

## **SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2000 IN IRELAND ROOM, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.00 PM

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **Schools' Group:**

Mrs C Hinds, Mr J Howe, Mrs P McNeish, Mr A Owen, Mrs J Wainwright and Mr G Woodruff OBE

#### **Buckinghamshire County Council Elected Members:**

Mr B G Allen, Mrs M A M Aston, Mr M E Brand, Mrs E M Lay, Mr J H McBPage

#### **Oxford Diocesan Board of Education:**

Ms G Allison  
Mr J A Loarridge, OBE (in the Chair)  
Mr D Sullivan

#### **Northamptonshire RC Schools' Commission:**

Mr B O'Byrne  
Mr P Niekirk

#### **Officers Present**

Mr D Ayres – Head of School Organisation  
Mr G Batchelor – Head of Select Committee Support  
Mr P Holmes – Education Officer (Capital Programme)  
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor (Education)  
Mrs C Gray – Committee Administrator

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies were received from Mr M C Appleyard, Mrs C C Martens, Mrs J Bray, Mrs M Bull and Mr J Douglas. Mr J H McB Page temporarily replaced Mrs P M A Dewar for this meeting. The Chairman welcomed Mr Batchelor and Mr Popat to the meeting.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 September 2000 were agreed.

In relation to Minute 1, the Head of School Organisation reported that he was unable to provide the financial information requested by Members for last years budget but that arrangements had been made for this years budget to ensure that the figures were broken down into categories.

In relation to Minute 3 regarding the School Organisation Plan it was noted that an Action Plan had been drawn up and looked at by the School Organisation Panel which included some dates and outcomes.

In relation to Minute 4 (Future arrangements for primary education in the Southcourt and Walton Court areas of Aylesbury) the Head of School Organisation reported that since the last meeting he had written to the Governing Bodies of Oak Green and Ashmead Combined School in relation to the catchment areas being adjusted according to the relative sizes of the two schools. Comments had been requested by 1 December 2000, a report therefore would be made to the next meeting of the Committee.

### **4 MODERNISING THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Head of Select Committee Support gave a presentation on the modernisation of the County Council. During the presentation the following points were noted:-

- The County Council was meeting on 23 November 2000 to agree the new political structure. The structure being put forward was the Cabinet/Leader Model.
- There would be five Select Committees; Corporate Performance, Lifelong Learning, Partnership, The Buckinghamshire Environment and Personal Care.
- A thorough consultation was carried out on which model the residents of Buckinghamshire preferred, including interested organisations and groups. The majority favoured the Cabinet/Leader Model.
- Several interim appointments have been made to support the new structure:-
  - Chief Officer of the Council
  - Head of Cabinet Support
  - Head of Select Committee Support
  - The appointment of General Managers was still to be decided.
- The first Cabinet meeting was 4 December where they would consider their Forward Plan and the second one on 18 December would consider Service Plans and Medium Term Plans.
- Copies of the Policy and Resources report were available which outlined the outcomes expected of the new structure.

During discussion the following points were made:

- One of the Select Committees relating to this Committee was Lifelong Learning. This would have co-opted members which would probably include 2 Church Representatives and 3 Parent Governors.
- The Cabinet and Select Committees would meet in public with a published agenda. The Cabinet would produce a four month forward plan to ensure transparency about what decisions they would be taking. These decisions may be looked at by the relevant Select Committee before they were implemented and their views would be put forward to the Cabinet, however, the decision still may be implemented without any changes. The County Council would be the final arbiter.
- Policy Advisory Groups would be set up to support the Cabinet Member in developing policy and would probably consist of 5/6 members on a cross party basis.
- One of the roles of the Select Committee was to scrutinise decisions. The Select Committee could ensure that community views were obtained to help influence the decision taken by Cabinet. There were a different number of Select Committees to ensure that the Committee did not shadow the same portfolio as the Cabinet. It was hoped that Select Committees would undertake joint work and that there would not be big boundaries between them.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **5 MONKS RISBOROUGH CE COMBINED SCHOOL – APPLICATION FOR CHANGE IN STANDARD NUMBERS**

The Head of School Organisation presented a report on discussions between the LEA and Diocese with the Princes Risborough and District Liaison Group concerning the proposal to change the Standard Number at Monks Risborough CE Combined School with effect from September 2001.

At the last meeting concern was raised about the potential effect this change would have on the intake of neighbouring schools and on the arrangements for transfer into the school from its feeder school at 7+; Great Kimble CE Infant School. A meeting was held of the Princes Risborough and District Liaison Group on 10 October 2000, which included the headteachers of local schools. The Group concluded that an acceptable and workable modification of the proposal would be to increase the Standard Number for Monks Risborough CE Combined School at 5+ from 23 to 28 as originally proposed in the Statutory Notice but to keep the Standard Number at 7+ at 10 rather than reduce it to 5 as originally proposed in the Statutory Notice.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the proposal with the modification that the Standard Numbers be changed from 23 (5+) and 10 (7+) to 28 (5+) and 10 (7+) with effect from September 2001 be approved.**

### **6 GUIDANCE ON STANDARD NUMBER CHANGES**

The Head of School Organisation presented a report with further guidance on procedures and criteria relating to standard number changes. The Committee noted that standard numbers were designed to maximise parental preference and should reflect the capacity of the school to accommodate pupils.

In answer to a question, the Head of School Organisation reported that there were two ways to calculate school capacity through the MOE (More Open Enrolment) formula and the Standard Number capacity. One of the assessments was based on the school building (MOE) and the other one was based on the number of pupils. The Head of School Organisation reported that it was important for these two formulas to coincide as far as possible. The LEA was obliged by the DfEE to apply these formulas.

During discussion a member expressed concern regarding how the number of places in Special Schools were allocated in view of the reduction in capacity for Special Schools. The Head of School Organisation informed Members that there usually was a fluctuation in demand for places and the numbers were determined by the LEA, Heads and Governors.

A number of members also expressed concern regarding the pressure on places relating to the decisions made by Appeal Panels for mainstream schools.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **7 GUIDANCE ON CLOSURE/AMALGAMATION OF SCHOOL**

The Head of School Organisation presented a report on guidance on the closure and/or amalgamation of schools. This was requested by Members at the last meeting. Members noted the checklist for review of school provision in relation to amalgamations, closure and significant change in size or character of the school. Members also noted the specification of considerations required prior to possible school amalgamations.

During discussion a member suggested that the guidance should refer to partnership with the Oxford Diocese Board of Education. A member referred to the anxiety felt by staff because of the review of school provision. The Head of School Organisation reported that there were three Area Standing Review Groups which looked at proposals for the future and provided the trigger for any review and that he would visit schools to talk to staff about any changes in organisation.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **8 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FORMAT/PRESENTATION/CONTENT OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**

The Head of School Organisation presented a report on the current format of the School Organisation Plan to consider any changes in format for next year and in the future. Examples of other authorities School Organisation Plans had been previously circulated to the Committee for their information from Bedfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council.

During discussion the following points were made on the current format:-

- It would be helpful to contain a little sketch of each school in the area to show:-
  - how many other schools were in the area
  - how far apart each school was
  - what connections there were to other schools. (Oxfordshire)
- It would be helpful to link more explicitly the School Organisation Plan and the LEA Development Plan or to provide a summary of the Development Plan.
- It would be helpful to provide the Plan in future in a looseleaf format.
- The Plan should be succinct and provide key assumptions. There was considerable support for the Bedfordshire Plan, in particular for its clarity.
- The Plan should include a summary of areas in which there would be a need to add or to remove school places (Bedfordshire)
- The Plan should be split into two parts – the second part should hold more detailed information and statistics.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the following changes as suggested above should be taken into account in the drafting of next year's plan.**

### **9 REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CONSTITUTION OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE (UPDATE OF PROCEDURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS)**

The Head of School Organisation presented a report on procedural and organisational matters facing School Organisation Committees to consider how any difficulties could be dealt with in the future. The constitution and the terms of reference of the School Organisation Committee was tabled, including a protocol from Northamptonshire School

Organisation Committee on addressing meetings.

During general discussion the following points were noted and agreed:-

- That a representative from the Legal Department should be present at all meetings and provide independent advice to the Chairman, and should be the nominated Secretary to the Committee;
- Reference should be made to the quorum in the current constitution and which members must be present. The quorum should be 3 colleges out of 4 for matters relating to under 16 education and 4 colleges out of 5 for over 16 education;
- The terms of reference and constitution should be updated to take into account the new structure of the Council and the fact that the representative from the FEFC would now be from the Learning and Skills Council.

The Committee then discussed at length whether representatives should be allowed to put forward their views at Committee meetings. The Committee agreed that representatives should be allowed to speak and there was some debate about whether these representatives should be named. It was finally agreed that the protocol from Northamptonshire should be followed where anyone could speak. It was agreed that where a number of people wish to speak on the same subject to express similar views, the Chairman had the right to require those views to be put by one spokesperson. Members agreed that the request to speak should be made at least 7 days before the meeting was due to start. Representatives who may wish to speak should know their rights at the start of the process.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1 That the constitution and terms of reference be updated to take into account the points made above and be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for approval;**
- 2 That a representative from the Legal Department be the nominated Secretary for this Committee;**
- 3 That the protocol used by Northamptonshire on addressing meetings of the Committee be adopted with the following amendments and be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for approval:-**
  - i) The request should be made at least 7 days before the meeting is due to start.**
  - ii) If a large number of people wish to speak at a meeting, for practical reasons, the Chairman has the right to reduce the time limited from the maximum to three minutes.**
  - iii) Where a number of people wish to speak on the same subject to express similar views, the Chairman has the right to require those views to be put by**

**one spokesperson.**

**10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Correspondence to the Committee**

Members referred to the letter that had been written to them in connection with future arrangements for primary education in the Southcourt and Walton Court areas of Aylesbury. It was agreed that if any correspondence was addressed to members that a letter should be sent out and signed by the Chairman on their behalf and that a separate letterhead should be designed for the Committee.

**11 DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Tuesday 27 February 2001 at 2.30 pm (pre-meetings to be held at 2pm).

**MR J LOARRIDGE OBE  
CHAIRMAN**

**CONTACT OFFICER : CLARE GRAY (01296) 382101**