RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 March 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

- That Beverley Kemp, social worker was in attendance.
- That Cllr S Clark was not in attendance.
2. **Members’ Interests**

None.

3. **Chairman’s Announcement and Communications**

The Chair announced that item 13 had been included in the agenda for information only and that any queries relating to it would be addressed during the Executive Member update.

4. **Petitions**

None.

5. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

6. **Call-In**

None.

7. **Requested Items**

None.

8. **Executive Members’ Update**

The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children extended her congratulations to all those pupils who had undertaken exams during the last academic year and highlighted positive outcomes for many of those young people. The Government had recently announced additional funding for education which was welcomed as Central Bedfordshire schools had been historically underfunded compared to the national average and statistical neighbours, particularly in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Following the recent annual conversation with Ofsted, the Council’s self-evaluation action plan and consistent improvements to service had been praised by the Eastern region lead inspector (HMI) and Members were also advised that a SEND inspection would be due over the course of the next 12-18 months which would identify strengths and highlight areas for improvement. The foster carer awards ceremony would take place on Sunday 15
September 2019 and the Executive Member extended her thanks to all those who had donated generous gifts and prizes for the occasion, also highlighting recent successes of two care leavers who had secured positions as apprentices within the Council. Lastly, the playing field at Silsoe Lower School had been opened after several years of delays to works, with the school reporting how pleased the children were when they returned from their summer break.

In response to a Member query the Executive Member advised that it wasn’t yet clear when the new schools funding formula would be available but the Committee would be kept appraised of progress. As one of the 40 lowest funded schools across the country, the Council would continue to lobby the Government in order to secure an increase in the pupil premium.

The Executive Member for Health requested that Members encourage those schools at which they were Governors to take part in the School’s Health and Wellbeing Survey (SHEU) as it was a vital tool in identifying the health needs of children and young people. New online support programmes had been launched in relation to children’s mental health, aimed at children and young people and parents and carers. These were publicised by the health service and widely available to schools to promote. The Council was one of the first authorities to offer the HPV vaccine to boys as well as girls which protected against certain types of cancer, with the initiative attracting widespread attention from media outlets. The Executive Member also highlighted world suicide prevention day and that she would be attending multi agency meetings to ensure a reduction in levels of suicide locally.

9. Unvalidated Exam Results 2018-19

The Director for Children’s Services introduced a report which provided details of unvalidated results following examinations in the summer of 2019. Members were advised that some results would change slightly following reassessment but that historically variations in results were minimal and the data presented within the report was largely accurate. Validated exam results would be available in early 2020 with a formal report being presented to the Committee at that time.

The Head of School improvement outlined key points within the report and confirmed that the disadvantaged gap had widened and was above the national average. This was an element which needed addressing as a matter of urgency and the directorate were in the process of commissioning specialist staff to provide appropriate resource and provision. Members were advised that the data demonstrating the 13% difference in the outcomes for those children attending primary schools compared with their peers attending middle schools would need to be analysed as part of the Schools for the Future project in order to better understand how to deliver the best long term outcomes for children living and studying within Central Bedfordshire. The school improvement team had launched various pilot projects to develop reading for those children not expected to reach the required standard and had seen positive
improvements, with post 16 performance improving across all areas. A report would be delivered in November 2019 which would outline the impact and outcomes of the school improvement team to date.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-

- Concerns that despite measures introduced to address it over the past several years, the disadvantaged gap had widened and the most vulnerable children were suffering as a result.
- That a lot of the schools categorised as underperforming were maintained schools and the need for a strategic and measurable plan detailing how the Council would work with all schools in order to realise significant improvements. In response the Executive Member explained that the majority of middle schools were academies rather than maintained schools and whilst it was important to work with all schools, the Council’s statutory duties applied to those schools maintained by the local authority.
- That half of the school clusters within the region had agreed to prioritise the disadvantaged pupil gap and that cluster plans be shared with the Committee at a future meeting.
- Recognising that disadvantage often started at birth, there was a need to coordinate with the early years team in order to support very young children before they started formal education and to support those eligible parents to access free nursery provision where appropriate.
- That local teaching schools were well placed to provide support to educational improvements.
- The correlation between poor attendance at school and low results, recognising the impact of exclusions.
- The need to improve the quality of school governors and ensure they were cognisant of key lines of enquiry within their schools and that they and Head Teachers ensured the pupil premium was allocated appropriately.

**RECOMMENDED:-**

1. That future reports contain specific data in relation to measurable targets and strategic methods of delivery.
2. That head teachers and cluster heads be invited a future meeting to discuss the detailed validated results and their approach to improving outcomes.
3. That the Committee recognise the limits of the Council’s authority with regard academies but that officers continue to communicate and work collaboratively with them, engaging the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and lobbying government where necessary.
4. That an invitation again be extended to the RSC to attend a future meeting.
5. That a future report be delivered to the Committee in relation to the work of the early years team.
10. SEND Vision and Action Plan

The Director for Children’s Services delivered a presentation detailing the SEND action plan which had been updated during 2019, agreed by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) delivery board and the parent carer forum SNAP. The ongoing approach would continue to be co-produced with young people and their parents so that they were confident when transitioning into adulthood, highlighting the importance of a multi-agency and holistic approach in order to ensure services were readily available to users. With the SEND service often underfunded it was important to ensure the correct systems were in place in order to manage budgets and effectively channel resources, particularly when working with schools to ensure exclusions were kept to a minimum.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:

- Confirmation that Bedford’s SEND arrangements had undergone an inspection last year, resulting in their Council’s Chief Executive and CCG accountable officer receiving a written statement of action in order to work towards the required improvements.
- The need to ensure children and young people with SEND were able to access the appropriate educational provision, whether that be in a specialist or mainstream school, recognising that children sometimes had to travel long distances to access suitable provision.
- The need to address the issue of children and young people waiting too long and having to travel too far to access the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision.
- That all staff working with SEND children in schools were appropriately trained.
- That the Schools for the Future project would address future SEND provision and specialist school places and to ascertain whether it would be possible to access Section 106 funds for future specialist school provision.

RECOMMENDED that officers consider the most appropriate method of reporting updates on the targets and milestones detailed within the action plan.

11. Pan Bedfordshire Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)

Members received a presentation regarding a new initiative which was designed to break the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, deliver a bespoke approach for each family and support a reduction in the number of children requiring child safety plans and being taken into statutory care services. The service would be launched in October 2019 and all Members were invited to either of the two launch dates.

In light of the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:

- That various trials would take place during the two year pilot scheme under a multi-disciplinary evaluation.
• That a reduction in children requiring statutory services would be a measure of the success of the scheme.
• That parent mentors would initially be sourced via existing FDAC arrangements in other local authorities and eventually those parents accessing the programme would graduate to become mentors themselves.
• That parents would be supported with travel needs as appropriate.

NOTED the presentation and that Members supported and welcomed the initiative.

12. Progress report on the Children's Services Transformation Portfolio

NOTED the presentation

13. Work Programme 2019/20 and Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following additions:-
• SEND Vision and Action Plan – milestones and targets as requested by the Committee – Date TBC
• Measuring the Success of the School Improvement Team - That future reports contain specific data in relation to measurable targets and strategic methods of delivery - November 2019
• Validated Exam Results - That a future report detailing validated results includes an invitation to Head Teachers and cluster Heads to discuss their approach to improving outcomes – March 2020
• The work of the Early Years Team – Date TBC
• To Assess the Budget Implications of Mainstream and Special Schools Transport - as requested by the Corporate Resources OSC – Date TBC
• Schools for the Future Update – November 2019 and January 2020

Chair .....................................................

Dated .....................................................