

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 28 January 2013 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on 28 March 2013.

**Elected Members:**

Mrs Denise Turner-Stewart (Chairman)  
Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs Carol Coleman  
Nigel Cooper  
Mr Tim Hall  
Mr Peter Lambell  
Mrs Marsha Moseley  
Mrs Diana Smith  
Mr Chris Townsend

**Independent Members**

Derek Holbird

**Apologies:**

Mr Chris Pitt  
Dr Andrew Povey, Substituted by Mrs M A Hicks  
Mr Keith Taylor  
Duncan Hewson  
Mary Reynolds  
Sean Whetstone  
Cecile White

**1/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Chris Pitt, Dr Andrew Povey, Mary Reynolds, Cecile Dorvault, Keith Taylor, Sean Whetstone and Duncan Hewson. Margaret Hicks substituted for Dr Andrew Povey and Simon Parr substituted for Mary Reynolds.

**2/13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING [Item 2]**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

**3/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

No disclosable pecuniary interests were received from Members.

**4/13 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]**

None.

**5/13 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]**

None.

**6/13 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]**

Members noted that the forward work programme would be an important document post-election and would help guide the initial work of the new Committee.

**Recommendations:**

- i. The forward work programme for 2013/14 continue to be developed.
- ii. That the committee consider ways to better monitor school performance when deciding its work programme for 2013/14 including the provisions of data for specific schools.
- iii. Further consideration be given to whether it is appropriate to consider post transformation of youth services at the first meeting of the municipal year.

**7/13 SCHOOL PLACE PROVISION [Item 7]**

**Witnesses:**

- Nick Smith, School Commissioning Officer
- Keith Brown, Schools and Programme Manager

**Key Points Raised During the Discussion:**

1. Members raised concern that the documentation provided in the agenda papers did not provide a real indication as to progress that had been made to date. The accuracy of the forecast models was also queried.
2. Officers stated that the School Commissioning Team and the Property Services Team worked closely together in order to develop the Capital Programme. Good quality data was vital to support this process and officers were always looking for ways to improve methodology.
3. The Schools Programme Manager stated that there had been robust challenge to ensure that costs were kept to a minimum and in line with budgets. Officers were working with 3 other local authorities as part of a cluster programme to attract efficiencies and significant cost savings by grouping relevant projects and going to market with larger programmes. Surrey had subsequently been identified by the Cabinet Office for exploring innovative procurement processes.
4. Members were advised that there had been instances where projects had commenced and extra costs had been incurred. However, by ensuring that project teams were more integrated in their approach and by working closely with relevant stakeholders, projects and processes could be better managed.
5. There was discussion around changing migration patterns as well as data regarding births. Officers stated that they worked closely with external agencies such as Surrey Health Authorities and GP surgeries in order to validate data. Officers stated that the Council continually reviewed the various social and economic factors that had the potential to impact on school place provision.
6. Members raised concern that, in practice, boroughs and districts were under no obligation to provide any CIL money to Surrey County Council and questioned the extent to which the Council could rely on this income stream. Officers stated that there was ongoing dialogue between the boroughs and districts and that there was an acceptance that school place provision was vital.
7. Members sought clarification on how Academies and Free Schools would engage with the School Basic Need Capital Programme and whether they would be willing to allow extension. Members were advised that the Local Authority had a duty to ensure an adequate number of places existed in the school system and that they would be working closely with all schools to ensure that this was achieved.
8. It was felt that Local Committees could play a larger role in school place planning and that this was something that the Committee may wish to look at in more detail in the future.

**Recommendations:**

- i. That the Select Committee continues to have an overview of the performance of the School Planning and Property Team in the delivery of school places.
- ii. That officers ensure that more detailed updates are provided as part of the regular bulletins sent to Education Select Committee members, including details of timescales and progress made.
- iii. That officers provide regular updates via the bulletin (or future agenda items) on negotiations with boroughs and districts in relation to CIL money.

## **8/13 DESIGNATED TEACHER REPORTS ON CHILDREN IN CARE TO SCHOOL GOVERNORS [Item 8]**

### **Witnesses:**

- Maureen Giles, Head of Surrey Virtual School
- Jennie de Bossart, Information Manager

### **Key Points Raised During the Discussion:**

1. The Head of Surrey Virtual School outlined the report and explained that a recent survey had revealed that not all schools were producing a designated teacher report for school governors. Where reports were being produced, there was inconsistency in the quality of the content.
2. As a result of the findings, Surrey Virtual School had worked closely with stakeholders to put together a standardised report template to ensure that relevant information concerning the progress of children in care could be shared with all school governors.
3. For looked after children, key stage transitions were an important time and it was acknowledged that there needed to be good working relationships and communication between teaching staff, headteachers, school governors and carers to support this. Various mechanisms were in place to ensure that stakeholders were kept informed, including a regular newsletter and forum.
4. A Member stated that they had attended a training session for designated teachers and that they had been impressed with the quality of the speakers and information that had been provided. They encouraged other Members to attend in the future.
5. Members stated that the enclosed templates were excellent and thanked the Virtual School for taking such a proactive approach.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. That Surrey Virtual School make available to all schools the templates now designed, for regular reporting to governors for schools with, and school without children in care.

- ii. That the Select Committee support the best practice of reporting to governors through both Designated Teacher and Governor training.
- iii. That the Select Committee support the on-going receipt of designated teacher reports by school governors.
- iv. That Surrey Virtual School report back to schools with an overall evaluation on the content being provided.
- v. That Members to be invited to attend Designated Teacher Conference.

## **9/13 BUDGET MONITORING 2012/13 [Item 9]**

### **Witnesses:**

- Paula Chowdhury, Strategic Finance Manager for Children, Schools and Families
- Lynn McGrady, Finance Manager, Funding and Planning

### **Key Points Raised During the Discussion:**

1. An update was provided setting out the current forecast position on the budget for Schools and Learning Services at the end of November 2012. The Strategic Finance Manager stated that she hoped Members would be satisfied with the content but that if the Committee required any additional detail, the report could be amended for future meetings.
2. Members raised concern that at a time when the Council's School Improvement Programme was struggling due to lack of funds it seemed wrong that money from the Schools and Learning budget was being used to offset losses in Children Social Care.
3. Officers stated that whilst the underspend in the Schools and Learning Service was being used to offset overspends in Children Social Care, the underspend was mostly the result of vacant positions due to restructuring and the fact that the service was gearing up for further savings in 2013/14. It was explained that due to the level of the savings required, implementation of efficiencies had to commence long before the start of the financial year.
4. The Assistant Director for Schools and Learning stated that it had initially been thought that the Council's role in School Improvement would diminish due to the increasing number of academies. However, the Government was now indicating that there would be a continued role for local authorities in monitoring the performance of all schools in their area.
5. A Member stated that there was a need for more transparency and that it was important that officers be seen to be completely upfront about issues. It was accepted that the Council faced numerous financial challenges in the coming months and years and that everyone needed to be clear about potential problems.

6. There was discussion around the layout of the data in the report, with Members suggesting that the Committee needed to have a better understanding of the wider Directorate Budget to properly analyse the information provided.
7. The Finance Manager provided the Committee with an update on School Funding reform. Some of the issues created by the new funding formula were outlined, particularly the difficulty in funding disadvantaged groups. It was explained that to compensate, Cabinet had agreed to the transfer of £27m of Dedicated School Grant funding from core to deprivation funding. However, this in turn placed schools that received a low level of deprivation funding in a potentially difficult situation.
8. Due to these issues, a letter had been written to the Secretary of State for a review with a view to amend the formula to allow more flexibility. A meeting was due to take place towards the end of February and officers would report back to the Committee with an update at the next meeting.
9. It was stated that protection mechanisms within the total available Dedicated Schools Grant would ensure that no school lost more than 1.5% of funding in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

**Recommendations:**

- i. That the current forecast position on the budget for Schools and Learning Services be noted.
- ii. That officers feedback the outcome of the February meeting concerning formula flexibility so that issues can be raised when the Committee meets with Michael Gove in March.

**10/13 2012 EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY EDUCATION PERFORMANCE [Item 10]**

**Witnesses:**

- Dr Kathy Beresford, Performance and Intelligence Manager (Schools and Learning)
- Maria Dawes, Head of School Effectiveness, Babcock4S
- Richard Evans, Senior Consultant, Babcock4S
- Kenvin Gawley, Chairman of the Primary Phase Council

**Key Points Raised During the Discussion:**

1. The Committee received a presentation setting out early years and primary education performance for 2012. The presentation also

outlined areas that had been identified as requiring improvement and that action taken so far.

2. The Committee discussed the difference in educational attainment between children attending separate infant and junior schools compared to those that attended joint primary schools. However, officers stated that there was no clear evidence that over-inflation of teacher assessments at the end of key stage 1 caused lower progress in junior schools.
3. The proportion of pupils achieving the early learning goals improved for the fifth consecutive year. Results for Surrey also exceed the national average across all 13 assessment scales
4. For KS1 the Surrey results for 2011/12 compared favourably to statistical neighbours and nationally. In particular, Surrey remained in the top ten nationally for reading at all thresholds and in the top five for maths.
5. Despite an increase in the percentage of pupils making expected progress in English and in mathematics between Key Stage 1 and 2, Surrey remained below the national average for both measures. Surrey was ranked 128<sup>th</sup> nationally for expected progress in English and 97<sup>th</sup> in maths.
6. Ten schools in Surrey were below the government floor standard.
7. Further discussion took place around the role of the Governors and the support and training offered to ensure that schools had effective governance. Officers stated that following a full review of the school improvement strategy there would be an increased focus on holding leaders, managers and governors more strongly to account for the outcomes of their school.
8. There were generally smaller proportions of lower ability or disadvantaged children in Surrey than nationally and this meant that these children were often dispersed thinly between schools or concentrated within one school. The result was that schools could end up isolated within a locality or that individual children were not always given the support they needed. It was acknowledged that the agencies and services around schools needed to work together better to target support for lower ability children.

**Recommendations:**

- i. That the Committee considers the draft school improvement strategy at its next meeting prior to its implementation in April.

**11/13 ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS AND COORDINATED SCHEMES FOR 2014 ADMISSION [Item 11]**

**Witnesses:**

- Claire Potier, Principal Manager for Admissions and Transport

### **Key Points Raised During the Discussion:**

1. The Principal Manager for Admissions and Transport advised the Committee that the consultation on admission arrangements was an annual exercise. The consultation process had ended on 22 January 2013 and officers were currently in the process of collating the responses.
2. Approximately 96% of children were given one of their preferences, although the exact figure naturally varied for primary and secondary admissions.
3. The draft primary scheme would allow parents to name up to 4 preferences, an increase from the existing limit of 3. It was explained that due to the current pressure on primary school places, parents faced a difficult choice if it was likely that their local schools would be oversubscribed. The increase would also help mitigate against the fact that London residents could name up to six schools, including those within Surrey. As such, it was felt that the increase to 4 preferences was an equitable solution.

### **Recommendations:**

- i. That the proposed changes to Surrey's admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools for September 2014 be noted.

### **12/13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 12]**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 28 March 2013 at 10:00am.

Meeting ended at: 1.20 pm

---

**Chairman**