

AT A MEETING of the CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at Ashburton Hall, Winchester on Tuesday, 19 July 2011.

PRESENT

Chairman:

p Councillor Stephen Reid

Vice-Chairman:

p Councillor John West

Councillors:

a Charlotte Bailey	p David Keast
p Ray Bolton	p Roger Kimber
p Graham Burgess	p Roz Muschamp
a Rita Burgess	a Pam Mutton
p Brian Collin	p Jackie Porter
p Brian Dash	p Jenny Radley
p Sam Darragh	p Bruce Tennent
a David Drew	
a Adrian Evans	
p Keith Evans	
p Andrew Gibson	

Co-opted Members:

p Sally Dace – Parent Governor (special)
p Mohammed Ansar – Parent Governor (primary)
a Rosemary Olivier – RC schools representative
p Tony Blackshaw – CoE schools representative
p Phil Watson – Parent Governor (secondary)

Also in attendance Councillors: Peter Edgar, Assistant Executive Member for Education, Marilyn Tucker, Assistant Executive Member for Children and Families and Carol Leversha.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Charlotte Bailey, Rita Burgess, David Drew, Adrian Evans and Pam Mutton. Co-opted member Rosemary Olivier was also unable to attend and sent apologies.

72. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

73. MINUTES

Subject to one addition agreed between the Chairman and Cllr Dash, the meeting agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2011. Minutes for the meeting held on 6 April 2011 were agreed without amendment.

74. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Julia Abbott from the Independent Remuneration Panel who was observing the working of a select committee.

Ofsted inspection

The Chairman indicated that the Committee was looking forward with interest to hearing how the recent Ofsted inspection had gone (Item 5 on the Agenda).

Committee member report

The Chairman invited Mr Mohammed Ansar to give a verbal report of his meeting with Ms Anwen Foy, County Inspector/Adviser for the Ethnic Minorities and Traveller Achievement Service.

75. VERBAL REPORT FROM MR MOHAMMED ANSAR, PARENT GOVERNOR REPRESENTATIVE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Mr Ansar reminded the Committee that he had raised concerns about the extent to which it was possible to determine how well specific groups of ethnic minority children were performing in schools.

Mr Ansar commented that he thought there was scope to improve the provision of information about specific

minority ethnic groups in specific locations. He thought this might make it possible to better track the achievement of these children, and to possibly identify factors that could account for under-achievement.

Whilst it was currently possible to track the achievement of pupils from Black and Minority Ethnic groups by 18 different ethnic groups (including White British) and also by the category of those who do not wish to declare their ethnic group (shown as 'refused'). This data could be further broken down by district and by school. EMTAS was also disaggregating some of the large groups such as 'Black African' and 'Black Other' to further refine the data.

The Governor Representative was concerned that the remit of the EMTAS was very broad and he thought it was probably understaffed. He also questioned how, with its distinctive remit, it was possible to link in well with the core educational services provided by Hampshire County Council.

The Chairman suggested that one of the key issues in educational achievement for many children was, in fact, a matter of parental expectations, values and support. It might therefore turn out to be the case that under-achievement by ethnic minority children could be due at least in part to a similar cause.

It was suggested that it may be timely for the Committee to consider the 'race strategy' adopted for guidance by Children's Services and how it influenced practice. This was identified as a possible candidate for inclusion on the work programme.

76. OFSTED INSPECTION

The Deputy Director of Children's Services gave a verbal summary of the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children. He was pleased to report that the indications at this stage were, that of the 22 judgements made, 13 were good and 9 were outstanding. This would put Hampshire amongst the best children's services departments in the country.

Members were pleased to learn that inspectors were impressed with the knowledge and role of members as 'corporate parents'.

The Chairman welcomed the Deputy Director's offer to bring to the Committee areas identified by the inspection as benefiting from improvement. The Deputy Director also cautioned Members that despite the encouraging outcome of the visit, even the most competent local authorities are acutely aware that such work was extremely risky. Members agreed that a good Ofsted did not guarantee that all risk had been or could be completely eliminated.

77. ACADEMIES IN HAMPSHIRE

Members were provided with an update to the background paper by the Department's Head of School Organisation. The Assistant Director of Children's Services responded to Members questions about what policy and strategy adjustments have been considered as a result of the Coalition Government's encouragement for local authority schools to become academies and the current level of interest by schools in Hampshire so far.

What would/could the County Council do in the event of an academy failing?

- When a school becomes an academy the initial agreement is for 7 years, however the process has been described as irreversible.
- It is very unclear what the LEA could do, whilst the Authority appears to be responsible for the educational outcomes for children in all schools, LEA inspectors and advisors may have no authority to intervene with respect to academies unless such services have been purchased the schools concerned.
- As yet, because of the uncertainties involved no contingency plan has been developed.

Hampshire offers high quality services to schools – are they also offered to academies?

The simple answer is that HCC provides a range of services to its schools and that these are available to academies, but it depends upon whether academies wish to purchase them. The less simple answer has to take into account, first, that so far academies have, for the most part, initially chosen to buy in services provided by Hampshire, but it is acknowledged that this situation may not continue into the future. In two or three years

there may be greater competition from other suppliers and other ways of providing excellent but cost effective services may have developed. The loss of some block budget funding for central services, a decline in demand for them from schools due to some becoming academies, and uncertainty about the future demand for them by academies is potentially destabilising, therefore the department has to try and strike a balance between sustainable resourcing and providing responsive, high quality services at a price that is attractive to customers.

The department aims to achieve some stability and has to make choices about its 'offer' and its potential as a service provider to trade in a wider market context.

In Hampshire the department has promoted the notion of the 'Hampshire family of schools' to underpin the value of historical ties and supportive local networks, however it is not certain how viable the concept will continue to be in what might be an evolving, competitive educational market.

School 'customers' will be quality and price conscious and be looking for good value for their money, and perhaps for the best offers available.

The Assistant Director indicated that services may need to adopt a flexible model that allows provision to shrink and expand in response to demand.

The Chairman asked to what extent the Department had begun to consider its offer to schools and academies on the basis of what their customers actually wanted, rather than on the basis of a top down driven historically model in which customer choice was largely limited to what the County provided. However he assumed that if the experience a school had had, for example, where Hampshire training for governors was good, then there was every reason to think that as an academy it might continue to use the same provider as long as it offered good value for money.

Taking a similar stance, another Member noted that a reasonable approach might be to accept the changing context and treat all schools as if they were academies or customers. This, he suggested would require a commercial approach where provision was driven by customer demand and business survival depended upon providing what the customer wanted at a price they were willing to pay. However the Member was

concerned that he was not aware of any urgency on the part of the Department to adapt to this reality, and suggested the Committee would be keen to examine any proposed business plan – the essential starting point for any significant business venture.

Members conceded that despite the interest by schools in achieving academy status, including the more than 800 applications already approved nationally, the position and trend in Hampshire is hard to predict.

It was proposed by Members and agreed by the Assistant Director that the Department would bring a succinct paper to the Committee for consideration that included:

- A set of principles for marketing a range of services to academies/schools, including the potential for trading beyond County boundaries
- Options and scope for a contingency plan to ensure that Hampshire children are not disadvantaged should an academy fail to deliver on the educational outcomes expected of it, and/or if it also exhibited signs of systemic or total failure.

The Committee was unanimous in agreeing with the Chairman that failure in schools could almost always be attributed to the quality of leadership. It was implied by one member that Hampshire could be in a position to offer a school a 'rescue' or 'turn-around' service based on its extensive experience as a successful LEA.

78. *Children's Centres – proposed reporting plan*

Following the Committee's meeting on 14 June and its interest in following up on the success of changes made with respect to children's centres, Members considered proposals made by the Department for reporting back on the implementation of the Executive Member's decision.

Members were made aware of what information could or could not be provided against the proposed dates in the timeframe and it was clear that the most interesting and useful information would become available once a complete year's cycle had been completed.

It was proposed that once a yearly cycle had been completed the following information should be included:

- parent feedback on what positive or negative changes had been experienced compared to the previous 'school year'
- an equalities impact assessment that would reveal the extent of penetration of services in areas of greatest need
- a detailed cost and outcomes comparison that would allow a like for like comparison of value for money of children's centres under the new management arrangements (2012/13) vs. the old (say 2011/12).

The Chairman suggested that the interim updates proposed by the Department be provided to the Committee approximately one month prior to its meetings. This would allow the information to be shared with the committee very early; then only if Members had specific questions on the information provided would it be necessary to ask an officer to attend to address them. In that case, the officer could be informed of the specific query well ahead of time. Members agreed to this approach.

79. Work Programme

The Chairman asked Members for suggestions on refreshing the work programme.

Following examination and consideration by members the current programme was endorsed, however items raised during the meeting had been identified as potential candidates for the work programme. It was therefore agreed that the Assistant Director would come back to the Committee in the new year with a paper for discussion on policy and strategy options in relation to academy schools. The work programme has been updated as a result of the refresh.

Chairman, 30 September 2011