

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 5 February 2020 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 4.00 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Michael Waine – in the Chair

Councillor John Howson (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor Ted Fenton
Councillor Mrs Anda Fitzgerald-O'Connor
Councillor Jeannette Matelot
Councillor Gill Sanders
Councillor Emma Turnbull

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services

By Invitation: Diane Wilson in place of Donald McEwan, Council of Oxfordshire Teachers' Association (COTO); Mrs Carole Thomson (Oxfordshire Governors' Association).

Officers:

Whole of meeting Chris Hilliard, Deputy Director Education and Deborah Miller (Law & Governance).

Part of meeting Deborah Bell, Kim James Allyson Milward and Barbara Chillman (Children's Services).

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.

1/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Mr Donald McEwan sent his apologies with Ms Diane Wilson attending in substitution.

2/20 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 November 2019 were approved and signed subject to the following amendments:

Add Kim James to the list of those present;

Minute 157/19 (Minute 151/19) add 'within the current budget' after the word 'expectation';

Minute 160/19, 4th paragraph add the words 'for central services' after the word 'higher'.

Minute 161/19, 2nd paragraph replace 'Thompson' with 'Thomson'.

Matters Arising

In relation to minute 158/19 recommendation (f), the Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services reported that in line with the recommendation, she had written to the Secretary of State asking to restore the ability of Local Authorities to instruct schools under Fair Access and to make it mandatory for all academies to share data with the LA for safeguarding pupils. She awaited a response.

3/20 IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

(Agenda No. 6)

A strategic review was being undertaken on how Oxfordshire County Council and key stakeholders, including settings, schools, Trusts, Diocesan Authorities and parents could all contribute to further improve education outcomes for young people in Oxfordshire. This review had been commissioned by Lucy Butler, Director for Children, Education and Families.

As part of this review, the Committee's view and opinions on the document 'Improving Education Outcomes – a strategic review' (ESC6) were sought. The review aimed to develop joint priorities which all stakeholders could support and work towards achieving.

In introducing the report, Mr Hilliard, Deputy Director Education emphasised the importance of the Improving Education Outcomes Strategic Review which would help develop a 3-year Strategic Plan for Education across the whole of Oxfordshire. The Plan would go out to consultation in September 2020 and would end on 28 February 2021. The document would clarify the local authorities' areas of responsibilities for children in all schools in Oxfordshire, including:

- Schools and universal services working together with local, targeted and specialist services which was key to improving outcomes;
- Shift the focus to prevention and early help through real partnerships and using resources effectively;
- Support the most vulnerable, including children with SEND, to make sure everyone had an equal opportunity to become everything they wanted to be – for too many of our children and young people outcomes were not yet good enough;
- Deliver responsive services that place children, young people and families at the heart of what we do.

The plan would be overseen by a Strategic Board and would include the Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted.

The Chairman, Councillor Michael Waine welcomed the document as a way of laying down the background from where we were to where we were going to in terms of where responsibilities. There was a need to ensure the document was very clear who was responsible for what. He welcomed the fact of the Regional School Commissioner being part of the Strategic Board.

The Committee made the following points during debate:

- Children & Young People were healthier in Oxfordshire but drugs and alcohol misuse was higher than other authorities.
- The Committee felt that the Funding & Skills Council should be included on the Board and that the position of the diocese and Anglican and Catholic MATs should be reflected.
- OTSA Job Boards should offer space on their boards to academies.
- Further work was needed on teacher training as was very deficient on some secondary school subjects.
- It was unclear how the bodies around the table would be the champions of that area of work. How were deprived and disadvantaged represented around the table?

The Committee thanked Mr Hilliard for the report.

4/20 THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGING ROLLS IN OXFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS (Agenda No. 7)

Members of Scrutiny Committee received an update on population trends affecting the provision of education services for children and young people in the county at its meeting on 4 September 2019. The Committee now had before it an action plan which set out aims and objectives of a strategy to meet changing demand and promote sustainability for schools (ESC7).

In introducing the report, Allyson Milward and Barbara Chillman set out the factors affecting demand for education provision in the medium term, potential effects of those factors and a framework for actions to ensure sustainability of Oxfordshire schools.

The Strategy set out plans to ensure there was sufficient places in mainstream schools for Oxfordshire's growing population; ensure sufficient provision for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, not only to meet population growth, but also related to changing policy, practice and incidence of specific needs; ensure sufficient Alternative Provision was provided and that there was support for Oxfordshire's schools to respond to changes in demand, both down as well as up.

The Plans objectives were to monitor demographic changes and housing growth in order to inform annual pupil forecasts; plan for new schools and expansions of existing schools; identify emerging spare building capacity which could be reallocated to other uses and to provide guidance to schools on maintaining their affordability/sustainability.

Mrs Milward report that the monitoring would be report back to a Schools Forum Stakeholder Group and that they were entering discussions with MATs to change their PAN in line with their areas. Officers were also linking closely with SEND and Alterative Provision colleagues to link up areas of work.

They were also running three 'Affordable Schools' workshops on how to run affordable schools, including small schools working together to look at structural ways of saving money.

The Committee made the following points during discussion:

The Committee congratulated officers on how well this area of work had performed. The Governor's Association welcomed the alternative use of accommodation, but wanted assurances that any alternative use of schools was ok with the school as it might not be reasonable to have Alterative Provision in the main body of the school and that the education side was looked at as well as accommodation.

The Committee questioned whether they had used spaces for SEND children or whether the Primary Schools just had vacant spaces? In response, Barbara Chillman reported that spaces had been used for SEND children, but that the pace needed to be approved in terms of safeguarding. In reality, there was not huge pockets of space currently, just one or two classrooms.

Diane Wilson on behalf of COTO welcomed any measures that would reduce surplus seats in schools to ensure the correct ratio of pupils to teachers.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their report and asked that any issues coming out of the Stakeholder Group be passed on to Scrutiny for consideration and that members be sent comparative school data from other authorities with statistical neighbours.

RESOLVED: to note the trends in requirements for pupil places and to note the action plan to be monitored by officers.

5/20 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION COMMISSIONING PROGRESS UPDATE (Agenda No. 8)

In September 2019, the Committee had received an initial report on plans to commission a range of Alternative Provision (AP) for Oxfordshire with effect from September 2021. The Committee had before them a report (ESC8) which set out a full programme of work which was underway for the tendering of longer-term commissioned alternative education places.

Deborah Bell, Head of Learner Engagement in introducing the report explained that the AP commissioning programme was on track with no slippage on timescales. A full and extensive engagement exercise had already taken place with a wide range of stakeholders. The main themes arising from this consultation was that AP needed to be local to where children were; secondary schools were keen to develop on-site provision; more support and advice was needed for primary schools in managing children who needed AP; that training was needed for parents around the behaviour

of their children and that AP needed to be affordable within already very stretched schools and local authority budgets.

She went on to set out the timetable as outlined on page 2 of the report and cautioned that the AP budget was funded by the High Needs DSG block which was facing considerable pressure and that future provision would need to be contained within the available budget by seeking value for money options.

The Committee noted that the cost of sending a child to Meadowbrook to the Authority was £200 per week and that provision needed to be based locally. They welcomed the idea of Alternative Provision being based in schools where appropriate in terms of safeguarding and pressure on school finances.

The Committee thanked Deborah Bell for the update and requested a further update in September.

6/20 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT WORKING GROUP REPORT (Agenda No. 9)

The Committee had before it a report (ESC9) which was the result of a deep dive by the Education Scrutiny Committee, as set out in its Forward Plan of work. The Committee formed a working group to take the deep dive forward, which met with key officers in the Education Service and visited four secondary schools to learn about good practice and innovation in teaching disadvantaged children.

This report set out why attainment (and progress), particularly of disadvantaged children, was chosen as a deep dive topic, what examples of good practice in education of disadvantaged pupils at secondary schools the working group learned about, and sets out the Working Group's conclusions for officers, Education Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet Member for Education and Cultural Services. The Education Service was beginning the development of a comprehensive 3-year Education Strategy for Oxfordshire. This report was therefore presenting the findings of the deep dive investigation, and the Working Group's conclusions in the interim, ahead of this important scheme of work.

Councillor John Howson in introducing the report, thanked members, officers and the schools who had taken part in the deep dive for their helpful advice and suggestions.

The Group had looked at good practice which was a key area for Oxfordshire and further consideration to how best practice could be disseminated and collaborated on needed further consideration. Oxfordshire had made significant improvement to absolute deprivation figures, but further work was needed on Progress 8.

The Committee held a detailed debate around pupil premium and the difficulties of parent/pupil take up. The Department for Work and Pensions held the information needed to allow schools to get the relevant funding and the Committee had previously written to the Government jointly with the Cabinet Member for Education & Culture imploring it to release the necessary information.

The Chairman suggested that a further briefing be drawn up for MPs to press the issue further.

Carole Thomson suggested that school admission forms could include a question on pupil premium.

RESOLVED: to agree the following conclusions from the report:

1. Education Scrutiny Committee should consider adding to its Forward Plan the following items:
 - annual monitoring reports of both the progress and attainment of disadvantaged children across primary and secondary phases;
 - a report on levels of disadvantage compared with those in existing Opportunity Areas, by Parliamentary constituency.
2. Education Scrutiny Committee should consider using its next visit from the Regional Schools Commissioner to ask how best practice can be actively disseminated and collaborated on by academies for the education of all children in Oxfordshire.
3. Education Scrutiny Committee should consider asking Property Officers to consider investigating how the county council might work with District Councils, Universities, Dioceses and businesses around supporting accommodation access for teachers in the county, including reviewing any county council assets that may be suitable for use as rented teacher accommodation.
4. The Educational Attainment Working Group asks the Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services to consider working with Communications on a campaign encouraging Pupil Premium registration.
5. Education Scrutiny Committee should consider asking officers to work with appropriate bodies to identify subjects and phases of education where insufficient teachers are being trained for Oxfordshire schools, being mindful of the forecast secondary school population growth.
6. Education Scrutiny Committee should ask officers to investigate with the teaching school and local universities the possibility for the formulation of a tailored package of professional development for Oxfordshire schools with the aim of closing the attainment gap in the county.

7/20 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 10)

The Committee considered the forward plan and **AGREED** that the Chairman and Vice Chairman, together with officers would manage the business on the current work programme for the efficient running of the Committee.

TO BE SCHEDULED (2020)					
Update	on	the	To present the impact / results	Deputy	Director

impact of work on reducing exclusions	of implementing the recommendations on exclusions from the committee working group. Summer 2020	Children's Services (Education) / Head of Learner Engagement (Deborah Bell)
Learner Engagement Strategy	To present to the committee the new OCC strategy for learner engagement. Summer 2020	Deputy Director Children's Services (Education) / Head of Learner Engagement (Deborah Bell)
Report on School Exclusions in Oxfordshire	A report on numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions. September 2020	Head of Learner Engagement (Deborah Bell)
Education Funding Agency	Q&A session with EFA around implications for Oxfordshire schools of changes to funding.	EFA representatives
Home to School Transport Policy	Discussion around forming a working group to input into the formulation of the policy for mainstream schools.	Cllr John Howson
Reintegration Timetabling Update	To receive a report about the number of reintegration timetables being used at schools across Oxfordshire as agreed at the September 2019 committee meeting. For September 2020	Head of Learner Engagement (Deborah Bell)
Draft Oxfordshire Special Educational Needs Strategy	An opportunity for Education Scrutiny Committee to hear about and comment on a draft of the developing Oxfordshire SEND Strategy.	Head of SEND (Jayne Howarth)
Children & Family Centres – Services Linked to Education	A report by the Committee following work to assess consistency of provision across Oxfordshire Children & Family Centres' services linked to education.	Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee (Cllr Michael Waine)

8/20 IN YEAR FAIR ACCESS POLICY UPDATE
(Agenda No. 11)

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

2 *Information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual*

It was considered that in this case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, in that such disclosure would infringe the rights of the individual to privacy contrary to the general law and the duty of the authority to respect human rights and to comply with that law.

The Committee received an update on the implementation and outcomes of the revised In Year Fair Access Policy (IYFAP) which had been requested by Education Scrutiny Committee. In Year Fair Access protocols with schools were required under the terms of the statutory School Admissions Code 2014. This was to afford a mechanism whereby children requiring a school place outside normal admissions rounds, where local places may not be available or when the child has additional vulnerabilities, can be offered a school place.

The protocol was designed to ensure a fair distribution of non-placed children across all schools. In Year Fair Access protocols must be designed in collaboration with representative school leaders and agreed by the majority. 100% agreement is not required for the IYFAP to be valid and lawful.

The Committee noted the update.

9/20 EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE AND ITS LOCALITIES' SCHOOLS

(Agenda No. 12)

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

2 Information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual

It was considered that in this case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, in that such disclosure would infringe the rights of the individual to privacy contrary to the general law and the duty of the authority to respect human rights and to comply with that law.

The Committee considered the Annual Education Performance Report at key stage 4 which gave a summary and overall analysis of key outcomes and progress measures.

10/20 OFSTED AND OXFORDSHIRE ACADAMIES

(Agenda No. 13)

The information contained in the verbal update was exempt in that it fell within the following prescribed category:

2 Information which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual

It was considered that in this case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, in that such disclosure would infringe the rights of the individual to privacy contrary to the general law and the duty of the authority to respect human rights and to comply with that law.

The Deputy Director of Education gave a verbal update outlining Paper recent discussions with Ofsted.

The Committee noted the report.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing