

MINUTES of the meeting of the **EDUCATION AND SKILLS BOARD** held at 10.00 am on 17 September 2015 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday, 22 October 2015.

Elected Members:

- * Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Mark Brett-Warburton (Chairman)
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- A Mr Robert Evans
- A Mr Denis Fuller
- * Mr David Goodwin
- * Mrs Margaret Hicks
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- * Mrs Mary Lewis (Vice-Chairman)
- * Mrs Marsha Moseley
- * Mr Chris Norman
- * Mr Chris Townsend

Ex officio Members:

Mrs Sally Ann B Marks, Chairman of the County Council
Mr Nick Skellett CBE, Vice-Chairman of the County Council

Co-opted Members:

- * Derek Holbird, Diocesan Representative for Guildford
- * Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for Arundel and Brighton

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Robert Evans and Linda Kemeny.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 2]

There were no pecuniary declarations of interest, however, Colin Kemp asked that it be noted that he is Chairman of a governing body at a school that could be impacted by changes to deprivation funding, in relation to Item 5 on the agenda.

3 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 3]

There were none.

4 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 4]

There were none.

5 FUNDING SCHOOLS FOR DEPRIVATION [Item 5]

Declarations of interest:

There were no pecuniary declarations of interest, however, Colin Kemp asked that it be noted that he is Chairman of a governing body at a school that could be impacted by changes to deprivation funding, in relation to Item 5 on the agenda.

Witnesses

P-J Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools and Learning
Lynn McGrady, Finance Manager (Schools)

School Forum Representatives:

Ben Bartlett, Hinchley Wood Secondary School
Chris Lee, Broadwater Secondary School
Kate Keane, Ewell Grove Primary School (Primary Phase Representative)

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Finance Manager introduced the item and talked Members through a number of slides, which are included at Annex A to these minutes.
2. It was noted that the deprivation funding factor in Surrey was 10.8%, against a national average of 8.1%. This higher figure for Surrey was reflective of the fact that the county had a large number of schools and certain pockets of deprivation. The Board was asked to note funding formula changes introduced in 2013 had removed a "tiered deprivation" funding factor.
3. A working group of headteachers had recently recommended to the Department for Education that the tiered deprivation factor be

reinstated. However, following rejection of this proposal, the working group has recommended that all schools in Surrey are consulted during September on three options for funding targeted to deprivation. Members were advised that even within the working group membership, views were polarised, resulting in the following 3 options being set out in the consultation:

- a. Maintained at approximately 10.8% of total schools' formula funding
 - b. Reduced to approximately 7.79% of total schools' formula funding (the national median)
 - c. Reduced to approximately 4.89% of total schools' formula funding (the median for south east counties).
4. Upon debating the 3 options, Members felt it would be helpful to find out more information about the difference each of those options would make in light of the minimum funding guarantee.
 5. The Assistant Director for Schools & Learning emphasised the importance of achieving a reasonable compromise and the right settlement. A key priority was for schools to reach a joint conclusion on funding targeted to deprivation. It was clarified that both academies and non-academy schools were impacted by the funding formula for schools deprivation.
 6. The School Forum representatives provided some context and insight into the relationship between deprivation and attainment. It was noted that in areas of high deprivation, students were more likely to have learning disabilities, social care and child protection issues. The Board acknowledged that there was a clear link between high deprivation and lower attainment, but emphasised the importance of monitoring progress of pupils throughout their school career and challenging the real impact that funding was having on attainment. The Scrutiny Board was very concerned about the attainment gap and suggested that opportunities should be explored to encourage schools to work in innovative ways, sharing resources to enable enrichment for pupils and minimise the impact of the funding gap. On the same topic, Members thought it was important to consider other ways of achieving a multi-tiered and cross-school partnership approach. For example, some groups of schools were offering a range of vocational courses that could not be achieved within a single establishment.
 7. The School Forum representatives stressed the importance of looking at the whole spectrum of deprivation and not just at finance matters. For example, demographic changes when residents moved out of neighbouring London boroughs such as Kingston and Sutton or changes to welfare benefits.
 8. There was some discussion about funding for schools in low deprivation areas. It was noted that schools in lower deprivation areas could be facing a budget reduction of £1million per year, compared to those in higher deprivation areas and some of the lowest funding of schools within the country. This was putting pressure on schools to make difficult decisions regarding expenditure on areas such as staffing. The School Forum representatives argued strongly that a

deprivation factor should be included in the Surrey funding formula for schools, over and above that from pupil premium. Before concluding their representations, the witnesses emphasised the importance of continuing the work that Surrey had done to campaign for a national funding formula.

9. The Board discussed the disparity between funding for schools in high and low deprivation areas. There was concern that the significantly lower funding available to schools in low deprivation areas would have an impact on education. Members referred to the Council's policy of 'no child left behind' and highlighted the importance of ensuring the best chance of a positive outcome for all pupils, including those experiencing high deprivation but attending a low deprivation school. It was noted that research had shown that children were more educationally disadvantaged if they were from a disadvantaged background but attending a low deprivation school. The Assistant Director for Schools & Learning went on to explain that the most disadvantaged schools were demonstrating real progress as a result of the funding they were receiving. There had been some suggestion that disadvantaged schools could continue to deliver the same outcomes with less funding, however the Assistant Director felt that this was not the case in Surrey.

10. There was some discussion about the national funding formula and government funding – Members thought it was important for the Council to take the strategic lead on ensuring that the school community generated its own funding.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

Recommendations:

The Board thanks witnesses for their contribution to the discussion on the funding for school deprivation.

It fully supports the efforts made by the School Forum and Council officers to work together to reach a consensus, and recommends:

Recommendations for the Board

- That the School Deprivation Funding consultation document is circulated to the Board for further information, and comments collated in order the Cabinet Member and Chairman can consider the respective views of the Board.

Recommendations for Cabinet

- That the Leader seeks to lobby national government for greater flexibility around the funding for deprivation and early help in order to improve linked pupil-centred support between schools and social care.

- That the Cabinet seek to link the early help strategy in Children's Services to the issues identified through the school deprivation funding.
- That the Cabinet are given the opportunity to review the full range of responses to the School Forum consultation - including evidence of the impact of each of the three options proposed and any other options considered- prior to any decision being made.

Recommendations for officers

- That officers proactively explore options with schools about how to best develop a collaborative alternative mechanism for targeting deprivation.
- That officers develop a strategy with schools to encourage families to register children for Free School Meals where eligible, in order to ensure schools are receiving the appropriate level of Pupil Premium funding.
- That officers support the Primary Phase Council in understanding the low response rate to the consultation, in order to develop a wider evidence base of how funding is used.

Board Next Steps

The Social Care Board has identified the following areas for future scrutiny and policy development:

- The wider issue of pressures on school budgets and the opportunity to generate funds
- How schools work together to target deprivation and the opportunities to collaborate in this area.
- Changes in DfE monitoring of progress and how this impacts on measuring the impact of school deprivation funding and other initiatives directed at improving attainment.

6 SCHOOLS AND LEARNING PRIORITIES 2015/16 [Item 6]

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses

PJ Wilkinson, Assistant Director for Schools & Learning

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Assistant Director for Schools & Learning introduced the item and referred to the one-page service plan set out in the agenda papers.

2. With regard to the key action to work with property and planning to deliver school places, Members acknowledged the importance of joined-up and collaborative working between these key services.
3. It was agreed that safeguarding should be explicitly mentioned in the service plan.
4. Members praised the simple layout of the service plan, but requested that the challenges and opportunities section was developed in the future to include aspirations.
5. It was noted that there was a minor error in the budget paragraph and the Assistant Director for Schools & Learning agreed to correct this.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

7 SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE PRIORITIES 2015/16 [Item 7]

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Frank Offer, Head of Commissioning for Young People

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Head of Commissioning for Young People introduced the item and drew attention to the on sided service plan included with the agenda papers. It was noted that the plan for Services for Young People focussed on a young person's employability. It was noted that all known Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young people were being worked with on an individual basis. The Head of Commissioning for Young People went on to talk Members through the other key actions for the service over the coming year.
2. Members felt that safeguarding responsibilities should be outlined in the service plan and officers agreed to include this for future plans.
3. There was a query about outsourcing of services. It was reported that rather than outsourcing, a variety of new models of delivery were being considered. A paper would be brought to Cabinet in February 2016.
4. Members were pleased to note the reduction in NEET numbers, but expressed concern about the apparent continuous change within the service. The Head of Commissioning for Young People advised that the Council was the second highest performing authority in the country

in terms of NEET figures. The last review of arrangements had taken place in 2011/12 and it was planned that after 3 years a review would take place. It was noted that due to a loss of income and budget alterations, there had been no option to continue with no change in service. Changes had included a focus on community youth work, development of a Resource Allocation System and prioritising community youth work on a need related basis. Plans for the future included looking at different models of delivering services, such as a staff mutual.

5. Members queried whether Services for Young People had the resource and services for such ambitious change. The Head of Commissioning for Young People explained that the Council's New Models of Delivery Team were aiding the service to explore a range of options.

Chris Norman left the meeting at 12.20pm.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

None.

Recommendations:

None.

8 APPROACH FOR 2015-16 [Item 8]

Declarations of interest:

None

Witnesses:

Andy Spragg, Scrutiny Officer

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman introduced the item and explained that he had worked with officers in Democratic Services to identify 5 strands of work for the Scrutiny Board to undertake throughout the year. 3 Members had been allocated to each topic and they were able to decide amongst themselves if they wanted to elect a Chairman of each of these sub groups.
2. The calendar of work and Member sub groups are detailed at Annex A to these minutes.
3. Following the debate at the Scrutiny Board meeting, Members emphasised the importance of continuing discussions around progress, rather than just attainment, for those sitting on the 'attainment and outcomes' sub group.

Actions/Further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

- That the Board adopt the proposed approach for 2015-16.
- That the terms of reference for the Board's Performance and Finance sub-group be agreed.
- That the Performance and Finance sub-group's membership was agreed as: Mark Brett-Warburton, Denis Fuller and Colin Kemp.
- That the terms of reference for the first activity of its Work and Prosperity Team be agreed.
- That the Work and Prosperity team membership was agreed as: Mark Brett-Warburton, Chris Townsend and Derek Holbird.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 9]

The Board noted that the next meeting would be 22 October 2015 at 10am.

Meeting ended at: 12.45pm

Chairman