



Minutes

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on Friday 24 January 2020, in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.05 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 M Hussain, Mr N Hussain, Mrs W Mallen and Ms K Wood

CO-OPTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs C Pease and Mr M Skoyles

GUESTS PRESENT

Mrs A Cranmer and Mr W Whyte

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms J Cassey, Mr G Morgan, Mr R Nash, Mr T Vouyioukas and Mrs E Wheaton

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr N Brown, Mr B Roberts and Ms J Ward.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr N Hussain declared that he was a contractor for bus and taxi services for BCC and worked with a number of Home to School transport companies in Buckinghamshire therefore he would not participate in any discussions about Home to School transport.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27th November 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr V Nicholas submitted the following public questions.

Q1. What timetable does the County consider to be most feasible for the re-opening of the secondary school in Burnham as a through school?

Q2. In the short-term – by the end of the Summer term 2020 – what assets at the school can be made available for community use and by other key stakeholders? Furthermore – what usage can be anticipated during the 2020/21 academic year.

We are all mindful that the School's Sports Hall was significantly funded by the local community, Burnham Health Promotion Trust and the outdoor all-weather pitches are also a valuable community asset.

Q3. What strategy and plans are being developed to develop post-16 and adult education in order to retrain and up-skill potential employees in such locations as Slough Estate and Heathrow Airport? Such provision was delivered on the existing site 30 to 40 years ago and it may now be timely to consider again such an initiative. We should also be mindful as to the benefit with the Aspire initiative which is supported by SEGRO.

Q4. Access and Egress to and from the existing site has always been problematic and the school's boundary in Stomp Road remains most unsatisfactory. What steps can be taken to ensure that this issue can be addressed in a constructive manner?

Mrs S Hodges submitted the following questions.

Q1. What training is provided and recorded for Educational Health and Care co-ordinators to ensure they are fully up-to-date with current legislation and statutory requirements for the EHC plan, assessment and subsequent implementation and how is this reviewed?

Q2. What training is provided to transport officers to ensure they are up-to-date with current statutory requirements and legislation?

Written responses have been prepared and sent to the members of the public and attached.

In addition to the public questions submitted in advance, County Councillor Alex Collingwood read out a question he had received from a resident in relation to SEN home to school transport. He agreed to send the email to Mr Vouyioukas after the meeting for a response.

Action: Mr Vouyioukas

County Councillor Niknam Hussain referred to a number of new staff in the home-to-school team and expressed concern about the lack of local knowledge. He agreed to send to Mr Vouyioukas details of a case he was involved with.

Action: Mr Hussain and Mr Vouyioukas

5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman thanked all Committee Members, Democratic Services, Cabinet Members and Lead Officers within the service.

He went on to say that the Committee had undertaken a number of inquiries over the last few years, including the Voice of the Child and the outcomes from these inquiries had helped to make improvements for all Buckinghamshire Children. Over the years, the Committee had reviewed and scrutinised Early Help (now the Family Support Service), elective home education, fostering and adoption services, educational psychologists, children's mental health services and home to school transport services.

A number of meetings had taken place with social workers and managers to understand the pressures and challenges facing them on the improvement journey and to identify any further areas of improvements. Dates for the visit to the Wycombe team would be identified and take place by the end of March.

Action: Committee & Governance Adviser/Richard Nash

The Chairman concluded that the Committee had helped to make a difference to every child's life in Buckinghamshire.

6 CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE - A RETROSPECTIVE

The Committee discussed the retrospective report and the following comments were made.

- A Member made particular reference to the permanent exclusions inquiry and the positive outcomes from the recommendations made in the report.
- A Member suggested that an in-depth look at the differences in educational attainment across the County could be undertaken in the new Council.
- A Member paid tribute to all the officers within the service and thanked them for all their hard work and support during difficult and challenging times.

7 BSCB ANNUAL REPORT - INFORMATION ITEM

Members noted the 2018/19 annual report and suggested that this report should be considered in conjunction with the 2019/20 annual report by Buckinghamshire Council.

8 FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Mr G Morgan, Head of Early Help.

During the presentation and discussion, the following main points were made and questions asked.

- The Family Support Service (FSS) had been operational since September 2019.
- FSS was now fully staffed and the integrated service offer was strengthened by having a wide range of skills and experience covering all aspects of the new early help offer, which extends to families with children aged 0-19 (25 with SEND).
- FSS provides support for children and young people through community-based support at 16 retained Family Centres, where bespoke timetables of activities were being developed.
- Eleven partners and/or other BCC teams were regularly using the centres, including the children's mental health services.
- The Cabinet Member explained that the number of level 3 cases (early intervention of family support) in 2019 was 573 and there were now 1,134 cases. This highlighted the success of a targeted approach and working closely with families in a timely and supported way.
- 178 sessions per week were being delivered through the Family Centres – both universal services as well as very specific courses were being run in some areas (40% of these sessions were for the under 5s, 30% were for families and 30% for school age children).
- A Member asked for clarification on the 100% increase in support for the families with greatest need. The Cabinet Member explained that this did not mean that there was a 100% increase across the county but the figure represented an increase in identifying issues earlier and being able to put support in place for families and children.
- The aim was to grow the service offer and ensure that all partners and staff were able to signpost families and children to the right service for the right support.
- A Member asked what processes were in place to measure the improved outcomes for families. Mr Morgan responded by saying that all families had a support plan to track their journey of change. Families were assessed at the beginning, middle and end so that improvements could be tracked – using a tool known as the Family Outcome Star. It was agreed that the impact of this work would be reported to the new Committee as well as reviewing the opportunities presented by the creation of more locality working through the Community Boards. In September 2020, it was suggested that there should be an annual review of the FSS, in conjunction with other partners.

Action: Mr Morgan/Committee & Governance Adviser

- A Member made reference to adult social care and how the service had a list of people who were on the cusp of needing care and asked whether this was the same for the FSS. The Cabinet Member explained that the locality teams were already working with families and children in the early stages before the need for statutory services. Mr

Morgan went on to say that there were link family workers within schools who helped to identify children and families requiring support. The team also worked alongside health colleagues at the FSS Centres so early discussions were already taking place.

- In response to a question about publicising the new FSS and promoting the good work currently being undertaken at the Centres, the Cabinet Member explained that the press had been invited to attend the Aylesbury Berryfields Family Centre recently and the website, which had been refreshed, had seen a 25% increase in usage since September. All the Centres had a Facebook presence and leaflets promoting the new FSS had been distributed to health agencies, GP surgeries and Libraries.
- It was acknowledged that the FSS was developed in partnership with other agencies and all partners had a role to play in delivering the key messages. Mr Morgan agreed to discuss what more could be done to promote the new service with health partners.

Action: Mr Morgan

- It was agreed to share the publicity information with parish councils so that it could be posted on their Facebook pages and promoted through other relevant channels.

Action: Mr Morgan

- In response to a question about the services aimed at adolescent anxiety and whether people could self-refer, Mr Morgan explained that people were primarily signposted to the service through the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and confirmed that self-referral was available. A Member felt that more should be done to promote this service as it would take the pressure off CAMHS in the first instance.
- The Cabinet Member agreed to reinforce the key messages and where to go for support with the Children's Partnership. He stressed that every school had a link family liaison worker.
- Facebook was suggested as a good channel to be used to promote the new service to every town and parish.
- A Member asked how the planned savings of £3.1m had been made through redesigning the new service (£2.5m had already been saved with a further 600k savings due to be made). The Cabinet Member explained that this was due to a reduction in the physical footprint and a new way of delivering the service. He went on to say that the savings did not include the £7m of public health money which funds specific services for children, including health checks.

The Chairman thanked the presenters.

9 CABINET MEMBER'S QUESTION TIME

The following questions were asked during this item.

A Member referred to a question he had asked at the previous meeting in relation to details of current programmes aimed to raise the standards and performance of children attending non-selective schools across the county. As agreed at the last meeting, this would be discussed

when an educational standards item was on the agenda. This would be scheduled into the work programme for Buckinghamshire Council.

Action: Committee & Governance Adviser

A Member commented that the key stage 1 results were not included in the latest Cabinet update. Mr Vouyioukas said he would look into this and circulate the results after the meeting.

Action: Mr Vouyioukas

A Member expressed concern around the delays in allocating places for SEN students transitioning to secondary school. Mr Vouyioukas explained that there were significant pressures on SEN but the Head of Service was working very hard and there was new capacity within the team so the service was expected to improve. He explained that the caseloads had been very high for Educational Plans in Buckinghamshire with over 4,500 Educational Care and Health Plans being prepared.

A Member referred to a recent Ombudsman decision which states that foster families should be reimbursed for home to school transport costs. Mr Nash and Ms Cassey agreed to look into this.

Action: Mr Nash/Ms Cassey

10 OFSTED MONITORING VISIT UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr W Whyte, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Mr T Vouyioukas, Executive Director for Children's Services and Mr R Nash, Service Director for Children's Social Care.

The following main points were made during the discussion of the latest Ofsted Monitoring visit.

- The Cabinet Member explained that the Ofsted letter had been delayed due to the General Election.
- Ofsted had recognised that improvements had been made. The leadership team were keeping the pressure on but pace had been hindered by not being able to recruit sufficient numbers of social workers. Recruitment remained the biggest challenge.
- A new academy for social workers had been set-up and 10 recruits were currently going through the programme, with another cohort due to start during 2020/21. The aim would be to over-recruit to reduce the reliance on agency staff and to build resilience within the teams.
- An international recruitment campaign had resulted in nine posts being filled by international social workers.
- Some agency staff had converted to being permanent staff which was helping to maintain continuity for children and their families.

- In response to a question about the turnover rate of 34.6% which was stated in the recent Cabinet report, Mr Vouyioukas explained that the job was very challenging but positive steps were being taken to recruit more permanent staff and reduce the reliance on agency staff.
- Across the 17 teams, there was one team which was 100% staffed by permanent social workers and their performance was strong and consistent.
- In response to a question about whether social workers were leaving having only spent a short amount of time in the job, Mr Nash explained that the length of service of each staff member was monitored regularly.
- A Member asked whether the systems and processes were now in place to ensure the service did not receive a similar letter from Ofsted. The Cabinet Member explained that a number of changes had been made to improve the service and, by way of example, mentioned that the way the service carries out court work had been altered and the launch of the new Family Support Service.
- The Ofsted letter focused on improvements in delivering front-line staff and acknowledged the work of the Leadership team. Mr Nash explained that each monitoring visit looked at different parts of the system. The speed of delivering the improvement relied on the ability to recruit good quality staff. He went on to say that the service was 90% through the work required to put things right.
- The Cabinet Member and Officers acknowledged that the service did not want to be in the same position in two years' time.
- In response to a question about the order of the priorities, Mr Nash explained that identifying a child's needs was something which the service was doing well whereas management oversight was an area which required improvement which explained why this was given a higher priority. He went on to say that there were four themes which presented themselves all too often and were the focus of the improvement work.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for their presentation.

11 IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Cabinet Member introduced this item and explained that the improvement plan was reviewed and rigorously challenged by the Improvement Partner, who had been appointed by the Department for Education.

Mr Nash explained that the management team reviewed the RAG status on a regular basis and information from the independent reporters, the council's quality assurances, auditing and sampling were used. He went on to say that Heads of Service were quite hard on themselves so the RAG status was not over-inflated but was a reflection of the focus of work for the service and how the improvements would be achieved. The RAG ratings were due to be updated and some of the areas would see an improvement.

A Member commented on the Care Leavers team and asked what measures were in place to specifically help the managers and assistant managers. Mr Nash explained that conversations with the teams were taking place on a regular basis and there was some historical unpicking to

be done but the team was working together to do this and it was a shared responsibility, in terms of what needed to be done.

The Chairman wished the team all the very best with their recruitment plans and their continued delivery of the improvement plan.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed to hold a meeting before the end of March to review the Ofsted Improvement Plan. Date of meeting to be confirmed.

Action: Committee & Governance Adviser

CHAIRMAN

Responses to Public Questions for the Children’s Select Committee meeting (24th January 2020)

The following questions were submitted by Mr V Nicholas with responses from the service.

Q1. What timetable does the County consider to be most feasible for the re-opening of the secondary school in Burnham as a through school?

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to ensuring that pupils in Burnham have the best possible experience of education. Burnham Park converted to academy status in 2012 when it joined E-Act, a multi-academy trust. The Academy struggled to deliver a high quality of education and was graded Inadequate by Ofsted. In addition, the school experienced falling pupil numbers, with Year 7 cohort having 21 pupils in 2018 against an admission number of 140 leaving the school economically unviable. As a result, in January 2019 E-Act invited stakeholders to participate in a formal public consultation concerning a proposal to close the academy.

Despite our objection to the proposed closure, the Secretary of State confirmed his decision to proceed and the site reverted to the Council on 13th September 2019.

At the point of closure, there was an insufficient number of pupils attending the school to keep it open. The analysis from our Pupil Place Planning Team shows that there is still insufficient demand to re-open a school on the site. As such, there are no plans to re-open the secondary school given the insufficient demand for places. In addition, data from both Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead also confirms that there is sufficient capacity in the area to meet local demand. We will, however, continue to monitor the situation.

Q2. In the short-term – by the end of the Summer term 2020 – what assets at the school can be made available for community use and by other key stakeholders? Furthermore – what usage can be anticipated during the 2020/21 academic year.

We are all mindful that the School’s Sports Hall was significantly funded by the local community, Burnham Health Promotion Trust and the outdoor all-weather pitches are also a valuable community asset.

The Council is in the process of commissioning a property agent to undertake an options appraisal for the site including the possibility of a future educational provision and the Council's desire to see the sporting facilities being made available to the community. It is anticipated that the report will take approximately two months to complete.

Opening areas of the school for community use has a number of implications including, but not limited to, insurances, the cost of wear and tear on the property,

charging for utility use and assurances from a health and safety perspective. Currently, the Council does not have the capacity to manage these issues; however, this option will be considered as part of the review of the site, including devolving the running of the sporting/community assets to a local group.

Q3. What strategy and plans are being developed to develop post-16 and adult education in order to retrain and up-skill potential employees in such locations as Slough Estate and Heathrow Airport? Such provision was delivered on the existing site 30 to 40 years ago and it may now be timely to consider again such an initiative. We should also be mindful as to the benefit with the Aspire initiative which is supported by SEGRO.

Our Education and Skills Strategy identifies post 16 provision and skills development as a key strand of work; the Council's remit within the strategy is to, 'equip young people with the knowledge, skills and experience to thrive in a modern economy'.

Our current post 16 provision is managed through the provision of high quality sixth form and college places with schools and the Buckinghamshire College Group. Buckinghamshire Adult Education sits within the Council and has been re-confirmed by Ofsted as 'Good'.

Bucks Thames Valley Careers Hub works with 21 non-selective secondary schools to ensure that pupils are provided with high-quality careers information, advice and guidance, skills development and enterprise experiences. The schools involved in the Hub receive support in order to achieve the Gatsby benchmarks, which are the key measures used to identify outcomes in this area. Performance data (Autumn 2019) evidences Buckinghamshire as the joint best performing Hub in the country.

Neither the Slough Trading Estate nor Heathrow Airport are located within Buckinghamshire and are therefore not in our primary delivery area for Adult Education. If grant funding were to be available to support such work and it was in line with our corporate objectives then we would bid for it along with any other interested Local Authorities.

Q4. Access and Egress to and from the existing site has always been problematic and the school's boundary in Stomp Road remains most unsatisfactory. What steps can be taken to ensure that this issue can be addressed in a constructive manner?

The main access to the school site is from Opendale Road and the junction with Stomp Road has pavements on both sides of the road. Given that the school site is currently vacant, we do not consider access and egress to the site an issue.

The following questions were submitted by Mrs S Hodges with responses from the service.

Q1. What training is provided and recorded for Educational Health and Care Coordinators to ensure they are fully up to date with current legislation and

statutory requirements for the EHC plan Assessment and subsequent implementation if necessary and how is this reviewed.

The training plan for Educational Health and Care Coordinators (EHCC) is comprehensive, detailed and thorough and based on the 2014 SEND Reforms. All EHCCs accessed this mandatory training over the course of the year and this was checked through the appraisal system that the Council uses for staffing. In 2019, EHCCs accessed training in a number of areas, including but not limited to:

- EHC needs assessment process and decision-making
- Key indicators for writing quality plans
- SEND Transport
- Safeguarding

During 2019, each EHCC accessed an average of 10 training and development days.

Q2. What training is provided to transport officers to ensure they are up to date with current statutory requirements and legislation.

A training schedule is in place to ensure that all Transport and Transport Compliance Officers have the right training to ensure that they are up to date with statutory requirements. This includes:

- All staff within the Integrated Transport Service must undertake annual e-learning training. Compliance with undertaking this training is closely monitored through the staff appraisal process. The training includes:
 - Safeguarding & child protection
 - Equalities & diversity
 - GDPR
 - Prevent
- Regular briefings on policy and legislation changes are provided to staff through quarterly service-wide all staff meetings and via team meetings. In addition, the individual training needs of staff are considered as part of the induction process for new staff, and through an individualised development plan for each staff member.
- All Transport Officers also attend the mandatory safeguarding training course provided to all drivers and passenger assistants in order to hold a BCC ID badge.
- Additional training for Transport Compliance Officers is planned for spring 2020 on SEND as part of the rollout of Independent Travel Training for young people. This training will provide Transport Compliance Officers with a greater

understanding of the issues faced by those with special educational needs and disabilities.