

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 27 JANUARY 2003 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

4

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SERVICE PLAN 2003/04

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member:- Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of report

To invite the Cabinet to consider the final draft of the Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/04 prior to it progressing to County Council for approval.

2. Summary

The CSF Plan 2003/04 brings together the key requirements of the:

- Education Development Plan
- Quality Protects Management Action Plan
- Early Years Development and Childcare Plan
- Youth Justice Plan
- Adult and Community Learning Plan

plus many other associated plans and strategies collectively designed to improve the opportunities for and achievement of children and young people.

Amendments have been made to the draft plan, which was issued for public consultation in September, and these reflect:

- the feedback provided through the stakeholder conferences and workshops
- feedback from young people
- recent legislative and policy developments
- current budgetary information and forecasts

Copies of the responses and comments received during consultation are available in the members' room.

The draft text of the Plan was considered at the meeting of the Strategy Panel held on 17 December 2002 and will be considered at the meeting of CSF Scrutiny Committee held on 22 January.

The version of the text attached reflects the comments of Strategy Panel; the recommendations of Scrutiny Committee will be provided to Cabinet separately.

Also attached is a table setting out the proposed performance measures for each Strategic Area, together with those that we propose to remove. These have been reviewed in the light of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process and explanations for any changes are included.

The draft text of the Plan and revised Performance Measures are now submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement, prior to being presented to the County Council for approval on February 13th 2003.

3. Conclusion

The Cabinet is asked to consider whether to recommend, subject to final proof-reading, approval of the Plan, including the revised Performance Measures, to County Council.

4. Background

- 4.1 During the first year of CSF, a strategic plan was drawn up, bringing together all the major service plans for children. It covers the period April 2002 to March 2007 and is updated annually. The CSF Plan 2002/03 was approved at the County Council meeting in February 2002 and has become the central planning device within the CSF Service. It has been recognised nationally for the way in which it brings together the wide range of planning requirements so that all the energy and resources of the service are focused on our priorities for children.
- 4.2 The Children Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/4: Draft for Consultation was issued in September 2002. Copies of the complete draft CSF Plan and/or the summary version were issued to all CSF staff, all Hertfordshire schools and to all CSF stakeholders. Response forms were included within all of these and an electronic response facility was also provided.
- 4.3 An extensive series of conferences and workshops was organised, each of which focused on specific areas or aspects of the plan. These proved to be very well attended (in total nearly 400 attendees) and provided a significant amount of the total feedback.
- 4.4 A folder containing all of the material from the public consultation process is available in the members' room.
- 4.5 All of the responses have been considered in the preparation of the revised draft Plan.

5. The Performance Measures within the Plan

5.1 We have reviewed the Performance Measures set out in the original draft of the 2003/04 Plan in the light of:

- the bureaucratic burdens of data collection on schools
- their continuing relevance in the light of any changes made in the priorities set out in the Plan
- changes in government measures
- any issues about the data collection systems
- the feedback from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment about the importance of targets being challenging but realistic

5.2 The Performance Measures now set out in the draft Plan are suggested for adoption. In most cases, both the indicators and the targets for future years are unchanged. However, there are some indicators, which we propose to drop, a small number, which we propose to add, and also some where future year targets have been changed. In all cases, the reasons underlying these changes are indicated alongside the relevant indicators. In considering these, it is important to bear in mind that a number of indicators, and also targets for future years, are set or agreed nationally, or in the context of the Best Value Performance Plan.

5.3 Overall, the performance data in relation to 2002 indicates strong or improving performance across a large number of areas. This is consistent with our strong performance, as a service, under OfSTED and SSI star ratings, and also under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process. That said, we have in the past set ourselves very challenging targets in many areas; this means that, even where our performance is improving, we may not have met the targets that we set ourselves. This is true, for example, in relation to a number of the attainment targets in Strategic Area 1, and also across other areas. We have reflected the lessons learned from this in the revised targets.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 An update on the overall budget context for the Children, Schools and Families service is being presented to the CSF Scrutiny Committee.

6.2 We are awaiting confirmation from the Department of Health about the likely availability of a new grant stream, "Choice Protects"

6.3 At this juncture, we would remain confident that the activity in the CSF Plan could be supported in 2003/04, but until the review of grant funding streams is concluded, we cannot guarantee that this will be the case. In addition as stated in the report to the CSF Scrutiny Committee, we are currently reviewing the flexibility that our CPA rating of Excellence gives us in terms of our deployment of specific growth across CSF.

7. Conclusions

The Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/4 has been re-drafted following the period of public consultation. Cabinet is asked to consider the revised version.

Background information referred to by the author

Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2002/3

Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/4: Draft for Consultation

Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/4: Consultation Feedback