

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 16 April 2015 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.30 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 Pete Handley
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Richard Langridge
Councillor Sandy Lovatt
Councillor Gill Sanders
Mrs Sue Matthew
Councillor David Wilmshurst (In place of Councillor Steve Harrod)

By Invitation: Ian Jones; Carole Thomson

Officers:

Whole of meeting Sarah Jelley, Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's office)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

	Officer Attending
6	Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director Education & Learning and Judith Johnson (CEF Schools Partnership Project)
7	Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director Education & Learning; Lucy Wawrzyniak, School Intervention Leader
8	Roy Leach, School Organisation & Planning Manager
9	John Mitchell, Assistant to the Director for Children's Services
10	Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director Education & 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.

11/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor Harrod (Councillor Wilmshurst substituting).

12/15 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2015 were approved and signed subject to the following minor amendments:

Minute 7/15 – add the word ‘to’ to the last sentence of the final paragraph of the preamble to read: She noted that the Committee should not get this out of kilter as many schools were very close **to** the wire in terms of their budgets.

Minute 8/15 – add a space between the words Free and Universal in the heading.

During discussion of the minutes the following matters were discussed:

- 1) The Chairman had met with The Virtual School and was very impressed with their work (Minute 4/15)
- 2) With regard to revenue balances (Minute 7/15) the Chairman advised that meetings had been held with a number of schools and there would be a formal report back to a future meeting.
- 3) With regard to Minute 6/15 it was clarified that children on a child protection plan would not necessarily qualify for pupil premium.
- 4) Responding to a question on what was being done to look at the on-costs of universal free school meals (Minute 8/15) Rebecca Matthews explained what was included and indicated a possible issue was the sustainability of equipment. The Chairman queried if and how this information was being monitored. A member queried whether provision which is universal would be better provided at a County level and whether the Committee should be considering what could be done to inform Government of the situation. The Committee also queried the impact on schools and the pupil premium as parents may not be coming forward and Councillor Waine speaking as Vice Chairman of the School Organisation Stakeholder Group indicated that the Group would be taking up this issue along with the question of the sustainability of equipment.

13/15 CHANGES TO LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (LAASSI): INSPECTION FRAMEWORK & IMPLICATIONS FOR SCRUTINY

(Agenda No. 6)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Director, Education & Learning and Judith Johnson attended to present the report (ESC6) that outlined the new statutory Ofsted Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement functions - as set out in the November 2014 Ofsted Framework and Guidance Handbook.

The report set out the focus areas for inspection, the national context, the risk assessment for the local authority and the steps taken to date to prepare for an inspection under this framework.

The report posed some queries for future Scrutiny Committee consideration related to their forward planning to ensure appropriate scrutiny of school improvement and school quality assurance functions.

During questions the Committee was advised that that the Council did not think it was at high risk of inspection currently but that the situation could change as the inspection regime was regionally based. Responding to a question on LAASSI Forum Rebecca Matthews stated that Councillor Tilley was a representative but that a representative of this Committee would be welcome.

The Chairman commented that the Regional School Inspector was invited to the June meeting and it was important to make the most of this opportunity by undertaking some planning for that meeting.

Members highlighted the important role played by Governors and there was the importance of having trained and experienced governors.

There was detailed discussion of the reporting areas and themes and it was suggested that it would be helpful to see information diagrammatically, e.g in spider diagrams, so that the Committee could gain an understanding of the emerging trends.

A Member asked for definitions of what educational responsibility and school quality oversight functions meant (paragraph 3) and it was agreed that this would be provided.

Having considered how their forward work plan enables them to ensure appropriate Scrutiny coverage of the nine inspection themes the Committee noted the report and AGREED that the self-evaluation exercise be shared with Committee members when completed.

14/15 CHILDREN ON THE EDGE OF CARE & EXCLUSIONS

(Agenda No. 7)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director, Education & Learning and Lucy Wawrzyniak, School Intervention Leader presented a report (ESC7) to update Education Scrutiny Committee about children on the edge of care and exclusions.

Lucy Wawrzyniak summarised the information contained in the briefing. During discussion a member highlighted the retention of staff and the impact high turnover has on children in the school. It was noted that some schools have social workers and other support staff and it was AGREED that at a future meeting the Committee hear from schools about what they are doing, the funding and the impact on children. It was also suggested that it would be helpful to hear from schools who had struggled with this issue.

Responding to a query on paragraph 8 Rebecca Matthews undertook to find out if the position was similar for other Authorities.

15/15 BRIEFING ON OVERVIEW OF SYSTEM DIVERSITY & DRAFT PROTOCOL ON RELATIONSHIP WITH ACADEMIES

(Agenda No. 8)

Roy Leach, School Organisation & Planning Manager presented a briefing (ESC8) giving an overview of system diversity and on the draft protocol on relationships with Academies.

The Education Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.

16/15 BREAKFAST CLUBS

(Agenda No. 9)

John Mitchell, Assistant to the Director presented a report (ESC9) in response to the following Motion from Councillor Gill Sanders and agreed at Council:

“This Council asks the Education Scrutiny Committee to consider asking those schools which currently do not, to provide school breakfast clubs for their pupils. In particular, it is asked to consider the impact this would have on raising attainment, improving absence rates and lateness and to investigate how sponsorship, alongside the Pupil Premium, might fund the breakfasts. This information should then be provided to all schools in the County.”

Members welcomed the report and asked that so far as practicable the Council continue to promote the use of Breakfast Clubs. Information was available on the numbers and locations of Breakfast Clubs.

The Committee AGREED to:

- (a) Ask officers to draw this report to the attention of headteachers, chairmen of governors, governing bodies and relevant persons and management committees of Academy schools, with a suggestion that active consideration be given to the introduction of breakfast clubs in schools and academies which do not already have them. The suggestion to include a recommendation that this might extend to discussion with colleagues in schools or academies which do have breakfast clubs; and
- (b) Ask officers to explore what charitable or other sources of funding might be available to support breakfast clubs in Oxfordshire and to alert schools and academies to those opportunities.

17/15 STRATEGIC SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP MODEL UPDATE

(Agenda No. 10)

Rebecca Matthews, Interim Deputy Director Education & Learning provided an update on the strategic schools partnership model.

18/15 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL

(Agenda No. 11)

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The Committee considered the Scrutiny Annual Report prior to its submission to Council in May 2015.

Members commented that it was a good report covering the work of the Committee. It was suggested that if possible reference be made to promote Breakfast Clubs, although it was recognised that this was a report looking back at the year.

19/15 FORWARD PLAN AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

(Agenda No. 12)

Members identified a number of issues for inclusion on the forward plan: the consequences of the raised leaving age to 18 including the on-going additional costs to schools; how can the Committee effectively scrutinise Academies.

In addition to the discussion with the Regional School Commissioner in July the following were identified as priority items for that and future meetings: FSM and non FSM attainment at different key stages; LAASSI and the challenge of recruiting/retaining teachers.

The Chairman advised that in September the process to recruit a new co-opted member would begin and members were asked to encourage governors to consider the role.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2015