

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 27 June 2018 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 3.15 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Michael Waine – in the Chair
Councillor John Howson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Sobia Afridi
Councillor Mrs. Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Jeannette Matelot
Councillor Gill Sanders
Councillor Dr Suzanne Bartington
Councillor Emma Turnbull

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Hilary Hibbert-Biles

By Invitation: Ms Carole Thomson
Mr Ian Jones

Officers:

Whole of meeting Deborah Miller and Lauren Rushen (Law & Governance).

Part of meeting David Clarke, Deputy Director for Education, Maria Godfrey, Delia Mann and Allyson Milward; Vaughan Burnard (Environment & Economy).

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.

99/18 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

(Agenda No. 1)

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting and in particular the new Deputy Director Education, David Clarke.

100/18 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2018 were approved as an accurate record subject to the following corrections:

Minute 87/12 substitute 'Suzanna' with 'Suzanne', Minute 91/18 substitute 'Jeanette' with 'Jeannette'.

Matters Arising:

In relation to Minute 91/18 the Chairman reported that due to Councillor Afridi no longer being on the Committee it had been suggested that Councillor Emma Turnbull sit on the school absence and attendance working group and that Councillor John Howson would join the group to deputise for Councillor Waine. The Committee indicated that it would be happy with these suggestions.

101/18 SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS DEEP DIVE CABINET RESPONSE

(Agenda No. 6)

In April 2018 the Cabinet received a report from the Education Scrutiny Working Group into Education Exclusions in Oxfordshire. The Working party had been established in response to the Education Scrutiny Committee identifying the increasing numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions in Oxfordshire schools and academies as a concern.

The Committee had before it a report (ESC6) from the Cabinet Member for Public Health & Education which provided a response to the former Overview and Scrutiny investigation into school exclusions in Oxfordshire, setting out details of the actions agreed in response to the recommendations in the report presented to Cabinet on 17 April 2018.

Councillor Hibbert-Biles whilst welcoming the findings of the deep dive and the report, explained that they had not yet got a full team in place so would be unable to do all that the Committee had asked straight away, but had started the process of getting the right team in place with the appointment of the Deputy Director and hoped to cover all the issues in the report in due course. She fully agreed that inclusion was a top priority and this had been a recent discussion at the Children's Trust.

Further training for Governors was a priority as was inclusion. There was a need to work in cohesion across services to reduce exclusions, increase inclusion and get the right curriculum in place for the right children.

In response to questions from members, the Deputy Director, David Clarke explained that training for Governors was currently being addressed. Recent changes in Governor Services was hoped to lead to better leadership and support.

During debate the Committee made the following points:

There was a need to ensure academies were on board – Councillor Hibbert-Biles felt satisfactory progress was being made via the Heads & Chairs Meeting. Councillor Hibbert-Biles was also visiting all schools across the County. There was also the learning engagement project, fair access panels and Oxford Headteacher's Association.

The Committee would wish to receive an update on exclusions every 6 months;

Director level reporting to Governors was needed – more information was needed on the Education Dash Board and a greater consistency was needed across the Council.

The involvement of the Regional School Commissioner was vital in ensuring academies were on board – Councillor Hibbert-Biles undertook to add this as a standard item to their meetings with the RSC.

The Committee felt that the time for being referred for EHCP remained too long, with children waiting 6-9 months for referrals – Councillor Hibbert-Biles agreed that the wait was too long but that the SEND Board was working on it. The new target was 24 weeks and so far, 50% had been done and the other 50% were on track to be done in 24 weeks.

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) note the response to the recommendations and support the delivery of the action plan and the ongoing reporting of progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (b) note that the Cabinet Member for Public Health would facilitate the involvement of the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure all academies were on Board.

102/18 CHILDREN AND FAMILY CENTRES AND LOCALITY SUPPORT SERVICES (Agenda No. 7)

The Chairman of the Committee had requested a report from officers to better understand how current services worked together to ease children's transition to school and promote school inclusion since the closure of the family Centres in March 2017.

The Committee had before it a report which set out how Children and Family Centres were reconfigured in 2017 including the Family Solutions Service which provided early help casework through the Team around the family (TAF), Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) plans.

The report further set out the role of health visitors and how they interacted with the Locality and Community Support Services (LCSS). Finally, the report set out how interactions at Children and Family Centres interact around exclusions, attendance and Education Health and Care Plans.

Accordingly, Maria Godfrey, Delia Mann, Social Care Manager and Nicola Taylor, Lead for Health Visiting attended the Committee to give an overview of the 3 services and how they came together to identify children requiring early help in order to ensure the right services were provided at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation into statutory services and to ease transition into school and promote school inclusion, including the role of health visitors.

The Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) was created to provide advice and guidance to professionals in the community, when there were emerging concerns about a child, to ensure the right services are provided at the earliest opportunity and prevent escalation into statutory services.

The Family Solutions Service combined Children's Social Care statutory social work and Early Help services. The Early Help offer was redesigned from the Council's former Early Intervention Hubs and Children Centres. The new service was run from eight Children and Family Centres plus two satellites across the county. The service provided early help casework through the Team around the Family (TAF), and statutory Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) plans, as well delivering evidenced-based interventions such as parenting education, treatment for domestic abuse, children's 'play and learn' sessions.

Each centre also delivered casework jointly with Aquarius (young people's substance misuse intervention) to young people to increase their educational inclusion and employment opportunities.

Health visitors were qualified nurses and midwives with specialist public health training. They were trained in child development, women's health issues and safeguarding children. The aim was to achieve for all families: improved access and experience of children's health services, improved health outcomes for children, reduced health inequalities. Health Visitors were experts at 'adding value' through their public health practice and delivery of universal services. Health visitors worked in teams and were supported by community staff nurses and nursery nurses. They were a skilled workforce proficient in contributing towards early health assessments focusing on preschool children up to 5 years old.

During debate the Committee made the following points:

- There was concern over children's readiness for school and whether there were enough Health visitors, recruitment of Health Visitors was an issue and currently the service was 7 visitors down;
- Provision was based in the highest need areas, so there was currently no provision for east and south Oxfordshire;
- There was a notion issue around "children's readiness" – the Children's Trust were carrying out a piece of work around this with Public Health England;
- Concern was expressed around the rural population and whether universal access was working;
- Outreach need more work – the model of referral presented challenges as it was harder to find people;
- There was a rise in children before 5 years of age with hearing and eyesight problems – the possibility of working with childcare services to be explored more fully for early identification;
- There was a named nurse for LAC;
- There was need for more support over attendance.

Following debate, the Committee **AGREED** to note the report and to set up a small working Group to carry out a piece of in the Autumn to ensure consistency was

offered across the localities in terms of what services were offered and to carry out a joint piece of work with HOSC around readiness for school.

103/18 ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

(Agenda No. 8)

At the Education Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2017, the Committee received a report about Elective Home Education (EHE) in Oxfordshire. In 2016-17 there were 558 recorded cases of EHE which represented an increase of 21%. 70 children returned to school, compared to 90 in the previous year.

The Committee agreed that Councillor Waine and Councillor Smith would undertake an investigation into the reasons for this rise; trends in EHE including concentrations of EHE in particular localities and schools; and to meet with parents who have decided to EHE. Members considered whether there were any particular trends in relation to year groups, locality or increase over time. The data suggest that there is no particular trend by locality, however there do appear to be higher instances of EHE for SEND pupils. During the course of the investigation, the Department for Education (DfE) published revised EHE guidance for local authorities and parents for consultation and so this has also been considered as part of the investigation.

To gather information, Councillors Waine and Emily Smith met with lead officers including an EHE Link Workers to understand the role of the EHE team, the national context, the powers and duties of the local authority and to commission further data to inform the investigation. A second meeting was held with the lead County Attendance Officer responsible for EHE to discuss the data and the DfE Call for Evidence.

Finally, the working group had met with two parents/carers who have elected to home educate to find out about their experiences. Both parents/carers had initially sent their children to primary school and had then pursued elective home education. The Committee now had before it a report (ESC8) which set out conclusion for the Committee's consideration.

In introducing the report Councillor Waine thanked Councillor Emily Smith for support in carrying out this piece of work. Councillor Waine further thanked the families for their time and sharing their experiences of Home Education.

During debate, the Committee made the following points:

The EHE website contained out of date information and was not very welcoming/user friendly for parents.

The challenges around Adoption needed to be added to the report.

There was a need to breakdown figures in age gender and ethnicity. Concern was expressed over the number of single sex schools provided for girls.

There was a need to get better at speaking to parents.

Following debate Councillor Matelot moved and Councillor Gill Sanders seconded that the recommendations set out in the report and on the face of the Agenda be moved. The motion was put to the vote and was carried nem con.

RESOLVED: (nem con) that:

- (1) A copy of this report and the response at Annex 1 are submitted as a response from the Education Scrutiny Committee to the Department for Education call for evidence.
 - (a) Further analysis is undertaken to understand the reasons for higher numbers of EHE at years 5 and 9 through modifications to the EHE parent/carer questionnaire.
 - (b) Further analysis is undertaken by officers on a school level and locality basis to understand the trends associated with EHE in locality areas to see if there are links with social deprivation or SEND provision.
 - (c) The concept of a 2-week cooling off period before taking pupils off the roll at a school is discussed as part of the attendance conference in July, or at another suitable occasion with head teachers, to gauge level of commitment from schools to understand whether it would be feasible to implement a system across Oxfordshire.
 - (d) That the authority advocates that school leaders include information about numbers of EHE children in their termly reports to governors/directors governors or other reporting mechanism that may exist.
 - (e) The Committee receives an update report in twelve months' time to review the impact of the restructure to the EHE team, how the RAG rating system is working, the outcome of the Committee's recommendations and the results of the DfE consultation.
 - (f) Schools and colleges in the County are contacted and asked if they would be prepared to provide access to private candidates to expand the range of exam centres in the County for EHE pupils.
 - (g) A named contact on the MASH is identified as a point of contact for EHE issues and concerns.
 - (h) A briefing is organised for representatives on the MASH about EHE and the role of the County Attendance Team in EHE.
 - (i) The EHE questionnaire is further modified to give the ability to include a more detailed explanation from parents/carers, if they wish to share more detailed reasons for opting for EHE.
 - (j) The Committee would like to receive a report containing further information about the Inclusion Strategy as it develops.

- (k) The New College, Swindon example of good practice is investigated and any information is shared with Further Education establishments in Oxfordshire.
- (2) to ask officers for a report back in six-months tracking progress against the recommendations, together with a breakdown on schools that have a high number of EHE, particularly Primary and whether this was due to choice

104/18 ACADEMIES ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee had before them a report (ESC9) which identified and analysed trends in the Council's Academy Programme during 2017 and indicated changes from those noted in 2016.

Allyson Milward, academies Team attended the Committee to highlight the key points set out in the report and to answer any questions the Committee may wish to ask.

In introducing the report, Ms Milward reported that following a year of considerable change in the legislative framework and national education policy agenda in 2016 there was no further legislation passed in 2017. The national focus on education policy changed to a different approach led by the National Schools Commissioner which focussed on creating sustainable MATs and embedding a different culture driven by a school improvement focus. The Government remained committed to the academy agenda but expected the mixed economy of LA maintained schools and academies to continue for some time whilst capacity was created in the academy system to support more schools effectively.

The council's last formal policy statement on the academies programme was issued in October 2015. It recognised that the Council had a strong track record of supporting schools to become academies. To avoid the risks associated with fragmentation and isolation, particularly of small rural primary schools, it was proposed that the Council adopt a more assertive policy of actively encouraging the incorporation of the remaining maintained schools into sustainable formal collaborative groupings, primarily through the Multi Academy Trust model but also through the extension of the 'collaborative company' model and the pooling of more resources and responsibilities.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms Milward confirmed that it was not the policy of the Council to 'encourage' schools to become academies.

Carole Thomson, speaking as a member of the Schools Forum, welcomed the fact that they were part of the DfE Working Group, but requested that outcomes keep being fed back via the Schools Forum.

Following debate, the Committee AGREED to note the report.

Exempt Item

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded for the duration of item ESC10 since it was likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt

information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to that item and since it was considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

105/18 SCHOOL BUILDING MAINTENANCE

(Agenda No. 10)

The information contained in the Annex to the report was exempt in that it fell within the following prescribed category:

3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and since it was considered that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, in that the information in the annex contained financial information in relation to matters which may distort the process of open competition and that which would prejudice the commercial confidence of the parties in involved.

Carillion was Oxfordshire County Council's strategic property maintenance, investment and facilities partner. On 15 January 2018, companies in the Carillion group structure began to go into liquidation. That triggered an immediate business continuity response by the Council, to guarantee continuity of delivery of key services and to ensure that schools and other council functions could continue to operate.

The Committee had before that a report (ESC10) and Exempt Annex 1 which provided a simple summary to be supplemented by verbal presentation at the meeting to explain the current situation viz a viz the resolution of construction projects that were under construction at the time of their liquidation.

Vaughan Burnand, Interim Head of Construction had been invited to give a verbal update and to answer any questions which the Committee had in relation to this Item.

The Committee then received a detailed breakdown of all school building projects underway and what action had been taken to resolve any issues. The Committee established that all projects had been surveyed, that all projects now had completion dates, that a new project management team had been employed and that better communication was a priority.

Following debate, the Committee **AGREED** to note the report and verbal update and to ask officers to ensure that all local members that had projects in their ward were sent school information including completion dates.

106/18 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 11)

The Committee considered the forward plan and **AGREED** as below subject to the Chairman and Vice Chairman, together with officers managing the business on the current work programme for the efficient running of the Committee.

Agenda Item	Reasons and objective for item	Lead Member / Officer
19 September 2018		
Ofsted	A question and answer session with Ofsted representatives	Cllr Michael Waine
School Building Maintenance	To receive a report about how school building maintenance work is to be prioritised and scheduled in maintained schools and academies who contract OCC following the liquidation of Carillion	Director of Property and Investment
Sufficiency of school places (particularly SEN)	Including places for pupils with Special Educational Needs.	Head of School Organisation and Sufficiency
Children and Family Centres and Locality Community Support Services	To present the findings of the monitoring investigations undertaken by members of the Committee following on from the presentation in July 2018	Cllr Michael Waine/Area Social Care Manager
Preliminary summer results	To receive a presentation on the preliminary summer 2018 exam results across the County	School Services Manager (?)/Performance Information Manager
School attainment	To agree the scope of the deep dive into educational attainment, particularly the attainment of vulnerable learners at secondary schools and to co-opt a final member of the working group	Cllr John Howson
28 November 2018		
School absence and attendance	Recommendations from the committee working group on improving school attendance	Cllr Michael Waine
6 February 2019		
School attainment	To agree the scope of the deep dive into educational attainment, particularly the attainment of vulnerable learners at secondary schools and to co-opt a final member of the working group	Cllr John Howson
3 April 2019		
To be scheduled		
Closing the gap (vulnerable learners)	Pathways to raising the attainment of vulnerable pupils (best practice), current provision of support, an overview of the profile of vulnerable	

	learners	
LA's new relationship with schools	To help shape an evolving relationship with schools and colleges.	
Looked After Children educational attainment	A review of attainment for a particular vulnerable group	
Demographic trends	Planning for school places and supporting families with English as an additional language	
Disparity in educational outcomes across Localities	Profile of educational outcomes across Oxfordshire – sharing learning across the county.	
Schools funding formula	Potentially a task group reporting back to ESC	
Educational Attainment	Recommendations from the committee working group on improving educational performance	Cllr John Howson

..... in the Chair

Date of signing