

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 25 April 2016 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Mark Gray – in the Chair

Councillor Michael Waine (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Kevin Bulmer
Councillor Steve Curran
Councillor Patrick Greene (In place of Councillor Richard Langridge)
Councillor Tim Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Steve Harrod
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Gill Sanders
Mrs Sue Matthew

By Invitation: Carole Thomson

Officers:

Whole of meeting Andreea Anastasiu (Policy & Performance Officer); Sue Whitehead (Corporate Services)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

6 & 8

Officer Attending

Roy Leach, Strategic Lead for Education, Sufficiency and Access; Chris Malone, Strategic Lead for Education Quality; Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality; Janet Johnson, Strategic Lead for Vulnerable Learners

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Roy Leach, Strategic Lead for Education, Sufficiency and Access

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Chris Malone, Strategic Lead for Education Quality; Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality

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Sarah Varnom, Schools & Learning Manager; Sharon Oliver, School Intervention Leader

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 [agenda, reports and schedule are attached to the signed Minutes.

9/16 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

(Agenda No. 1)

Councillor Gray in welcoming everyone to the meeting gave an update on two recent visits to the McIntyre Academy and to the UTC, Oxfordshire.

He noted that Rebecca Matthews had left her post as Interim Deputy Director, Education & Learning and commented on the very real contribution she had made.

10/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Pete Handley and Richard Langridge (Councillor Patrick Greene substituting). Apologies were also received from Ian Jones.

11/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE OF THE BACK PAGE

(Agenda No. 3)

Councillor Howson declared an interest by reason of being a director of TeachVac, part of the Oxfordshire Teacher Services Group.

Councillor Gray indicated that his partner's head teacher was attending the meeting today but that this would not affect his approach and questioning.

12/16 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2016 were approved and signed.

In response to a query from Councillor Howson on Minute 7/16 on the Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, the Chairman indicated that the intention was that the report back referred to at item (b) (see below) would come to the next meeting:

- (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.

13/16 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS IN EDUCATION

(Agenda No. 6)

Roy Leach, Strategic Lead for Education, Sufficiency and Access, together with Chris Malone, Strategic Lead for Education Quality, Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality and Janet Johnson, Strategic Lead for Vulnerable Learners attended to present a report on an overview of the practical implications of the future arrangements in education agreed by Cabinet on 23 February 2016. They also

outlined recent developments at national level including the White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere.

During questions the following points were raised:

1. Should all schools become academies as proposed in the White Paper there was uncertainty about how continuing school improvement would be achieved and the role of the local authority. It was noted that from September funding in this area would end.
2. Concern was expressed for the future of small rural schools under the White paper proposals which to be effective would encourage the growth of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). Roy Leach confirmed that Councillor Tilley, Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families had already expressed those concerns. There was support for locally grown MATs as the most likely to support the needs of schools in Oxfordshire including small rural schools.
3. Queries were raised about cost implications for Oxfordshire of the academisation programme. Highlighted were the fairer funding review, the effect on the school transport costs and queries over the implications on costs of school staff in the Local Government Pension Fund.
4. There was discussion of the respective roles of the authority and the Regional Schools Commissioner with regard to failing academy schools.
5. With regard to schools places there was a mixed picture with applications for reception and transfer to secondary schools being to the local authority and following a process involving the academies there is a co-ordinated allocation with all children getting the offer of one place. Outside these years it is open to academies to deal with parents directly. However in Oxfordshire most academies choose to continue to allow the local authority to do it. Under the White Paper the local authority would co-ordinate admissions to all years.
6. Officers confirmed that there was a continuing role for Scrutiny to play in education and referred to work being done to provide a challenge to all schools on attendance figures. It was noted that some academies did not provide the necessary data and the Committee noted that this was an issue they would raise with the Regional Schools Commissioner when he next visited the Committee. The Committee emphasised the need for clarity over what their and the County Council's future role would be.

The Chairman proposed and by a show of hands by 9 votes for to 1 against it was:

AGREED:

- (a) Given the policy for all schools to become academies the Committee strongly supports encouragement of locally grown multi-academy trusts to meet the needs of both large and small schools in Oxfordshire; and
- (b) that the Cabinet Member be requested to write to local MPs to ask them to find out the costs for Oxfordshire of academisation and the fairer funding review in order to ensure that it not be to the detriment of children's education in Oxfordshire.

14/16 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF TEACHERS

(Agenda No. 7)

Roy Leach, Strategic Lead for Education, Sufficiency and Access, attend for a discussion around the issue of recruitment and retention of teachers. This built on previous consideration of the issue at the 11 February 2016 meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

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

- Mr Adam Arnell, Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance
- Mr Philip Baillieu, Chair of Governors, Wheatley Park School
- Ms Kate Curtis, Headteacher, Wheatley Park School
- Mr Richard Peacock, Chief Executive, SOHA

Ms Curtis highlighted that the quality of teaching was the biggest factor affecting the quality of a school. One of their biggest concerns was around funding and keeping good teachers. She detailed the steps they took to look after teachers at Wheatley Park School including development, social networking and addressing pupil behaviour. However maths and English teaching was a problem with the response to adverts being poor and they were often forced to pay more. She added that primary schools had similar problems.

Oxfordshire was an attractive place for young teachers but they often ended up in poor housing which was an issue in terms of retaining staff. Retention was a greater issue even than recruitment. In response to questions she commented that in her experience teachers did not leave for the private sector based on political ideology but rather for any number of reasons including smaller classes and easier to teach pupils.

Mr Arnell, explained that increasingly problems of teacher recruitment and retention impacted on the work they did. He gave figures for teachers in training in Oxfordshire for the current year highlighting the difficulties faced. This included problems with the allocations policy from central government that limited the number of training posts on offer and did not take account of local need. Although not set up to undertake recruitment activity they were becoming involved in some simple aspects. They talked to people about the benefits of working in Oxfordshire and had set up a vacancy website which cost less than the IBC provided site. He noted that other County Councils had spent money on promoting their areas.

Mr Peacock, detailed the process for allocating rented social housing which was based on housing need criteria with local authority nominations. Shared ownership schemes provided greater flexibility and could help teachers to obtain suitable accommodation. He outlined the likely costs involved and noted that cheaper housing would only be possible with subsidy. He added that there were ways in which the County Council could help including making land available to housing associations at a cheaper price. He also referred to the use of key worker schemes.

Mr Baillieu supported the comments from Ms Curtis and added that as a Chairman of a company (in his role as Chair of Governors) he was frustrated that he was not able to make best use of assets. For example he was unable to raise a mortgage against them.

During discussion Education Scrutiny Committee:

1. Considered the issue raised around the sale of land at less than market value and whether this was worthy of consideration by Cabinet. They acknowledged that it could not be considered in isolation from the Council's broader financial situation.
2. Noted the problems raised concerning the allocations policy for preparing teachers.

The Chairman proposed and by a show of hands by 7 votes for to 2 against it was:

AGREED to:

- (a) request Cabinet to discuss with schools and housing associations the possibility of selling land at below market value to assist with the current and ongoing issue over recruitment and retention of teachers; and

It was further **AGREED** (nem con): to:

- (b) recommend the Cabinet Member writes to the Secretary of State for Education requesting an allocations policy for preparing teachers 2016 that allows Oxfordshire schools to recruit sufficient trainees to meet the future needs of local secondary, and primary, nursery and special schools.

15/16 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AT KEY STAGE 5

(Agenda No. 8)

Roy Leach, Strategic Lead for Education, Sufficiency and Access, Chris Malone, Strategic Lead for Education Quality and Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality attended for consideration of the report that provided trends in Key Stage 5 attainment in Oxfordshire. This included trends in the number of young people taking level 3 qualifications; A level subject comparisons as well as A level and vocational trends in Oxfordshire's maintained schools and colleges.

The Education Scrutiny Committee received the report and noted the trends in Key Stage 5 attainment in Oxfordshire.

16/16 SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN & UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS

(Agenda No. 9)

Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality and Chris Malone, Strategic Lead for Education Quality, attended during consideration of a report on new guidance from the Department for Education for local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners entitled: '**Schools causing concern. Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools**'.

In welcoming the useful report the Education Committee requested the following additional information in future reports:

- Information on MATs – e.g. around governance and financial measures;
- Information on nurseries;
- Benchmarking data;
- Progress and achievement of schools that became academies as a result of poor performance

The Committee noted that the Regional Schools' Commissioner would be attending the next Education Scrutiny Committee meeting and they would take up the concerns around under-performing academies with him at that meeting.

AGREED: to:

(a) note the content of the report; and

(b) raise with the Regional Schools' Commissioner the concerns around the academies that have been judged as inadequate and the actions taken in relation to the underperformance of academies in Oxfordshire.

17/16 EXCLUSIONS IN OXFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

(Agenda No. 10)

Sarah Varnom, Strategic Lead for Education Quality and Sharon Oliver, School Intervention Leader attended for this item on information provided on exclusions in Oxfordshire Schools, Terms 1 – 4, 2015/16.

Following questions and in noting the report the Committee requested officers to look into:

- The possibility of providing information in future reports based on district council areas to inform community safety/safeguarding.
- Providing an analysis of Year 10 data to be clear what is happening and what is being done.
- The trend for home schooling, and in particular the peak in Year 11.

18/16 DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

(Agenda No. 11)

The Education Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Annual Scrutiny Report prior to its submission to full Council. Members were advised that any comments could be emailed to Andreea Anastasiu.

The membership set out in paragraph 3.1 was amended to reflect the non-voting status of Carole Thomson and Ian Jones.

AGREED: Subject to the above to note the contents of the report.

19/16 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 12)

Following discussion of the forward plan it was agreed that the following be included in future programming

- Exclusions – July

It was further agreed to discuss the best way to take forward the following items at the agenda planning meeting:

- Provision of School Places in Areas of Growth. Cllr Lovatt requested this include consideration of the emerging issue around the cost of additional school places in S106s where districts disagree with the sums from County and feel that it is making developers draw back from schemes.
- Children in care and on the edge of care

It was also agreed that the items on NEETs and school balances be deleted from the future programme.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 200