

MINUTES of the meeting of the **EDUCATION AND SKILLS BOARD** held at 10.00 am on 24 March 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 Tuesday, 19 April 2016.

Elected Members:

- * Mrs Liz Bowes
- * Mr Mark Brett-Warburton (Chairman)
- * Mr Ben Carasco
- * Mr Robert Evans
- Mr Denis Fuller
- Mr David Goodwin
- * Miss Marisa Heath
- * 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, Schools.
Mrs Mary Lewis, Cabinet Associate for Children, Schools and Families Wellbeing.

15/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies received from David Goodwin, Chris Townsend and Denis Fuller.
There were no substitutions.

16/16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING: 14 JANUARY 2016 [Item 2]

Correction to the minutes to be made; Mary Lewis was in attendance. The remainder of the minutes of the meeting on 14 January 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

17/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

Robert Evans advised that he was a tutor at the Royal Holloway, University of London.

18/16 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were no questions or petitions.

19/16 RESPONSES FROM THE CABINET TO ISSUES REFERRED BY THE SCRUTINY BOARD [Item 5]

There were no items referred.

20/16 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER AND FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 6]

Witnesses:

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

Key points raised during the discussions:

1. The Cabinet Member advised the Board that the Henrietta Park Trust had been re-constituted and would start dispensing funds. The Chairman added that there would be an item on this at a future meeting and that the Council Overview Board had created a Task & Finish Group to investigate trust funds more broadly and that he would feedback on the outcome to this Board.
2. The Chairman informed the Board that Martin Lock, a co-opted Member, had stepped down from the Board with immediate effect and that a new representative of the Parent Governor Association would be co-opted later in 2016.
3. The Chairman explained to the Board and members of the public present that the order of the meeting had been changed and that it would begin with the overview of finances.

21/16 SEND STRATEGY 2020 [Item 7]

Witnesses:

Julie Fisher, Deputy Chief Executive
Frank Offer, Head of Commissioning for Young People
Sue Roch, Area Education Officer (South East)

Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational
Achievement
Mary Lewis, Cabinet Associate

Robert Evans left the meeting at 11:27

Key points raised during the discussions:

1. The Head of Commissioning for Young People introduced the item and outlined the context for the strategy. He advised the Board that the council faced a number of challenges; cultural issues, building a customer centred system, reshaping the local offer with partners and development of inclusive practice. The Board learned that the council faced SEND pressures that exceeded demographic growth for a number of reasons and an over reliance on the non-maintained independent school sector.
2. A needs analysis had been undertaken by the service to better understand the needs of Surrey children and they were using this information to model provision for future years. Officers were asked if they had also visited other authorities to learn from their practice. The Board were informed that officers had been to Hertfordshire to understand their low use of NMIs and Gloucestershire for the timeliness of their SEND assessment process.
3. The Board expressed strong concerns at the level of need in Surrey and how this compared with other authorities. The Head of Commissioning for Young People explained that other areas make greater use of alternatives to SEN statements such as support through Speech and Language Therapy and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services. The Deputy Chief Executive commented how this situation highlights the need for a well articulated early help offer which would impact how children are assessed in Surrey.
4. Witnesses were asked if the council understood where children with SEND lived and where they went to school to help develop a local offer. The Head of Commissioning for Young People confirmed that they do and that they have a software tool to aid the modelling of provision to meet need. This has, for example, led to a bid for a free school in the west of the county to meet a gap in provision there in relation Communication and Interaction Needs (COIN).
5. The Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement emphasised the significance of inclusion in meeting

needs of children with SEND. Promotion of inclusive practice was happening through a pilot in 53 schools, examples of good practice in Surrey Heath were referred to and how these needed to be scaled up across the county. Further to this, all of Surrey's special schools are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted and this should be more widely communicated to parents and carers. The Cabinet Member also commented that more could be done to meet need through the creation of free schools with support from the Regional Schools Commissioner.

6. A Board member stated that school governors, local MPs and councillors should be mobilised in support of this strategy. The Cabinet Member told Members that two meetings are held each term with governors and typically had 70 people in attendance and recently she had presented the SEND transformation agenda and that it had been positively received by governors.
7. The witnesses were asked what impact the strategy and the needs analysis would have on the Schools & Learning budget. The Head of Commissioning for Young People advised that some modelling was already included in budget projections. What needed more work was the impact of growth post-16 resulting from Children & Families Act, integrated working to develop local solutions and early help. The Deputy Chief Executive added that there were further savings in the Medium Term Financial Plan that have not been quantified as yet including the impact of using the Hertfordshire model of provision in Surrey.

Recommendations

None.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Board next steps:

None.

22/16 SEND TRANSPORT [Item 8]

Witnesses:

Sue Roch, Area Education Officer (South East)

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

Mary Lewis, Cabinet Associate

Key points raised during the discussions:

1. The Area Education Officer (South East) advised the Board that the number of pupils that used taxis and medical escorts had

decreased. The council was working with schools to make children comfortable with sharing routes with their peers. In the future they also hope that parents will make use of a travel allowance for their children.

2. A Member of the Board suggested that there should be further training for Members on transport appeals which the Area Education Officer agreed to take away. Officers were questioned about the low response rate to the consultation on transport policy and how this needed to be communicated clearly to avoid unnecessary appeals. The Board were reassured that the entitlement to transport would remain the same it is how that entitlement is met with more use of travel allowances than taxis though there was recognition that this won't be for every family.
3. The Chairman suggested that the response rate could have been improved. Perhaps cards could have been placed in taxis to allow for more responses. The Area Education Officer explained that past experience had informed the approach and that individual letters to parents on the East project had returned a similarly low response rate.
4. Members asked about the procurement of taxi services including the cost per mile increases in a period of cost suppression. The Area Education Officer (South East) explained that there was a high expectation placed upon drivers in these cases such as the need for Disclosure and Barring Service checks. The Cabinet Member highlighted that transport would be going out to tender and that there is a need to be able to break contracts and re-organise the services, however, there was an issue with the market response – with very few bids to the council's tenders.
5. The Board heard that parents consider their children to be entitled to a taxi service which is not the case. Assumptions need to be challenged in annual reviews of service packages. Parents needed to take more responsibility through schemes such as the travel allowance and independent travel training for children aged over 16. In this age group families had not, historically, been asked to contribute to costs but the new policy would seek to change that.

Peter Corns left the meeting at 12:25

Recommendations

1. The Board to invite procurement officers to a future meeting to discuss the procurement of taxi services for children with SEN.

Actions/further information to be provided:

None.

Board next steps:

None.

23/16 SEND FINANCES [Item 9]

Witnesses:

Paula Chowdhury, Strategic Finance Manager for Children, Schools and Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. 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.
2. The officer gave Members a presentation on the Children, Schools and Families budgets under the Medium Term Financial Plan.

24/16 PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SUB GROUP VERBAL REPORT [Item 10]

Witnesses:

Paula Chowdhury, Strategic Finance Manager for Children, Schools and Families

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. A summary of the content of the recent Performance and Finance Sub Group meeting was incorporated in the presentation for Item 9.

25/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]

The date of the next meeting will be on Tuesday 19 April 2016 at 10.00am.

Meeting ended at 12:45

Chairman