

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2000, IN THE IRELAND ROOM, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr M C Appleyard, in the Chair

Mr B G Allen, Mrs M A M Aston, Mrs A R Bainbridge, Ms M A Baldwin, Ms J Bramwell, Mr M E Brand, Mrs M P Clayton, Mrs P M A Dewar, Mr D C T Graves, Mr D A B Green, Mrs K Harper, Mrs S J Lee, Mr J A Loarridge OBE, Mrs C C Martens, Mr P Niekirk, Mr J H McB Page, Mr D Palmer, Mr A J Plumridge, Mr C E Roberts, Mrs F D Roberts, MBE JP, Mr C F Robinson OBE, Mr D J Rowlands, Mr D A C Shakespeare, Mr F V J Sweatman, Mrs C S Willetts and Mr R K Woollard

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr K F Morgan JP, Dr B R Stenner and Mr M W Taylor. The Head of Administration reported the following changes in membership:

Temporary Member

Mrs M P Clayton
Mr C Graeff
Mr D A B Green
Mr D J Rowlands

Replacing

Mr P A Cochrane
Mrs B H Jennings
Mr M J Greenburgh
Mrs E M Lay

1 PETITION/LETTER

A letter was presented to the Members of the Education Committee from the Buckinghamshire Primary Assembly calling upon the County Council to address the continued under-funding of primary schools relative to the Standard Spending Assessment.

2 LAST MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

As this was the final meeting of the Education Committee, a presentation was made by Julian Hunt from the Local Studies and Records Office on the history of the Education Committee. The Director of Education thanked Members for all their work on behalf of the Education Service and in particular the three Chairmen of the Education Committee with whom he had worked: Mr Appleyard, Mr Lawrence and Mr Barnes. The Chairman of the Education Committee then thanked all Members of the Committee for their contribution to the Committee and in particular the Vice-Chairman, Mrs Dewar. He also thanked the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committees and Panels, the

Members of the Opposition Groups, Officers who provided advice to the Committee, the Education Department and Members of the Press. The Vice-Chairman thanked the Chairman, on behalf of Members of the Committee, for his contribution to the work of the Education Committee.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Mrs M A Baldwin declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6A and also an interest in Item 9 in relation to the SEN Policy and Strategy as she had a child who was attending a special school. Mr D C T Graves declared an interest in Item 4 as Governor of Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 July 2000, were confirmed.

5 REPORT OF THE SCHOOLS SUB-COMMITTEE

The report of the Schools Sub-Committee was received and noted.

In relation to Item 6, the “Parents as First Teachers” programme in Buckinghamshire, the Director of Education assured members that every effort would be made to provide accommodation for this project at the new combined Meadowcroft Schools in Aylesbury; within the capital moneys available.

6 TECHNICAL ADDITIONS TO CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Laboratory Refurbishment at a Number of Secondary Schools

The Schools Sub-Committee on 19 September 2000 had considered a report on the technical addition to the Education Capital Programme 2000/2001 of a contribution of £279,340 to fund laboratory refurbishment at a number of secondary schools.

RESOLVED

- 1 That a technical addition to the Education Capital Programme 2000/2001 of £279,340 to fund laboratory refurbishments at a number of secondary schools be approved;**
- 2 That the Director of Education in liaison with the School Organisation Panel make the allocations of funding for the proposals to be included in this initiative.**

Learning Support Units at a Number of Secondary Schools

The Schools’ Sub-Committee on 19 September 2000 had considered a report on the technical addition to the Education Capital Programme 2000/2001 of a contribution of £81,629 capital (and £30,611 revenue) for Secondary School Learning Support Units (SSLSUs) at a number of secondary schools.

RESOLVED

- 1 That a technical addition to the Education Capital Programme 2000/2001 of £81,629 capital (and £30,611 revenue) for Secondary School Learning Support Units (SSLSUs) at a number of secondary schools be approved;**
- 2 That the Director of Education in liaison with the School Organisation Panel make the final decision about the deployment of the funding for this initiative.**

7 REPORT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PANEL

The report of the Special Educational Needs Panel on 4 October 2000 was tabled at the Education Committee as there were no further meetings of the Schools Sub-Committee. The report was received.

In relation to the Item on Pupil Referral Units, Members expressed concern at the temporary closure of the Aylesbury Vale Primary Support Unit and asked that it be reopened as soon as possible. The Director of Education reassured Members that the role of Pupil Referral Units was extremely important and that this service would continue to be provided. The Primary Support Unit in Aylesbury Vale had been temporarily closed owing to a further deterioration in the staffing situation but it was the intention of the Department to reopen the Unit in January 2001 when it was hoped that the staffing issues would be resolved. In the meantime those pupils who required this service were receiving this on an outreach basis within their schools.

8 NURSERY SCHOOL FUNDING

The Special Educational Needs Panel on 4 October 2000 had considered a report which set out a new Model for funding provision for three year olds within the maintained sector, including in particular, those three year olds who had SEN or other priority needs. In answer to a question, the Director of Education reported that transitional arrangements would be put in place to ensure that no nurseries were adversely affected by this change in funding.

RESOLVED

That the proposal for a new Model for funding provision for three year olds within the maintained sector should go to formal consultation.

9 SEN DRAFT CODE OF PRACTICE

The Special Educational Needs Panel on 4 October had considered a report on the proposed changes in the Draft Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs. A Member commented on the success of the Parent Partnership Conference and it was agreed that it would be useful to invite all Members to any future such Conference to benefit partnership working.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Education prepare a response to the Draft Code of Practice to the DfEE in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel.

10 REPORT OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The report of the Lifelong Learning Sub-Committee was received and noted.

11 REPORT OF THE POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE PANEL

The report of the Policy, Performance and Finance Panel meetings held on 18 July 2000 and 29 September 2000, including the confidential report, were received and noted.

12 SCHOOLS' FINANCIAL PLANS 2000/01

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 18 July 2000 had considered a report on the submission of schools' financial plans for the current year 2000/01.

RESOLVED

That the action of the Director of Education in agreeing a deficit budget in 2000/01 for Cressex Community School be noted.

13 NURSERY SCHOOL FUNDING

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 18 July 2000 had considered a report on the outcome of the deliberations of the Working Group of Members and Officers tasked by the Panel to consider the financial difficulties facing maintained nursery provision, especially as it affected nursery schools.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Education be requested to identify funds in order to vire, on the advice of the Head of Resources, and on a one off basis, sufficient funds into individual Nursery School budgets to ensure that each Nursery School is able to set a balance budget for 2000/01.

14 PROPOSED EXTENSION TO CHESHAM LIBRARY TO HOUSE CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAU

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 18 July 2000 had considered a report on the housing of the Chesham Citizens' Advice Bureau within an extension to Chesham Library.

RESOLVED

That negotiations should continue.

15 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING: ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 18 July 2000 had considered a report on the arrangements for Corporate Performance Monitoring for 2000/01 including a suggested list of “significant” targets to be included in the monitoring reports.

RESOLVED

That the suggested list of the most significant targets, which would be monitored by the Policy, Performance and Finance Panel (and its successor body) be endorsed as set out in Appendix A to the report including the additional comments made by Members.

16 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 18 July 2000 had considered a report on the outcome of further discussions with the Diocese and representatives of Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School, Chesham Bois, with a view to reaching an agreement on the transport area for the school which could be implemented by September this year.

A Church representative expressed concern that a new proposal had been tabled at the Policy, Performance and Finance Panel without further consultation with the Diocese and representatives of the Catholic School and, in his view, “contrary to the wishes of the Education Committee as expressed on 5 July 2000. In consequence he felt the new proposal was invalid and, further, denied the legitimate expectations of the other parties to the negotiations.” In response to this, Members were reassured that the process had been undertaken correctly and expressed the view that the new proposal had to be made to control the escalating costs of home to school transport. A vote was then taken on the proposal and agreed by 19 votes to 2. Mr Graves, Mrs Martins, Mr Robinson and Mr Woollard abstained from voting.

RESOLVED

That the free home to school transport area for Our Lady’s Catholic School for qualifying children should comprise the RC Parishes of Amersham and Chesham with effect from September 2000.

17 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2000/01

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 29 September 2000 had considered a report on the early projection of outturn variances against budget for the Education Committee’s delegated and non-delegated controllable budgets.

RESOLVED

That the following permanent virements be approved:-

**From Learning Support Service (Specialist Teachers)
To Education Psychologist Service** £31,000
(For 2000/01 the virement will be part year affect only)

**From Green Park
To Youth and Community** £28,000

18 HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT DATABASE

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 29 September 2000 had considered a report on the necessity to replace the existing database management system for administering education transport services.

RESOLVED

That the funding of the replacement education transport database from the home to school transport budget be agreed and that this matter be referred to the ICT Working Group.

19 SCHOOLS' FINANCIAL PLANS 2000/01

The Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 29 September 2000 had considered a report on the submission of schools' financial plans for the current year 2000/01. The Committee discussed casual lettings and a number of members expressed concern that a number of schools, through their governing bodies, were charging high rates for lettings, particularly for nursery classes and community use. However, another member felt that commercial rates should be encouraged to cover the cost of staff and resources.

RESOLVED

That the action of the Director of Education in agreeing a deficit budget for Quarrendon School of £124,891 (7.7%) in the current financial year be approved.

20 LEARNING AND SKILLS ACT 2000

The Director of Education submitted a report on changes to legislation in relation to the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The Act would give for the first time ever statutory entitlement to learning for all 16 to 19 year olds and also for the first time a statutory duty and public body to promote participation in learning. In relation to the local progress to meet the requirements in the Act, Members were informed that the Connexions Partnership Bid from the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire area had been successful in obtaining £100,000 development funding.

A number of Members were concerned about the level of funding available and about a potential threat to sixth forms. The Director of Education reassured members that the new Learning and Skills Council would simply act as a conduit for post-16 funding up to 2003.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

21 THE OFSTED/AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEA: REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Education informed Members that OFSTED revisited the LEA in June 2000 and a report of that visit was published on 21 September 2000. The Director of Education submitted a report on the main outcomes of the OFSTED re-inspection of the LEA and sought approval to a revised draft of the LEA Improvement Plan.

A Member expressed concern that the Government had set the same standard of achievement for upper schools as comprehensive schools. It was noted that the Director of Education had written to the DfEE stating that these standards were not appropriate for upper schools.

RESOLVED

1 That the findings of the report be noted.

2 That the revised Improvement Plan for submission to the DfEE be approved.

22 SEN POLICY AND STRATEGY FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The Director of Education submitted a report on the results of the consultation on the new policy and strategy indicating the work that had been undertaken as a result of feedback from consultation.

During discussion Members made the following comments:-

- The growth in SEN costs was becoming unsustainable;
- SEN was an area at which members would look very carefully before deciding which portfolio should ultimately be responsible for it;

RESOLVED

1 That the results of the consultation on the SEN policy and strategy be noted;

2 That the work programme outlined in paragraph 15 be noted;

3 That there should be a consultation with schools, as part of the wider consultation; on how and when formula funding of some SEN budgets could be introduced; and that the consultation papers be finalised by the Director of Education in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee and the Local Management Scheme Working Group.

23 FURTHER DELEGATION TO SCHOOLS

The Director of Education submitted a report on the implications of the Secretary of State's target for increasing the level of delegation to schools. Members were asked to approve consultation with schools on possible delegation options in response to this target.

The following proposal was put by Mr Brand and seconded by Mrs Willetts:-

- "1 This Committee notes the Director of Education's letter of 3 July 2000 to the Headteachers in which he:
- a acknowledges that "the Individual School Budget per pupil in Buckinghamshire is £2143 per pupil as compared with the County average of £2261 per pupil", a difference of £118;
 - b acknowledges that on the Buckinghamshire needs led schools' funding model the "gap" is about £10m (in the context of the 2000-2001 budget).

The Committee regrets the proposed effect this funding shortfall has on schools' finances.

- 2 The Committee confirms its support for and agreement with the County Council policy to delegate at least 85% of the Local School Budget in 2001-2002.

It recognises as stated in the officers' report (paragraph 15) that based on the 2000-2001 budget an addition of £9m would need to be delegated to schools to achieve this target.

- 3 Furthermore, the Committee acknowledges the report to the Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 29 September which noted that:
- a The new SSA model on a fully passported basis would imply that £1.5m may be available as real terms growth over and above inflation;
 - b That the Council's policy of 2% efficiency savings will yield a further £800,000 in the year 2001-2002.

The Education Committee therefore instructs the officers to consult schools on options for a package of delegated funding which will deliver

- 1 a minimum of £9m additional delegated funding to the ISB, at 2000-2001 levels, (i.e uplifted for inflation);
- 2 an additional minimum figure of £2.3m (being £1.5m new passported SSA plus £800,000 efficiency savings).

An amendment was then proposed by Mr D A C Shakespeare and seconded as follows:-

The Education Committee therefore instructs the officers to consult schools on options for a package of delegated funding which would deliver:

- 1 The minimum level of additional funding to schools necessary to achieve a delegation level of at least 85% in 2001-2002 and
- 2 The maximum additional funding for schools, in 2001-2002, assuming full passporting of the Education Standing Spending Assessment and also bearing in mind other spending pressures for the Committee.

Following discussion it was agreed that the proposal should be changed to take account of the amendment made. This was put to the vote and agreed by 21 votes in favour and 0 against.

RESOLVED

- “1 This Committee notes the Director of Education’s letter of 3 July 2000 to the Headteachers in which he:**
- a acknowledges that “the Individual School Budget per pupil in Buckinghamshire is £2143 per pupil as compared with the County average of £2261 per pupil”, a difference of £118;**
 - b acknowledges that on the Buckinghamshire needs led schools’ funding model the “gap” is about £10m (in the context of the 2000-2001 budget).**

The Committee regrets the proposed effect this funding shortfall has on schools’ finances.

- 2 The Education Committee instructs the officers to consult schools on options for a package of delegated funding which will deliver the minimum level of additional funding to schools necessary to achieve a delegation level of at least 85% in 2001/2002;**
- 3 Furthermore, the Committee acknowledges the report to the Policy, Performance and Finance Panel on 29 September which noted that the Council’s policy of 2% efficiency savings will yield a further £800,000 in the year 2001-2002.**
- 4 The Education Committee instructs the officers to consult schools on options for a package of delegated funding which will deliver the maximum additional funding for schools in 2001/2002, assuming full passporting of the Education Standard Spending Assessment and also bearing in mind other spending pressures for the Committee**

24 THE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN IN ACTION: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Director of Education submitted a report on the plans for reviewing the implementation of the Education Development Plan and on some examples of early developments that were taking place through that Plan. A Member expressed concern about the shortage of candidates for headteachers and the Director of Education reported that the Department was looking at a number of initiatives to attract headteachers into the County.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

25 THE LEA-SCHOOL RELATIONS CODE OF PRACTICE

The Director of Education submitted a report on a consultation on the revised Code of Practice on LEA-School Relations.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26 INTERIM REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE WYCOMBE COMMISSION

A report was tabled on the progress of the work of the Wycombe Commission. The Director of Education reported that the Commission had set out to consult widely in order to find out as full a range of views as it could of both the present circumstances of the area and the people's views of what they would like to see in the future. Members of the Commission were now considering the evidence gathered individually, before coming together to produce a draft report and recommendations during November. These would then be finalised and ready to present to the County Council in January 2001.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

27 THE REVISED AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) submitted a report on the recommended Revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education from SACRE.

RESOLVED

That the Revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for maintained schools in Buckinghamshire be adopted.

28 CONSORTIUM FOR EDUCATION BUSINESS LINKS

The Director of Education submitted a report on the details of the Consortium proposals for the delivery of Education Business Link activities across the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire area.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

29 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

The Director of Education submitted a report regarding a summer programme run by the Buckinghamshire Young People's University and the proposed autumn courses. Members were informed that a presentation would be given on the work of the Buckinghamshire Young People's University on the evening of Tuesday 24 October. Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

30 INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES REVIEW

The Director of Education submitted a report on "Educating for International Citizenship Programme" and associated strategic European/International activities with schools in the County.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

**M C APPLEYARD
CHAIRMAN**

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