At a meeting of Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in Priory House Council Chamber on 09 July 2019 from 10am

| Present:       | Cllr D Shelvey (Chair)                                                                 |
|               | Cllr M Liddiard (Vice-Chair)                                                          |
| Members:      | Cllrs F Firth                                                                            |
|               | Cllrs M Foster                                                                           |
|               | Cllrs M Smith                                                                            |
|               | Cllrs M Versallion                                                                       |
|               | Cllrs D Bowater                                                                          |
|               | Cllrs A Ryan                                                                             |
|               | Cllrs J Tamara                                                                           |
|               | Cllrs E Wallace                                                                          |
| Parental Co-optees: | J Andrews                                                                    |
|               | K Minor                                                                                  |
| Church of England Co-optee: | D Morton                                                    |
| Apologies:    | Cllrs Raymond Berry                                                                     |
|               | Parental Co-optee                         Mrs Vicky Hopkinson                          |
| Absent:       | Roman Catholic Co-optee                                                                  |
|               | D Main                                                                                   |
| Members in Attendance: | Cllrs S Clark                            |
|               | Cllrs B Spurr                                                                           |
|               | Cllrs S Goodchild                                                                       |
|               | Cllrs A Dodwell                                                                         |
|               | Cllrs T Stock                                                                           |
| Officers in Attendance: | S Tyler                                    |
|               | Assistant Director - Children’s Services                                                |
|               | Head of Children’s Services Transformation                                              |
|               | Head of SEND                                                                            |
|               | Principal Assistant, School Places                                                      |
|               | Scrutiny Policy Adviser                                                                 |

1. Minutes

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.
2. **Members’ Interests**

Cllr Smith declared an interest in relation to item 13 due to his work with the voluntary sector.

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

The Chair welcomed new Members and Parent Governor Co-opted Members to the Committee.

4. **Petitions**

None.

5. **Questions, Statements or Deputations**

None.

6. **Call-In**

None.

7. **Requested Items**

None.

8. **Executive Members’ Update**

The Deputy Executive Member for Families, Education and Children provided an update in relation to Looked After Children (LAC). In summary the Committee were informed that GCSE results had improved substantially over the past year and were higher in comparison with the national average and statistical neighbours, resulting in LAC results being in the upper quartile. The Executive Member extended her congratulations to those students and young people for their achievements. Members were also provided an update on several volunteering projects for young people and advised that locally childminders had been judged by Ofsted as 98% good or outstanding.

The Executive Member for Health highlighted work in the areas of health relevant to children and young people, which included the healthy child programme, the work of health visitors, weight management, the drug and alcohol board and mental health services. An invitation was extended to Members of the Committee to attend the
Health and Wellbeing Board at which a report on the mental health needs assessment of children and young people would be delivered. Those Members, who were also school governors were encouraged to ensure their schools took part in the Pupil Health and Wellbeing Survey (SHEH).

RECOMMENDED
1. That where there was a report that had a clear interest for both the Children’s Services and the Social Care Health and Housing OSC’s they would be invited to attend each other’s meetings.
2. That the most recent Health and Wellbeing Board report on children and young people’s mental health needs assessment be shared with Members of the Children’s Services OSC.

9. Commissioning of New School Places in the ward of Tithe Farm through the expansion of Thornhill Primary School, Houghton Regis for September 2021

The Principal Assistant, School Places delivered a report which set out proposals to increase capacity at Thornhill Primary School, highlighting the positive responses received from a recent consultation. Those concerns raised in relation to traffic management in the vicinity of the site would be addressed as part of the planning application and a new site entrance would help minimise the impact of traffic. Members were advised that the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision would be considered separately as part of the Schools for the Future project, as would secondary school provision.

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

- The rationale behind a three-form entry, whether that approach would become the norm and concerns that the expansion was much larger than usual. In response it was confirmed that nationally three-form entry worked well at primary level, it was an opportunity to invest in a school which was performing well and it would benefit existing and new residents, with the expansion meeting the local housing demand and a subsequent increase in pupil numbers.
- The importance of addressing the need to recruit appropriate levels of teaching staff, to which it was confirmed that the Council’s school improvement advisors were working closely with schools in this regard.
- That the physical location of local children’s centres would not change at this time and that it was positive to see a close working relationship between all partners.
- The need to understand the impact of competition and resolve concerns that parents would choose new schools over existing due to a historic lack of investment in many existing school buildings.
- Concerns regarding capacity and the school’s ability to cope with such a large increase in numbers given that it was not currently meeting floor standards. In response officers assured Members that they were confident the school would
manage the change effectively and that the leadership at the school would cope well, with full support from the school improvement team.

RECOMMENDED:-
1. That the Committee support proposals that the Executive approve the new school places required in Houghton Regis to meet the Councils statutory duty under The Education and Inspections Act 2006 by two forms of entry (60 places in each year group) for Thornhill Primary School, Grove Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5PE by September 2021.
2. That the Executive support the proposed capital expenditure at Thornhill Primary, Houghton Regis, subject to the granting of planning permissions under Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act.
3. That an addition be provided to the Executive report, including information that supported three-form entry with details relating to change management measures. In the future this information should be included in all reports to CSOSC and the Executive.
4. That an addition be provided to the Executive report including details of the rationale behind the expansion of a school with poor Key stage 2 results.

10. Proposal for increased total capacity for Ivel Valley Community Special School

The Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provided a summary of the proposals to increase capacity permanently at the school in order to provide SEND provision whilst the Schools for the Future programme progressed. Members were advised that there were no additional net capital costs to the Council as funds had already been allocated.

In light of the report Members discussed the following in summary:-
- That the increase in pupil numbers would also be matched by an increase in teaching staff.
- Whether the school would expand again in the future. Members sought clarification of the maximum number of pupils that were permitted at a specialist school, to which it was confirmed that the Council adhered to national guidelines.
- That current provision for SEND was in the north and south of the region and that children often had to travel long distances in order to access appropriate provision.
- That projects were underway to support children at the lower end of the needs assessment which would help address capacity within specialist schools.
- That objectors to the proposals had cited parking and classroom size as their primary concerns. Members queried whether the expansion would cause parking pressures around the school site, to which it was confirmed that any impact would be minimal.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee support the proposal to increase the capacity from 170 places to 200 places at Ivel Valley Community Special School.
11. Family Support Services including Children’s Centres and Harlington Academy School Trust

The Assistant Director (AD) for Children’s Services delivered a report which detailed an update on the commissioning of services in relation to children’s centres and medical needs services. A consultation on children’s centres had been undertaken, the tender process had concluded but the directorate had been disappointed with responses received and so a decision had been taken to bring services back within the control of the Council and deliver them directly. The Council had hoped to extend the health contract to the beginning of September 2019 but that had not been possible and so the subsequent TUPE of all staff was underway and was completed on 01 July 2019.

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

- The quality of tenders and whether the additional staff now under contract to the Council and the direct management of services would result in higher costs. In response it was confirmed that those costs would be met within existing budget constraints.
- Whether there were proposals to expand particular children’s centres, to which it was confirmed that there were no plans for new buildings, instead services would integrate with other premises owned by the Council.
- The measures required to ensure parity of service delivery in deprived and affluent areas and that the directorate was confident that services would improve under the new structure.
- That the TUPE of staff would ensure continuity of service and that there would be no disruption to relationships with families accessing services.
- That the percentage figures in relation to voluntary sector management fees had been fairly high and a lack of evidence to suggest that the voluntary sector had accessed the grant funding available to them.
- Details regarding the advice and guidance service tender, with the new service commencing from September 2019.

RECOMMENDED:-

1. That the Committee support the decision taken by the Director of Children’s Services, as an outcome of the recent commissioning Family Support Services commissioning programme, to bring the direct management of the Children’s Centres and Medical Needs provisions in to the Council.
2. That a progress report be delivered the Committee in May 2020 in order to assess the effectiveness of the new approach.
12. Personalisation (Including short Breaks)

The Head of Children’s Service Transformation delivered an update on progress as requested at a previous meeting. Members were reassured that the voluntary sector was considered critical to delivering services and the Council was working in close collaboration with all partner organisations. Members were also provided with background to the personalisation agenda which, following the Care Act 2014, now aligned with the approach adult services had adopted many years previously. In order to minimise any instability in families accessing services, officers confirmed that no funding allocation would change until April 2020, which would give all parties time to adjust to the new system.

In response to the presentation Members discussed the following in summary:

- That the financial model would be in place by April 2020 and implemented after that time.
- That all financial, legal and equalities implications would be detailed when the model had been finalised.
- The need for a genuine partnership and effective communication with voluntary organisations.
- That it was possible to use analytics to determine how many people were accessing the family information service.
- That a communications plan had supported families to continue to access services online in place of the School’s Out booklet.

RECOMMENDED:-
1. That the Committee support the progress of the Personalisation (including Short Breaks) project to date.
2. That the Committee support the project priorities for the next four months.
3. That the directorate proactively engage with the voluntary sector at every stage of the process.
4. That a future report be delivered in January 2020 detailing the agreed model.

13. Work Programme 2019/20 and Executive Forward Plan

AGREED the Committee Work Programme subject to the following additions:-
1. New children’s safeguarding arrangements (Date TBC)
2. Measures to address the effectiveness of school Governors (Date TBC)
3. General updates on school cluster information in relation to the Schools for the Future project (at regular intervals)
Chair

Dated