

MINUTES of the meeting of the **EDUCATION AND SKILLS BOARD** held at 10.00 am on 8 June 2016 at County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Board at its meeting on Thursday, 7 July 2016.

Elected Members:

- Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Mark Brett-Warburton (Chairman)
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- Mrs Carol Coleman
- Mr Robert Evans
- Mr Denis Fuller
- Mr David Goodwin
- * Mrs Margaret Hicks
- * Mr Colin Kemp
- Mrs Marsha Moseley (Vice-Chairman)
- * 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:

- * Peter Corns, Surrey Governors' Association
- * Derek Holbird, Diocesan Representative for the Anglican Church
- Simon Parr, Diocesan Representative for the Catholic Church

In attendance

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

36/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Liz Bowes, Carol Coleman, Robert Evans, Denis Fuller, Marsha Mosley and Simon Parr.

37/16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 19 APRIL 2016 [Item 2]

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

38/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

39/16 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions received.

40/16 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 5]

There were no responses to report.

41/16 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

The Board noted and agreed with the proposed Recommendations Tracker and Forward Work Programme.

42/16 SURREY AREA REVIEW [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Frank Offer, Head of Commissioning and Development
Ron Searle, Secondary Phase Council Chair

Key points raised during discussion:

1. The Officer explained to the Board the purpose of the Surrey Area Review, highlighting its nature as a central government led scheme focussing on post-16 education in dedicated Sixth Form colleges and general Further Education (FE) colleges. It primarily focussed on FE for young people, but that some attention was given to adult FE. The terms of reference of the review aimed to scrutinise the sustainability and financial resilience of these institutions. The Board expressed concerns with regards to the limitations of the review, noting that schools with internal Sixth Forms were not included, nor were academised schools, suggesting that the review may not provide a comprehensive view of FE in the Surrey area. It was also noted that any recommendations made by the review were not binding on schools.

2. The review suggested that, while Surrey was ahead nationally on Level Three performance, it had a lower level of attainment with regard to pupils supported by free school meals, and that there was room for improvement with this.
3. The Officer informed Members that the Employment and Skills Board had identified that, to meet local business demands, there was a need for increasing and developing FE provision in high growth, significant employments such as finance, IT, construction and new high-tech industries with particular focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills. The Employment and Skills Board also proposed a more comprehensive collaboration between employers and schools to help ascertain employer skill requirements whilst improving and informing school curriculum planning. It was suggested by Members that it may be beneficial for the Board to work with schools and local enterprise partners more closely to ascertain required skills and suggested that a more localised view was key to supporting this.
4. It was queried by the Board why STEM subjects were less popular among FE students in Surrey, and whether the relative affluence of the county lead to a focus on arts teaching. The Chairman invited the Secondary Phase Council Chair to speak on the matter, who commented that, while Science and Mathematics were compulsory subjects in Surrey schools, it was their opinion that the reduction of vocational courses has had an impact on the prevalence of employable skills.
5. It was highlighted that that there had been an increase in pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) requiring transport services to FE providers outside of county, and it was suggested that this may be a result of the provisions of Children and Families Act (2014), but that more research would have to be undertaken to identify this trend.
6. The Board praised the proposals made in the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), suggesting that they were effective in their role of influencing the curriculum.
7. The Board queried the reasons for the higher numbers of children with SEND requiring Education, Health and Care Plans in comparison with other Local Authorities. Officers responded that a comprehensive review would be undertaken in Summer 2016 with regard to this, however a specific example was given with regard to Hertfordshire County Council's use of Health and Care Plans; how the authority, schools and the health care system worked in "clusters" to determine whether support outside of the statutory framework could have been achieved. It was implied that a similar scheme in Surrey may work to

reduce the numbers in a similar way, but that a review would be undertaken to ascertain this.

8. The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement commented that the issue of children with SEND was being considered the SEND 2020 Partnership Board with particular focus on the identification of children at an early age, providing better Early Years support and aiming to reduce the probability that the child will require a Health and Care Plan. It was suggested that this was the optimal outcome for the child, as well as being the optimal financial course. The Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families also commented that this proposal was favoured by the parents of children with SEND within the Family Voice group.

Margaret Hicks left the meeting at 10.28

9. The Board questioned whether preparation for adulthood, particularly in the form of work experience and apprenticeships, were sufficient for young people. The Officer intimated that national policy had moved away from the focus on work experience in schools, leaving such schemes at the discretion of individual schools. The Board suggested that Officers do further work with local businesses and schools to encourage work experience and apprenticeship programmes for young people, citing the Enterprise Ambition Scheme as a good example of this.
10. The Board expressed the opinion that it would be worthwhile to seek out student input on the subject of the Surrey Area Review.
11. The Officer commented on the improvements made in the provision of apprenticeships in Surrey, but acknowledged that the region still fell below the national average of providing apprenticeships. The Board questioned why the level of apprenticeships was below average, and whether any steps could be taken to rectify it. The Officer suggested that regions with high levels of heavy industry were the most prolific at providing apprenticeships. It was noted that the Surrey region is not heavily industrialised, most employers being small to medium scale business, which limited the commercial viability of apprenticeships in this business demographic. However it was noted that the proposed Apprenticeship Levy policy may do some work to alleviate this problem.
12. The Board also put forward a question relating to the length and quality of apprenticeships, and whether these were guaranteed by Surrey County Council. The Officer responded that central government announced, in February 2016, the establishment of the Institute for Apprenticeships as an independent body to support employer-led reforms and to monitor and regulate the quality of apprenticeships,

and ensure that young people receive value from them.

13. The Board commented on the impact of staff morale in the Surrey area and that this may have been overlooked in the Surrey Area Review. The Officer agreed that staff morale was a key factor in maintaining educational excellence and agreed that better staff engagement with similar area reviews was something to consider for the future.
14. The Board offered their support to FE colleges and praised the work that they were doing to support aspiration and opportunity creation for young people in Surrey.

Recommendations

The Board recommends that:

1. Officers circulate the Employment and Skills Board initial submission document from March 2016 for the Board's reference.
2. Officers circulate the final Area Review report to the Board, upon publication in Summer 2016.
3. That the Board, or a sub-group of the Board, works in conjunction with officers to gather additional information, post-review, to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of what skills the local employment market requires and how this can be matched by Surrey schools.
4. Officers encourage schools and Local Enterprise Partnerships to develop extensive, high quality work experience and apprenticeship programmes throughout Surrey that encourage flexibility, communication and teamwork skills. It was also suggested that officers report to the Board on what programmes are currently available, and details on uptake across the county.
5. That Officers consider the how the development of work experience and apprenticeship programmes for pupils with SEND can help create a higher quality way of life for these students.

43/16 PROCUREMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES TRANSPORT SERVICES [Item 8]

Witnessess:

Shona Snow, Senior Category Specialist
Tracey Coventry, Transport Coordination Specialist
Dierdre Linehan, Senior Principal Accountant
Sarah Bryan, Contract and Performance Officer

Key points raised during discussion:

1. Finance, Transport and Procurement officers gave the Board presentations on SEND Transport.
2. Officers explained that there had been consistent budget overspends in SEND transport provision from the financial years 2012/13 to 2015/16. It was suggested that this was, in part, due to an increase in the demand of SEND transport in Surrey. It was also explained in the presentation that the per pupil cost of SEND transport had consistently risen in conjunction with a reduction in the number of children carried per route, highlighting the statistic of the number of solo routes has increasing by 8%.
3. The Board queried whether combining more transport routes would increase efficiency and reduce costs incurred by transport provision. Officers agreed that shared routes would bring down transport costs, however, they warned that there was a balance required to meet the needs of some SEND students.
4. Members asked if there was a possibility of combining SEND transport with regular school transport. Officers responded that this was already a practice in some cases, but that any conjunction of service would need to be implemented by the SEND team. Members suggested that better linkage between services would be beneficial to the aim of solving such logistical issues.
5. The Board raised concerns with projected savings in this services and questioned how, with the consistent history of overspend and the numbers of eligible pupils rising, the service can feasibly to deliver the projected £7 million cost reduction.
The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement suggested that a key contributor to savings would be transforming the county provision of SEND support. The Cabinet Member went on to suggest that appropriate provision was already available, but not necessarily in the right places; and by transforming the Council's SEND provision, including appropriate targeted funding, it was

believed that savings could be found.

6. The Board questioned the major increase in SEND transport routes between April 2013 and October 2013 and asked why these figures were anomalous in comparison with the trend. Officers commented that this was indeed out of place and that investigation into these statistics would need to take place in order to identify this anomaly.
7. Officers identified that the number of required medical and behavioural escorts had increased; indicating a changing trend in SEND requirements. The Board questioned whether escorts were more prevalent on solo routes and whether this served to increase costs. Officers informed Members that the requirement for escorts depended on a child's Education, Health and Care Plan and, although would directly affect overall costs, could not be negotiated. Officers explained that more information on escorts and how they were deployed was required to analyse any possible cost reduction in the service.
8. Officers highlighted the changes made to the transport procurement system, praising the new system's flexibility and ability to increase competition, offering the best opportunity for cost reduction. Officers also extolled the benefits of opening routes up to "mini-competitions," suggesting that these have had a positive effect on cost reductions in transport procurement.
9. Members commented that parents of children with SEND frequently had high expectations for service provision for their child, which could have lead to increasing demand on the service. Members were also concerned by the potential exploitation of the system by some parents, and how exposed officers may be to this risk. Officers accepted that there was much room for improvement in this regard but also highlighted the importance of transforming the local offer further.
10. Officers highlighted the risks and the risk avoidance strategies employed in future SEND transport procurement strategy proposals going forward:
 - a. That the team ensures that operators are made fully aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that children with SEND requirements are effectively safeguarded,
 - b. That the team ensures operators are made fully aware of any complex medical needs and their requirements with regard to these, and;
 - c. The increase in labour costs for SEND transport and escort services for the Service.

It was concluded that, while this would take time to implement, the team would work with the SEND transport team to set in motion procedures to minimise these risks.

11. The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement informed the Board that the work being undertaken with regard to procurement improvements was supported by the parents of children with SEND requirements, citing the group Family Voice as a key proponent of the strategy put forward. The Board suggested that it should be ensured that this group is representative of the wider community of parents of children with SEND requirements and suggested that a wider consultation might be considered.
12. The Board suggested that a scheme should be implemented to explore increasing the attractiveness of parental transport. Officers responded that, within the consultation, there is a recommendation to encourage parental transport as a positive option going forward.
13. It was asked by Members what the breakdown of costs were in relation to transport procurement, particularly identifying the percentage costs of taxi hire and escorts, and if there was a feasible means of quantifying this. Officers responded that an annual review of escort services was being implemented to ascertain this outlay, and that planned better linkage between procurement systems will serve to create a more comprehensive dataset with regard to these figures.

Recommendations

The Board recommends that:

1. The Procurement team report back to the Board in collaboration with the SEND team, in November 2016, in order to monitor progress made, as part of the proposed Parent Guide consultation review.
2. That the Procurement team provide, a more detailed breakdown of costs, including: comparison data for solo routes vs group routes, with and without escorts; duplicate route information; and, with input from the SEND team, investigate other potential local transport options.
3. That the Board's Performance & Finance Sub Group regularly request to review and address future generated savings.

44/16 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 9]

1. The Chairman informed the Board that should any Member had wished to raise any matter relating to the Part 2 Annex [Item 8], that the meeting needed to be taken into a Part 2 session. The Board agreed for the item to be taken into Part 2, by virtue of paragraph(s) 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information).

**45/16 PROCUREMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND
DISABILITIES TRANSPORT SERVICES - ANNEX B [Item 10]**

1. The Board requested clarity on the statistics published relating to procurement. The figures were clarified by officers.

46/16 PUBLICITY FOR PART TWO ITEMS [Item 11]

The Board concluded that the items referred to in the Part Two annex should not be made available to the public at this time.

47/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS [Item 12]

1. Henrietta Parker Trust

The Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families requested that the Board considered the status of the Henrietta Parker Trust (HPT), and that the Board supports keeping the HPT as an independent trust fund for Elmbridge. The Board agreed that the trust should remain independent, under the caveat that the trust can show, after a biannual review, that the trust has effectively utilised its funds.

48/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 13]

The next meeting of the Board will be a private meeting held at County Hall on 7 July 2016 at 10.00am.

The next public meeting of the Board will be held at County Hall on 15 September 2016 at 10.00am

Meeting ended at: 12.15 pm

Chairman