

AT A MEETING of the EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL
held at The Castle, Winchester on 25 September 2013

PRESENT

Councillors: P Edgar (Chairman), R Burgess (Vice-Chairman), J England, R Chadd,
W. Lovegrove, J Porter and C Choudhary

Co-opted: D White, P Clarke

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Fawkes and F Cowper, Tony Blackshaw and David Mewes.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

With relation to items on the agenda, Councillor Edgar declared a non-pecuniary interest as a life member of the National Association of Head teachers.

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman informed Members that he had taken great pleasure in attending the graduation ceremony for governor chairmen. The course, the National College Chairs of Governors Leadership Development Programme, was an excellent example of work going on to give support to governors in schools.

He had also attended the New Heads Familiarisation Day run by the Local Authority, which he felt had been very well organised and had received compliments from those head teachers attending. He noted that it was a very

challenging job to run a school today and it had been stressed to the head teachers attending that the Local Authority would always be available to help and support.

Bringing the Panel up-to-date on academies, the Chairman advised Members that there were 39, with another one, Mill Chase Community Technology College, becoming an academy in November 2013. He noted that the Local Authority had appointed two experienced governors to Mill Chase to help with their transition. It was explained that the relationships between the Local Authority and its academies was very strong in the main and it was intended that this would continue as the Local Authority still has a duty of care to Hampshire's children.

The Panel were notified that the fire at Winton Academy on 19 September 2013 had been attended by Hampshire's Emergency Planning team and Property Services department. The Local Authority was continuing to work in partnership with the school carrying out its role as landlord of the site.

15. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made.

16. STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Melanie Saunders, the County Manager for Educational Improvement, reported to members on the statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities in relation to school improvement and explained the approach adopted by Hampshire County Council. (Item 6 in the Minute Book).

She began by giving a summary of the key Education Acts that relate to statutory responsibilities, explaining that there had been no diminution in responsibilities with successive Acts. The 2006 Act was highlighted as this had expanded the Local Authority's duty not only to promote high standards in education, but also to ensure 'fair access and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential'. It was further explained that it was this same Act that gave Ofsted the right to inspect how Local Authorities carry out their statutory functions, and that they had begun with those Local Authorities that were not fulfilling their school improvement function. Members' attention was drawn to the key failings by Local Authorities as listed at 3.4 in the report. Members were also asked to note in particular section 28 in the 2012 guidance, "Educational Excellence", which she had included in full in her report, which reaffirmed all the legislation in relation to the performance of schools. It was stressed that a Local Authority is responsible for performance of children in all its schools whether they are academies or not, but that the existence of academies makes this more difficult to intervene.

The County Manager then described the school improvement service within Hampshire; this is based on a Leadership and Learning Partner who is allocated to each maintained school to ensure a good working knowledge of and relationship with the school; these are overseen by a District Manager and by one of the two Area Directors. The Deputy Director co-ordinates data analysis and the strategic direction for school improvement. She indicated

that there was substantial evidence that Hampshire's approach was successful; GCSE result statistics for western Hampshire showed that there were definite improvements in schools with Local Authority support compared to those without.

It was explained to the Panel that previously the DfE had appeared to encourage Local Authorities to step back from their education duties, which Hampshire had not, and that those that had were now being failed by Ofsted for neglecting their statutory responsibilities and were finding it difficult to rebuild their services and re-establish relationships with their schools. Because of this there was an increasing demand for Hampshire's highly-regarded services outside of the Local Authority. It was acknowledged that it was important to sell these services and grow the education business, but all agreed that this must not be to the detriment of Hampshire children and therefore, the business must grow in a controlled manner. Members were told that the improvement service brought in revenue of about £4.5 million with a core spend of £3 million. It was stated that charges for services to all schools were the same, whatever type they were.

There was discussion about the need to recruit the right calibre of staff and the difficulties in doing so, and about managing the service at a time of funding cuts and increased demand. Members expressed concern that the improvement service was becoming stretched; this was confirmed by the County Manager, who added that in the short and medium term there would be no difficulty in the Local Authority fulfilling its statutory functions.

The County Manager was thanked for her comprehensive report.

RESOLVED:

- That the Panel noted the statutory responsibilities which local authorities have for school improvement and the way in which these are carried out in Hampshire.
- That the Panel noted the challenges faced by school improvement services nationally and in Hampshire.

17. PROGRESS OF SCHOOLS IN WESTERN HAMPSHIRE CAUSING CONCERN

The Panel considered the report of the Director of Children's Services identifying the schools in Western Hampshire that were causing concern (Item 7 in the Minute Book).

The Chairman stressed the need for all elected Members to become more involved with the schools in their division to be able to support them in the challenges they face.

The Area Director began his report by explaining how Ofsted inspections have changed; instead of a planned visit every three or four years a 'desk audit' is carried out in addition and, if there is a downward trend in results, this triggers an early inspection. He stated that Ofsted has had a significant focus on

inspecting 'satisfactory' schools through the past year, as well as others, and within western Hampshire there were over one hundred inspections in 2012/13, which was an unprecedented number.

RESOLVED:

- That the Education Advisory Panel noted the report.

18. 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.

19. PROGRESS OF SCHOOLS IN WESTERN HAMPSHIRE CAUSING CONCERN

The Panel considered the exempt appendix of the Director of Children's Services on schools in Western Hampshire causing concern (Item 7 in the Minute Book).

Members discussed in detail issues relating to those schools.

[SUMMARY OF AN EXEMPT MINUTE]