

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 11 February 2016 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.41 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Mark Gray – in the Chair
Councillor Michael Waine (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Kevin Bulmer
Councillor Steve Curran
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Richard Langridge
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Gill Sanders
Mrs Sue Matthew
Councillor Patrick Greene (In place of Councillor Steve Harrod)

By Invitation: Ian Jones; Carole Thomson

Officers:

Whole of meeting Andreea Anastasiu and Sue Whitehead (Corporate Services)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item	Officer Attending
6, 7 & 8	Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director, Education & Learning;
6	Mark Jenner, Improvement & Development Manager for Vulnerable Learners – Education and Learning

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

50/15 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

(Agenda No. 1)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

51/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor Steve Harrod (Councillor Greene substituting).

52/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE OF THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 3)

Councillor Howson declared an interest by reason of his employment

53/15 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015 were approved and signed subject to the following amendment:

Minutes 43/15 Councillor Waine corrected the minute to include a focus on attainment looking at the locality level on a school by school basis.

During discussion the following was agreed:

Minute 43/15 – a supplementary report on secondary schools was to be added to the forward plan;

Minute 43/15 Officers to provide the clarification requested in the bullet point around Henley College Grouping;

Minute 45/15 Carole Thomson clarified that it was details of the meeting to be circulated not the paper. Details were circulated at the meeting.

54/15 THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS - 2014-15 ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 6)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director, Education & Learning attended for this item, together with Mark Jenner, Improvement & Development Manager for Vulnerable Learners – Education and Learning to present the annual report (ESC6) that concerned the outcomes for children looked after and those who are care leavers. It focussed on phonics in year 1, key stage 1 & 2 at primary aged pupils and GCSE at key stage 4. It also reported on destinations for those post-16 and on attendance for all pupils in care.

The report also looked back at the progress against priorities set last year and the new priorities and targets for 2015-16.

In the temporary absence of the Chairman Councillor Waine was in the Chair for part of this item.

During questions the following points were raised:

1. The implications for looked after children and care leavers in need of Education & Health Care Plans were considered. Mark Jenner commented that these children often moved around a lot and that the EHCP process was

quite lengthy. This put children in care at a disadvantage. As a service they were working hard to flag up the issue and expected that the Placement Strategy would help.

2. Early identification and intervention for children needing support was important for all children as well as looked after children.
3. Mark Jenner agreed that attendance was a crucial factor and outlined the work done to gather information, to identify patterns and to address difficult cases. A member flagged concern with the downward trend in attendance.
4. There was a request that future reports include numbers on asylum seekers.
5. There was some concern expressed about the use of absence as an unofficial policy of schools. Councillor Waine noted that absence had been considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Members of the Education Scrutiny Committee wished Mark Jenner well in his new role at Ofsted.

The Education Scrutiny Committee received the report and AGREED to request a further report to the Corporate Parenting Panel looking in detail (by schools) at the absence trend. It was necessary to make the link to individual schools and how they dealt with the issue. Reference was also made to the use of restricted timetables. The Committee further agreed that if necessary a further report come back to this Committee.

55/15 LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (LAASSI) OFSTED INSPECTION FRAMEWORK UPDATE (Agenda No. 7)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director for Education and Learning gave a verbal update on the position. She advised that officers met regularly and were in contact with Ofsted.

56/15 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS (Agenda No. 8)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director for Education & Learning attended for the discussion around the issue of recruitment and retention of teachers in Oxfordshire. The Committee had before them a background paper by Councillor John Howson who declared an interest by reason of being a director of TeachVac, part of the Oxfordshire Teacher Services Group.

The following people also attended to address the committee on this topic:

- Patrick Garton, Cherwell School Assistant Headteacher
- Tracey Smith, Headteacher of Tower Hill Primary School
- Dr Mary Wild, Head of the School of Education, Oxford Brookes University

Councillor Howson introduced the contents of the report highlighting the worsening position with an expected increase in pupil numbers creating greater demand.

Mary Wild spoke about the position with regard to primary schools and referred to there being fewer allocations. This had led to a competitive environment for securing post graduates. They had been allowed to recruit only 75% of primary teachers compared with the previous year.

Patrick Garton outlined the work of the School Direct partnership and noted that all their work was at post graduate level. He had noticed fewer applications for RE, music, drama and IT and drawing and technology where there were fewer incentives to apply. In response to a question he outlined the model of training which was similar to that employed by the University led programme.

Tracey Smith spoke of the particular difficulties faced by individual schools in recruiting and retaining staff. Her own school with 57% of its children on pupil premium was able to make use of the protocols favouring schools in greatest need. She highlighted the problem of affordable housing that meant that strong newly qualified teachers moved away from Oxford as there were no relevant key worker schemes for them that would allow them to remain.

During discussion Education Scrutiny Committee:

1. considered the difficulties faced in getting recognition of the problem at government level and suggested a recommendation to ensure that local MPs were lobbied..
2. noted the problems created by the lack of affordable housing and made recommendations accordingly.
3. noted that linked to problems of recruitment and retention of new teachers was the increasing numbers of experienced teachers leaving the profession early.
4. recognised the difficulty of the changing education landscape with schools acting individually. They noted the comments from Patrick Garton that he was involved in various groups and networks seeking to fund recruitment initiatives jointly. Members proposed that the paper be referred to the Schools Forum so that they could take note of the concerns raised.

The Education Scrutiny Committee AGREED:

- (a) Note with concern the contents of the report;
- (b) ask the Cabinet member for CEF to report back to this Committee on any actions that have been taken by the various Boards established in Oxfordshire to address recruitment challenges with specific reference to housing;
- (c) refer the issue of recruitment to the Teachers Joint Committee for discussion at their next meeting;
- (d) recommend the Cabinet member to request District Councils to consider the position of teachers and other workers in education in relation to housing;
- (e) recommend the Cabinet Member to raise with Oxfordshire MP's the pressures the County Council faces so that they can bring it to the attention of Ministers;
- (f) ask the Cabinet Member to discuss with Ofsted the Committee's concerns at their constantly changing emphasis and priorities
- (g) ask the County Council to consider a recruitment strategy that emphasises the positive aspects of working in Oxfordshire;

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- (h) Request the Schools Forum to take note of the paper and use as a discussion point.

57/15 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS
(Agenda No. 9)

Following discussion of the forward plan the following priorities were suggested for future meetings:

- LAASSI;
- Scrutiny Annual Report
- Future Arrangements in education;
- KS5 report;
- Children on Edge of Care Schools Response.

It was further agreed that the following be included in future programming:

- Free School Meals – July
- Educational Attainment of Vulnerable Learner – bring back to agenda setting meeting

It was noted that the Role of Schools (and particularly school nurses) in smoking cessation should be removed from the forward plan.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

2016