2019/20

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on 15th January 2018 at 10:30am, in Mezzanine 1, County Hall, Aylesbury

CHAIRMAN