

MINUTES of the meeting of the **EDUCATION AND SKILLS BOARD** held at 10.00 am on 14 January 2016 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Thursday, 24 March 2016.

Elected Members:

- Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Mark Brett-Warburton (Chairman)
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- * Peter Corns
- Mr Robert Evans
- * Mr Denis Fuller
- * Mr David Goodwin
- * Miss Marisa Heath
- * Mrs Margaret Hicks
- * Derek Holbird
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- Martin Lock
- * Mrs Marsha Moseley (Vice-Chairman)
- Mr Chris Norman, Substituted by Mr Michael Gosling
- * Simon Parr
- * Mr Chris Townsend

In attendance

Mrs Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement
Mrs Mary Lewis, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families Wellbeing

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Robert Evans, Chris Norman and Chris Townsend. Michael Gosling substituted for Chris Norman.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

Derek Holbird declared an interest as the Director of the Guildford Education Trust and The Good Shepherd Trust.

4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PLAN [Item 5]

The Board noted the ongoing recommendations from previous meetings and the Forward Work Programme.

6 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 6]

The Board reviewed the response from Cabinet.

Members commented that schools need to continue to explore ways of collaborating and working together, taking any advantages from bulk purchasing and sharing resources between them.

7 THE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY OF THE ACADEMY AGENDA [Item 7]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Nicholas Smith, Schools Commissioning Officer
Julie Stockdale, Head of School Commissioning
David Monk, Headteacher of Pond Meadow School
Louise Druce, Headteacher of Stamford Green Primary School

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Headteacher of Pond Meadow School advised that it began to consider academy status in 2013, and eventually converted in 2014.

The school had considered the pros and cons of academy conversion and believed that on balance it would be possible to achieve the same benefits of academy status through other means. The school finally chose to convert, however, because the education landscape was changing and would be academy centred in the future. The new Pond Meadow Academy Trust aimed to be a multi-academy trust as it could choose its partners now, rather than face being forced into partnerships at a later date. The Pond Meadow Academy Trust explored shared savings within a multi-academy trust model, and it hoped to develop this with other local Special Schools. When it initially converted there was a more attractive financial offer from the Department for Education than available now.

2. Members questioned whether the Council could still fulfil its statutory requirement to ensure fair admission policies across Surrey's schools under the new academy system. Officers informed the Board that the Council would need to maintain a good relationship with schools in order to help ensure school places and fair admissions.
3. Officers also reported that academies ran their own admissions but now bought services from the Council. Officers suggested it would therefore be in the Council's interest to maintain these core services in order to ensure that the schools continue to use these services. Officers claimed that academies and converting schools are keen to stay within the 'Surrey family' of schools; however academies can use alternative service providers and the Council cannot require compliance as they are now independent from the Local Authority.
4. Members commented that Council services needed to think like a private company in order to continue to sell its services to academies, and questioned whether the services were considering this approach. Officers reported that services were working towards a strategy that would position the Council, and its services, well in the future, and that this strategy was being co-designed with Surrey's schools.
5. The Headteacher of Stamford Green School, a non-academy school in Epsom that received an Outstanding Ofsted report in February 2015, informed the Board that the school had a working party, lead by the Governor Vice-Chairman, to explore options for the school's future. The options include: remaining as a local authority maintained school, becoming an academy trust, becoming part of an umbrella trust or joining a multi-academy trust.
6. The Board queried whether it remained the Local Authority's responsibility to drive school improvements, including safety and standards control. Officers informed the Board that it was unclear where the responsibility for school improvements and standards lay, however, the Council aimed to retain a level of input and advice for school improvement within the County. The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement commented that school improvement had been a priority for some years, and that the Council needed to protect and ensure that it is at the forefront of school improvement alongside the academies.

7. The Board referred to reports of academy trusts spanning a large geographical area, sometimes even out of county borders; Members questioned whether the Council was doing enough to support schools in finding local partnerships. Officers answered that the Council was working with and very willing to help schools become academies, as well as joining existing trusts. Officers also informed that there had been no evidence to suggest that long distance being an issue within academy trusts. It was mentioned that there are differing models up and down the country and that there was no definitive best model.
8. Members commented that as multi-academy trusts grow and develop, there is an importance for the governor role to grow too in order for the governorship to represent all the academies in the Trust.
9. The Board decided it needed a better understanding of the various trusts, academies and schools within the county; where these education providers are heading and their general character in their communities. Members also felt that the Board requires a clear understanding on what the Teaching Schools are doing within the academy agenda.
10. Members commented that it would be beneficial to the Council to have a 'go-to' person as link to Surrey's multi-academy trusts; and also suggested that the Council should ask the Government on how the local authority will take care of their responsibilities in order for school places to be provided for. Officers explained that the Council was working closely with the Regional Schools Commissioner and in doing so was trying to ensure that resources and provision was kept up with demand. Officers are also expecting a white paper in March 2016 around some of the issues raised.
11. Members raised the point that as the academy agenda continues there will become a substantial loss in funding for maintained schools. Members voiced concerns that services and provision for maintained schools needed to remain in the future. Officers agreed that this needed to be at the forefront of the Council's planning.
12. Members queried whether the future strategy will help address the £45m spending on non-maintained Special Educational Needs (SEN) places in Surrey. Officers reported that the Council was engaged in positive conversations on new Free Schools, with a view for these future schools to increase the SEN provision within the County.

Recommendations:

1. The Board thanks the witnesses for the comprehensive introduction to 'academisation' of schools process in Surrey. The Board requests a further report from the council's school commissioners, with input from schools, on the results and outcomes of the 'academisation' process.

The Board recommends that Officers compile a comparison of school results against the types and profiles of institution (i.e. Local Authority Maintained School, Academy, part of a Multi-Academy Trust).

2. The Board also recommends that it receive a report on the council's ongoing strategy to maintain proactive involvement with education in Surrey in light of the shift towards 'academisation', including business plans for the provision of services, development of good governance, and consideration of how to develop Teaching Schools to maintain supply of high quality teachers to Academies in Surrey.

8 COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE - SELF ASSESSMENT REVIEW [Item 8]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Paul Hoffman, Principal Community Learning and Skills
Anu Chanda, Deputy Principal Community Learning and Skills

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Board questioned the aims of the service. Officers explained that the Community Skills Budget in the main was for non-accredited learning; working with parents and carers of young people at schools. The service worked closely with people with learning difficulties and also in areas of deprivation. Courses run by the Community Learning and Skills Service are tailored for personal development.
2. Officers reported that the service worked alongside other agencies, mental health patients, Job Centre Plus, housing services, recruitment services and that Surrey Care Trust performed some subcontracting work for the service. Community Learning and Skills Service was also working with church groups, actively supporting their job clubs and a bespoke course for these clubs.
3. Officers also reported that the service provided some qualifications in core subjects such as English and Mathematics, as well as IT courses for people with learning difficulties. People aged 19+ could be referred to Community Learning and Skills Services and suitable courses would be available to them. The Community Learning and Skills Service adhered to national criteria and the Council is performing above the benchmark for non-accredited learning in its statistical group of 39 other providers.
4. Members asked whether the service was doing anything to catch residents that fell out of the education system at school age. Officers informed Members that the GCSE programme gives people a second chance at Key Stage 4 learning, however the funding is for people aged 19 years old and above, so the service is not generally aimed at school age residents.
5. Members asked whether, in the light of the academy agenda, the service was considering changing its provision model. Officers reported that there was a small trend in other local authorities to externalise their adult learning provision, and cited West Sussex as an

example of this. Officers claimed there were both advantages and disadvantages to retaining the service in house. Officers highlighted that success rates of services is very good however the pressure to recruit staff and tutors was difficult and that the pressure was not likely to be diminishing in the near future.

6. Members raised an issue around safeguarding for learners and officers confirmed that the trends around safeguarding issues were changing and increasing. Officers explained that learners partly attend courses for education, but also for the social interaction and wellbeing benefits. Officers also explained that pastoral care has become more of a part of the service and if issues cannot be dealt with appropriately by tutors and staff, staff referred cases on to the appropriate agencies.

Recommendations:

None.

9 HENRIETTA PARKER TRUST FUND - INTERIM REPORT [Item 9]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Paul Hoffman, Principal Community Learning and Skills

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers explained that since the Henrietta Parker Trust Fund paper was tabled at the October 2015 Board meeting, good progress had been made. Proactively working with Legal Services and Financial Services, the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement had agreed to Chair the management board of the Trust. Work had begun on options for the management plan and that officers were in the process of notifying relevant individuals.
2. Members raised concern around the cost and resources used in getting the Trust to its current situation and expressed a view that the Trust could be better governed by another organisation, rather than the Council. The Cabinet Member explained that the process was still in early formation but the management board had a good idea of where it wanted to place the Trust Fund. Options were being considered and if the Trust took up too much time or resource then a review of the governance may be required.

Recommendations:

1. The Board recommends that Officers prepare a full report on the future management of the Henrietta Parker Trust for the Board meeting of 24 March 2016.

The Board recommends to the Council Overview Board that it considers a request for Officers to:

- i. Collect details of the various local Trusts operating in Surrey into a single register indicating the level of council involvement in each one
- ii. Provide the details of relevant Trusts by area to the Chairmen of the Local Committees.

BREAK 11:45am - 11:52am

10 BUDGETS AND FINANCE [Item 10]

Declarations of Interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Garath Symonds, Assistant Director for Young People
Paula Chowdhury, Strategic Finance Manager for Children, Schools and Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers gave Members a presentation on the future of the Children, Schools and Families strategy.

Margaret Hicks left at 12:00pm

11 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 11]

The Chairman of the Board agreed for the item to be taken into Part 2 under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

12 BUDGETS AND FINANCE [Item 12]

Declarations of interest:

None.

Witnesses:

Garath Symonds, Assistant Director for Young People
Paula Chowdhury, Strategic Finance Manager for Children, Schools and Families

Points raised during the discussion:

1. Members discussed the Children, Schools and Families strategy.

Actions:

The Board's Performance & Finance Sub-Group to follow-up on the Cabinet Member's and Senior Officers' development of social investment opportunities to achieve savings and other sources of income generation.

13 PUBLICITY FOR PART 2 ITEMS [Item 13]

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 14]

The next full public meeting will be held at 10am on Thursday 24 March 2016 at County Hall.

Meeting ended at: 1.06 pm

Chairman