

MINUTES of the meeting of the **CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE** held at 10.00 am on 27 March 2014 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, 14 May 2014.

Elected Members:

A Mrs Liz Bowes
A Mr Ben Carasco
A Mr Robert Evans
* Mr Denis Fuller (Vice-Chairman)
* Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
* Mr Ken Gulati
* Miss Marisa Heath
A Mr Colin Kemp
A Mrs Stella Lallement
* Mrs Mary Lewis
* Mrs Marsha Moseley
* Mr Chris Townsend

Ex officio Members:

Mr David Munro, Chairman of the County Council
Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Vice Chairman of the County Council

Co-opted Members:

A Cecile White
A Duncan Hewson
A Derek Holbird
A Mary Reynold

Substitute Members:

Nick Skellet
Richard Walsh
Richard Wilson
Simon Parr

In attendance

Mrs Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Mrs Clare Curran, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families
Mrs Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Children and Learning

12/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Ben Carasco, Robert Evans, Derek Holdbird, Colin Kemp, Stella Lallement and Mary Reynolds.

Nick Skellet acted as a substitute for Ben Carasco, Richard Walsh acted as a substitute for Colin Kemp, Richard Wilson acted as a substitute for Liz Bowes, and Simon Parr acted as a substitute for Mary Reynolds.

13/14 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 27 JANUARY 2014 [Item 2]

It was noted by the Committee that Marisa Heath had been present at the last meeting. Pending this correction, these were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

14/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no declarations of interest. However, Nick Skellet requested that it be noted that he is a governor for Oxted school. Richard Wilson asked that it be noted that he is a governor for three schools: West Byfleet Junior school, West Byfleet Infant school, and Heathside School, Weybridge.

15/14 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

16/14 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE [Item 5]

The Committee did not refer any items to Cabinet at its last meeting, so there were no responses to report.

17/14 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION [Item 6]

The Chairman provided a brief outline of the structure of the meeting.

18/14 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT CONSULTATION [Item 9]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Claire Potier, Principal Manager for Admissions and Transport

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee discussed the outcomes of the consultation. It was explained that any policy had to be considered fair and equitable, and that this reduced the number of options available when trying to address local discrepancies. It was clarified by officers that the policy under discussion did not relate to children holding a statement of Special Education Need (SEN). However, it was commented that the

SEN policy mirrored the policy for those in mainstream education, with the exception of those requiring a more specialised provision.

2. The Committee asked for clarification about the two-tier appeal system for decisions related to transport eligibility. Officers informed the Committee that the decision to ensure that families were entitled to both a case review by officers and a Member review was a decision taken by the Executive when the policy was agreed in June 2006. The Committee queried whether the proposed changes in policy would mean fewer appeals. It was commented that often the reason for appeal were case-specific, and a change in policy was unlikely to lead to any significant reduction in the number.
3. The Committee was informed that the additional cost to the Council as a result of extending the Home to School Transport policy to siblings was difficult to determine. It was explained that the cost of transport varied according to need and circumstance, it was also commented that a change could impact on a family's decisions around school placements.
4. The Committee had a discussion over the benefits and risks attached to offering free transport for children to attend the nearest Surrey school, if the nearest school was out of county and they were considered eligible for free transport in that instance. It was commented that, although this only impacted a small number of young people, the change was welcomed as it encouraged Surrey residents to educate their children in Surrey. Officers expressed the view that the proposed decision could influence school admissions decisions for some families.
5. It was clarified that eligibility was automatically assessed through the schools admissions process. It was commented that this could not be the case when eligibility was linked to income. However, a trial scheme was being undertaken where information regarding students eligible for free school meals in junior and primary schools was used to identify those potentially eligible for transport when beginning secondary education.
6. The Committee was informed that new schools would influence how many students were eligible for home to school transport over time. It was recognised that academies and free schools might also impact on the number eligible. Officers commented that admissions arrangements in such instances were often developed with a particular focus on encouraging admissions from the local area.
7. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning commented that she welcomed the debate in relation to the Home to School Transport consultation. It was recognised that there was a need to consider all the implications in any change of policy, including cost and the need to ensure that any change was fair and equitable. The Cabinet Member also noted that the consultation had drawn a limited number of respondents, which was suggestive that many residents were happy with the present policy.

Recommendations:

That Surrey's Home to School Transport Policy be extended to:

1. Provide for a child to receive concessionary home to school transport, or free home to school transport if from a low income family, to attend the same school as a sibling where the sibling has already been assessed as entitled to free home to school transport and where the child is eligible for a place at the same school.
2. Provide free home to school transport for a child to attend their nearest geographical Surrey school if their nearest school is out of county and the distance or safety of route to that school would mean that transport would still need to be provided.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

19/14 PERSONAL EDUCATION PLANS [Item 10]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Patrick Ward, Deputy Headteacher for Surrey Virtual School
Peter John-Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Caroline Budden, Deputy Director for Children's, Schools and Families

Mary Angell, Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was informed that a change in process had seen a drop in the number of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) completed within statutory timescales. Officers commented that the new process had been introduced to ensure that PEPs were being audited for quality, and that there had been signs of improvement in the timescales following a period of adjustment. The Committee was told that it would never be the case that 100% of PEPs were completed within the statutory timescale due to the complexity of the individual cases, although it was required that all PEPs had an identified timeframe for completion.
2. The Committee queried how the Virtual School ensured contact with every school with a child who was Looked After. It was explained that all schools with a Looked After Child had a designated teacher with a specific role in relation to children who were Looked After, and that it was the Virtual Head's responsibility to deliver training to the designated teachers, both within the local authority area and where children were placed out of county. The Committee was advised that

the PEP was completed in conjunction with both the child's social worker and teacher. It was highlighted that the PEP also had a specific section where the young person's wishes could be recorded.

3. The Committee was informed that the PEP was reviewed twice a year as a matter of routine. Officers commented that a review would also be initiated if there was a change of circumstance in the provision for the child's education. Members questioned whether there had been an improvement in the level of achievement. It was commented that the indicators demonstrated improvement, and that the Ofsted measures of success had recently been reviewed to place a greater emphasis on progress rather than achievement.
4. Officers commented that the PEP was also monitored through the holistic Looked after Child review process, which took a child's education provision and attainment into consideration as part of the review.
5. The Committee was informed that the performance of the Virtual School could not be effectively measured through improvements in annual student attainment, as the cohort changed often and was comparatively small in number when considered alongside overall school performance data. Officers stated that the Virtual School was measured in terms of ensuring consistent value and positive outcomes for the young people it supported. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning commented that she would wish to see more training for governors in schools on how to support children who are Looked After. It was explained that training was offered to all Surrey governors, and that the sessions had been well attended.
6. The Committee discussed the role of the Virtual School in supporting students placed outside Surrey. Officers commented that PEPs in such instances were subject to the same quality assurance criteria, and that the statutory requirement for regular Looked after Child reviews also supported this principle. It was confirmed that training was offered to those supporting a young person placed out of county, where it was practicable to do so.
7. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families commented that it was often difficult to secure positive educational outcomes for children who were Looked After. However, it was highlighted that there had been a number of positive pieces of work with both the apprentice schemes in Surrey and the Care Council.

Resolved:

- That the committee endorses the proposed actions listed on page 124 and supports the work of Children's Services and the Surrey Virtual School towards further improving educational outcomes for Looked After Children.

Recommendations:

- That the Headteacher of the Virtual School provides the Committee with an update on the Virtual School's progress towards the end of 2014.

Action by: Headteacher, Virtual School for Children in Care

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

20/14 EDUCATION & ACHIEVEMENT PLAN [Item 7]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses:

Peter John-Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Rhona Barnfield, Secondary Phase Council
Elizabeth Corlett, Primary Phase Council

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee discussed the continuing pressure to provide school places due to the population growth in Surrey. It was noted that economic growth would also bring a greater demand for school places. Officers commented that most schools were ready to expand where necessary. It was highlighted that there were examples of large primary schools in Surrey that had become popular in recent years, despite a traditional view that smaller primary schools were preferred.
2. The Committee was informed that Free Schools were welcomed by the Local Authority when they addressed an identified need. It was highlighted that the Local Authority was not presently permitted to build new Community Schools, and would continue to engage with academies and Free Schools to ensure the demand for school places was being met.
3. It was commented by officers that while the Council's relationship with academies was generally good, it was recognised that there would always be some challenges in how such a relationship was managed. The Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning informed the Committee that she believed that the Council's relationship with Surrey schools was key to the success of the Education & Achievement Plan. The Committee highlighted the benefits of engaging with schools through Local Committees.

4. The Committee discussed the changes to Special Education Needs (SEN) legislation, as outlined in the Children & Families Bill. Officers commented that it presented some challenges, but also an opportunity to develop better ways of working with the families supported in the process. It was commented by officers that the present SEN statementing process could at times be combative, and discourage positive discussion about meeting specific areas of need.

Resolved:

- That the Committee endorses the Key Priorities set out in paragraph 23 of the report.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

**21/14 EDUCATION PERFORMANCE & SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY
[Item 8]**

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: Peter John-Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Rhona Barnfield, Secondary Phase Council
Elizabeth Corlett, Primary Phase Council
Maria Dawes, Babcock 4s

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee was provided with a presentation that outlined the key points from the Education Performance & School Improvement Strategy. It was noted that there were presently only two Surrey schools where the leadership ability was assessed to be below the Ofsted standard of 'good'.
2. The Committee discussed the performance of Primary schools in Surrey compared to Infant and Junior schools. Witnesses commented that there had been investigations around the performance discrepancy within Infant and Junior schools and a number of influencing factors had been identified, including the role of feeder school arrangements.
3. The Committee was informed that the number of pupils eligible for both free school meals and a statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) was higher in Surrey than the national average. It was also

noted that there were a higher number of white British pupils eligible for free school meals in Surrey. Witnesses commented that the majority of free school meal students were not located in areas of high deprivation.

4. The Committee was told that analysis suggested that the educational performance of disadvantaged pupils was often connected with a complexity of need. Witnesses highlighted the need to train teachers to overcome barriers connected with the complexity of need, and share good practice to ensure better educational outcomes.
5. Members questioned why there was an apparent drop in performance between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. It was explained that the drop was in line with trends for all pupils. Witnesses further commented that the means of measuring attainment in both Key Stages was different, and that a like for like comparison did not always provide the best indicator. The Committee was informed that the attainment gap reduced between disadvantaged pupils and the general school population at Key Stage 4.
6. The Committee discussed whether changes in leadership created instability, and what efforts were made to ensure new head teachers were able to develop the capability required for the role. It was commented that it was challenging to recruit head teachers, as the salary was fixed by the size of the school. This was considered a particular issue in rural areas. The Committee was advised that Babcock 4s worked to develop leadership where possible, and that there were examples where interim arrangements had offered opportunities to develop staff and build on their capabilities. It was commented by officers that the cultural shift to taking a stronger line in addressing leadership issues was welcome, as it meant that significant problems could be tackled before they impacted on school performance.
7. The Committee asked what efforts were made to track the use and impact of Pupil Premium funding. It was commented that this was monitored by Babcock 4s, and that sharing examples of good practice through headteacher networks had proved particularly effective in developing co-ordination around the use of Pupil Premium funding. The Committee commented that they would wish to explore the Local Authority's role in tracking Pupil Premium in the future.
8. The Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning praised Surrey schools for their performance in 2013. She highlighted that this was particularly notable given the number of schools in Surrey, and stated that she believed this was partly the result of secondary school headteachers working together to deliver positive results.

Resolved:

- That the Committee endorses the priorities on page 17 and 18 of the report, on the condition that the second point is updated to reflect there needs to be a clear focus on the improvement of teaching and learning.

Recommendation:

- In developing its 2014/15 Work Programme, the Children & Education Select Committee to consider further scrutiny of Pupil Premium use, including the County Council's role in monitoring its effectiveness.

Action by: Chairman/Democratic Services

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

As per the recommendation, an item about the use of Pupil Premium to be brought to a future Committee meeting.

22/14 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 11]

Declarations of interest: None.

Witnesses: None.

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker. There were no further comments.

Recommendations:

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Committee Next Steps:

None.

23/14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 12]

The Committee was informed that the next meeting would be held on 14 May 2014 at 10am.

Meeting ended at: 12.55 pm

Chairman