

## CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 31 August 2010 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.05 pm.

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Don Seale – in the Chair

Councillor M. Altaf-Khan  
Councillor Marilyn Badcock  
Councillor Norman Bolster (for Councillor Alyas Ahmed)  
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (for Councillor Val Smith)  
Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor  
Councillor Jean Fooks (for Councillor Janet Godden)  
Councillor A.M. Lovatt (for Councillor Nicholas P. Turner)  
Councillor Neil Owen  
Councillor Melinda Tilley (for Councillor David Sexon)  
Councillor Carol Viney (for Councillor Ann Bonner)

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor Michael Waine (for Agenda Item 4 )

**Co-opted Members:** Mr Chris Bevan

**By Invitation:** Ms. Brenda Williams, COTO  
Ms Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Governors Association)

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting Director of Children, Young People & Families, R. Leach (School Organisation & Planning), L. Michelson & S. Whitehead (Chief Executives)

*The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports and schedule are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### 82/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies and temporary appointments were received as follows:

Name	Temporary Appointment
Councillor Alyas Ahmed	Councillor Norman Bolster

Councillor Ann Bonner	Councillor Carol Viney
Councillor Janet Godden	Councillor Jean Fooks
Councillor Dave Sexon	Councillor Melinda Tilley
Councillors Val Smith	Councillor Liz Brighthouse
Councillor Nicholas P Turner	Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Mrs Sue Matthew	

**83/10 SPEAKING TO OR PETITIONING THE COMMITTEE**  
(Agenda No. 3)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed:

Speaker	Item
Councillor Larry Sanders, local Member Frank Newhofer, local resident Fazal Hussain, Chairman of the Central Oxford Mosque Society	4. Call in of Decision of the cabinet – Oxford School.

Councillor Larry Sanders spoke in support of the call in highlighting that the decision was taken when the schools were closed and at a time when education policy was in a state of change. He explored the reasons for the poor results that included socio economic factors in East Oxford and the influx of mid year admissions many of whom were asylum seekers. He referred to the hard work of the school to raise standards and commented that he did not believe that a change to academy status would change the situation. There was an opportunity now to allow the local schools to work together.

Mr Frank Newhofer spoke in support of the call on the grounds that there had been insufficient consideration given to strategic outcomes and the possibility of collaboration between local schools. He commented on the new Education Act and the withdrawal of Building Schools for the Future funding. He questioned the success of existing academies and highlighted the local opposition to the proposals. He felt that the decision should be deferred to allow discussion to take place with all of Oxford City's secondary schools.

Mr Frank Hussain speaking in support of the call in stated that the mosques had not been consulted and represented up to 5,000 people in the catchment area of the school. The Central Oxford Mosque ran voluntary after school clubs providing help to under achieving pupils. Oxford School was the only secondary school without religious ties and the academy proposals removed this option.

Responding to questions Mr Hussain gave some background on the working of the voluntary classes.

**84/10 CALL IN OF DECISION BY THE CABINET - OXFORD SCHOOL - AUGUST 2010**  
(Agenda No. 4)

The Scrutiny Committee had before it the report of the Director for Children, Young people & Families to Cabinet on 10 August together with the draft minutes of that meeting.

**The Committee considered the following reasons for call-in:**

**“The decision is premature before the start of the new school year when discussions could have happened about possible federation arrangements with other schools;**

**The decision is also premature before the Comprehensive Spending Review in October when the capital position will be known.”**

(Amendments in bold above agreed at the meeting on 28 September 2010).

Councillor Fooks spoke in support of point 1 of the call in. She referred to a meeting she had attended with Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education where he had indicated that it was possible to have confederations covering several schools. The situation had changed with a new government and the opportunity should be taken to look at all possibilities.

Councillor Michael Waine, Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement, responded to questions:

1. From Councillor Carol Viney – He confirmed that the move to an academy status did not preclude later discussion about federation. The Director for Children, Young People & Families, responding to a question from the Chairman undertook to advise head teachers that they would be able to pursue any collaboration proposals with the new academy. Councillor Waine added that there was already collaboration between local schools.
2. From Councillor Melinda Tilley – He commented that the schools had broken up for the summer at the end of the consultation period. He added that it was a myth that schools closed down in the summer.

During discussion the following points were made:

1. There were ongoing discussions about collaboration that were wider than the curriculum and the 14-19 agenda. There was a value in the role of the LA and the involvement of local communities. A concern was expressed that once the academy was in place there would not be a level playing field. Oxford City was unique with a rich mix across class and ethnic boundaries and it was right to try and put together the patchwork of education across the City.
2. It was suggested that a different model of education could affect the ability of schools to confederate. Councillor Waine replied that if there was a wish to confederate the consultation could have been a vehicle to raise that. Discussions could still take place.
3. A member queried how much of the non delegated schools budget had been lost with the other academies.

Councillor Fooks spoke in support of point 2 of the call in. She highlighted that there was uncertainty over future financial arrangements. The Building Schools for the Future funding was gone and she feared that the Council was rushing into a decision before the funding available was known.

Councillor Michael Waine, Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement, responded to questions:

1. From Councillor Neil Owen – He confirmed that there was concern around the capital funding but that there was a clear undertaking from government to discuss the position. The premise had been very much based on the transformation of the school from within so he felt that the spending review was a red herring. Roy Leach added that potentially, in the event of a delay, initial funding could be at risk. There was no capital guarantee with the new academy model. He confirmed that revenue funding would be based on the number of places rather than the numbers on roll.
2. From Councillor Sandy Lovatt – Councillor Waine outlined the timetable for moving forward on the proposals that had necessitated the decision during August. He also referred to the wish of Council as expressed at a Council meeting to avoid further delays and uncertainty.

During discussion the following points were made:

1. Concern was expressed that insufficient time was allocated for discussion with the unions. COTO were against academies and despite extensive consultation there were still issues surrounding the existing academies.
2. Some members expressed the view that it would be better to await the outcome of the government spending review.
3. Concern was expressed that there was no guarantee of the capital funding and in particular funding for the science block.

On a show of hands it was:

**RESOLVED:** to:

- (a) (by 8 votes to 3) take no further action on point 1 of the call in because the Committee found no material concerns and agreed not to refer the matter back to Cabinet for further consideration; and
- (b) (by 7 votes to 4) take no further action on point 2 of the call in because the Committee found no material concerns and agreed not to refer the matter back to Cabinet for further consideration.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing  
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