

AT A MEETING of the EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL held at The Castle, Winchester on 25 January 2012.

PRESENT

Councillors: P Edgar (Chairman), B Collin, B D Dash, M Kemp-Gee, R J Kimber, R McIntosh, F Cowper

Co-opted: D Walker, D White, D Mewes

Observer: Mrs J Abbott (Independent Remuneration Panel)

The Chairman spoke a few words about Councillor Allgood who had died since the meeting in October 2011, praising the service and support he had given to the Education Advisory Panel.

66. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs J Porter, Councillor K Evans, and Mr T Blackshaw.

67. DECLARATIONS 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, 1, 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.

With relation to items on the agenda, Councillor Edgar declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as a life member of the National Association of Headteachers.

68. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman informed Members that he had made numerous school visits in the last few months, but wished to highlight two of them. He cited Marlborough Infant School, Aldershot, as a good example of how schools could overcome the challenges of a congested old building and a large number of service children and deliver good quality education. Siskin Junior School, Gosport, was also noted, for its improvement through a 'whole campus' ethos and the tremendous work of the County's education officers. The Commissioner for Education had recommended that the school should become a sponsored academy. However, the school was now being left in the hands of the Local Authority.

The Chairman reported on two conferences that he had attended. He informed Members that the impression he had picked up from the North of England Education Conference regarding Academies was that the government had underestimated the task of converting schools to academies and that the government would be looking to have close working relationships with authorities that already provided good quality education, such as Hampshire. He indicated that he had found the speech at the BETT Conference by the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, excellent and inspiring. He had spoken about the importance of using IT and modern technology in schools to drive up standards.

He informed Members that a £4 million pound investment had been approved by BLAPP (Buildings, Land and Procurement Panel) to relocate the Quayside Education Centre, which deals with excluded secondary pupils, to the Woodcot Primary School site; this would bring £250,000 investment to the school. It was stressed that the two buildings would be self-contained with separate entrances.

Finally, the Chairman drew Members' attention to a newspaper article that had suggested, wrongly, that the Local Authority had issued an ultimatum to a school that it would have to become a sponsored academy. In fact the Local Authority advised the school to conform to current legislation, but the Local Authority would fully support the school through the process. In the same article it was stated that the role of the Hampshire County Council in education was declining. Councillor Edgar emphasised that, although the role of the authority was changing, it was likely to be an enhanced one in the future.

70. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made.

71. EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services on the progress of children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (Item 6 in the Minute Book).

The Head of Services for Young Children explained the framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile which assessed children at the end of Year R against 117 statements across six areas of learning and development. (Members were asked to note an error in 2.1 of the report – PSED stood for Personal, Social and Emotional Development). Referring to the report she informed Members about threshold and gap scores and government targets for these. It was explained to Members that the reason that Hampshire's threshold score was below the national average, was that teachers and officers were stringent in their assessments and moderation. Members' attention was drawn to a pleasing reduction in the gap scores, which were above the national average, especially for free school meal pupils and Irish traveller children. Mention was also made of the very significant improvements made in the most deprived areas of the County in two of the Early Years' strands, Communication, Language and Literacy and Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

Some members expressed concern that, although threshold scores had improved, only just over half of children were above the threshold. The explanations given were that assessments were still bedding in as they had only been going since 2008, that they were based on teachers' observations of children which are harder than the paper tests used in other key stages, and that summer-born children did not generally score as high.

Members were informed that there would be a new framework from September 2012 and assessments would be changing; this would make the the comparison of data more difficult. It was suggested that arrangements could be made for Members to visit an Early Years setting to see assessments being made.

A brief overview was given of the implications of the threshold and gap data on the districts. All districts had made improvements in threshold scores, notably Gosport, Havant, New Forest and Winchester. Three districts with increased gap scores were highlighted, Test Valley, Rushmoor and Fareham. It was noted that Fareham was receiving targeted intervention.

It was commented that there was growing enthusiasm for an 'all through' ethos in schools and that fewer problems arose where children remained on the same site for the whole of their education. Members were also informed of the huge benefit for children's development that was being seen from the 'Keep on Talking' initiative which encouraged parents to work alongside their children in schools and other educational settings.

RESOLVED:

- That the panel noted the report.

72. TEACHING SCHOOLS

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services on Teaching Schools and the Local Authority's partnership with them (Item 7 in the Minute Book).

Members were informed that 'Teaching Schools' was a new ten year initiative which began in September 2011 and that there were currently five schools with this designation in Hampshire. The officer referred Members to the report to explain what Teaching Schools were and what they would be expected to do and to achieve.

Members discussed the implications of initiative and expressed concerns about the financial viability of the scheme and the accountability of the schools. It was commented that much of what would be implemented was already being done by the local authority, especially school to school support and professional development. Concerns were also raised about the expected increased workload of teachers within these schools and how high calibre graduates would be attracted to the profession without increased pay. It was explained that as the initiative was totally new, it was impossible to tell whether it would work; but that the Local Authority would have to work with the Teaching Schools to ensure that the core purpose of the Local Authority, of ensuring the best educational provision for children, was achieved. Members were told that the Local Authority would continue to identify schools

that needed support and would broker with the Teaching Schools what that should be. It was explained that the initiative to become a Teaching School would come from a school, not the Local Authority, and that the National College would make the decision.

The Chairman summed up the discussion saying that there was potential within this initiative to build on the things that were already being done in the area of school to school support – that the best ways to improve teaching had always been through colleagues' support and for trainee teachers and prospective heads to work alongside outstanding practitioners.

RESOLVED:

- That the panel noted the report.

73. PROGRESS OF SCHOOLS IN EASTERN HAMPSHIRE CAUSING CONCERN

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services identifying the schools in Eastern Hampshire that were causing concern (Item 8 in the Minute Book).

Members were informed that only five schools out of over 250 in Eastern Hampshire were currently in an Ofsted category, but that with the introduction of the new Ofsted framework there was likely to be an increase.

RESOLVED:

- To note the schools identified in the report .

74. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That in relation to the following item the press and public be excluded from the meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information for the reasons set out in the report.

75. PROGRESS OF SCHOOLS IN EASTERN HAMPSHIRE CAUSING CONCERN

The Panel considered the exempt appendix of the Director of Children's Services on schools in Eastern Hampshire causing concern (Item 10 in the Minute Book).

Members discussed in detail issues relating to those schools.

[SUMMARY OF AN EXEMPT MINUTE]