



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

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AGENDA ITEM: **4**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2001 IN THE IRELAND ROOM, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.05 PM**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

#### **Schools Group**

Mrs C Hinds, Mrs P Mc Neish and Mrs J Wainwright

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

Mrs M A M Aston, Mrs M P Clayton and Mrs E M Lay

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

Mr D Sullivan and Mr J A Loarridge, OBE (in the Chair)

#### **Northampton RC Schools Commission**

Mr B O'Byrne

#### **Officers Present**

Mr D Ayres – Head of School Organisation  
Mr D Bradley – Committee Administrator  
Mr P Holmes – Education Officer (Capital Programme)  
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor Education  
Mr P Scott – Head of Pupils, Students and Families

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

Apologies were received from Mr B Allen, Mr M C Appleyard, Mrs J Bray, Mrs M Bull, Mrs E Cracknell, Mrs C M Martens, Mr P Niekirk and Mr G Woodruff. One permanent change in membership was reported in that Mrs M P Clayton would be replacing Mr M C Appleyard for this and future meetings of the Committee.

A representative of the Schools Group asked that the Committee note that Mr G Woodruff was not attending, as he had not received an agenda and papers for the meeting. This was due to a misunderstanding over the date of Mr Woodruff's retirement from the Committee. The representative asked members to note that Mr Woodruff's term of office did not end until 20 July 2001.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mrs C Hinds declared a general personal interest in that she is a Governor of Hughenden School.

### **1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 April 2001, copies of which had been circulated, were confirmed.

With regard to Item 2 of the minutes, which related to SEN provision in Buckinghamshire, the Committee received an oral update by the Head of Pupils, Students and Families. In relation to members' requests for research evidence used by HMI to determine their support for "wide spectrum" schools, the Officer reported that the DES had been asked to provide details of schools deemed to operate "good practice". Members further noted that the Cabinet Members for Schools and for Children and Young People would be invited to visit such schools once details had been received. With regard to the impact of a reduction in the number of statements issued, the Officer reported that whilst there had been a reduction in the number of new statements issued in the last four years, there had been no overall change in the numbers of statements dealt with as children moved through their education. The Officer further reported that whilst there had been a reduction in MLD statements, there had been an increase in SpLD statements. Members welcomed the Officer's offer to present them with a more detailed explanation of such data at a future meeting.

In relation to members' questions over the capital budget funding for SEN departments, the Officer explained that modelling had now taken place to identify all departments that would be needed in junior and secondary schools, however, he informed the Committee that the impact of delegating MLD/SpLD funding was not yet fully known. Members noted that it would be for each school individually to determine how best to provide such support. With regard to the concerns raised by members over the possible closure of some special schools as a result of the new SEN Policy, the Officer assured the Committee that there were no plans to close such schools. Rather, the emphasis would be upon creating more flexible support units across the board. The Officer explained that a consequence of this would be a fall in the number of MLD/SpLD teachers required, though not in the number of teachers required in total. The Committee noted these comments.

One member took the opportunity to ask the Officer of the potential impact of the Government's new targets for exclusions on PRUs. In response, the Officer explained that at present it was difficult to assess this in that the Government had yet to finalise its position. However, the Committee noted that in anticipation of proposals in this area, the PRUs were looking at alternative ways of dealing with pupils under their responsibility, especially those at Key Stage 4. Issues of funding and how local authorities could best meet any additional demands placed on PRUs were also under consideration.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his time and comments, and welcomed the offer of a more detailed presentation on SEN provision at the Committee's next meeting.

With regard to Item 3 of the minutes and the proposals to change the standard numbers at Great Kingshill CE Combined School, officers reported that a further meeting had taken place with the School in late May 2001, as had been requested at the Committee's last meeting. Following this meeting it had been agreed with the School that the standard number at 4+ should be increased from 33 to 44 and reduced at 7+ from 30 to 24. The Committee noted that the Chairman of Governors at Great Kingshill and Hughenden Schools were both happy with the revised figures. It was therefore noted that under previously delegated authority, the Chairman of the Committee had approved the changes in the standard numbers at Great Kingshill CE Combined School to 44 at 4+ and 24 at 7+.

With regard to Item 8 of the minutes and the matter of appointments to the Schools Group, officers apologised for the delay in beginning the appointment process and informed the Committee that this would now commence at the start of the next term in September 2001. In response, a representative of the Schools Group expressed concern over this delay, commenting on the partial disenfranchisement of the Schools Group.

## **2 SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2001 - 2006**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Education, which provided members with the opportunity to discuss the Plan prior to the close of the formal consultation period on 25 July 2001. A copy of the draft Plan had been previously circulated to members.

Officers reported that a number of responses had already been received relating to the draft Plan and that these comments would be fed into the finalised version. Officers also commented on the fact that this Plan was intended to be a more user-friendly document in terms of its length and informed members that a full copy, including appendices, was also available to the public through the Council's website. Particular thanks were expressed to Len Brazier for his work in expanding the Plan's section on SEN provision.

In discussion of the draft Plan, members welcomed the more manageable size of the document and the clarity of its content. A representative of one of the Diocesan Boards also welcomed the inclusion in the report of the fact that Diocesan representatives would be involved in the advice and consultation processes of Asset Management Planning within the Plan's Processes and Structures. One member of the Schools Group inquired as to the potential for including more detailed targets on an area-by-area basis in future Plans. In response, officers explained that such proposals were under consideration following an examination of Bedfordshire County Council's School Organisation Plan, which included such localised details.

The report was noted.

## **3 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Education, which outlined the possible implications for school organisation as a result of the establishment of the Local Learning and Skills Council. Prior to the meeting, copies of a paper setting out the names of those individuals appointed to the Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) South East had been circulated to members.

In their discussion of the report, members expressed concern that there was no direct representative of Buckinghamshire County Council on the LLSC, noting that both Oxfordshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council had Education officers

present. A representative of the County Council informed the Committee that the Leader of the Council had written to the LLSC expressing this very concern. Members went on to express further concern that the LLSC had yet to confirm who they would be appointing as their representative to this Committee. Consequently, it was agreed that the Chairman of the Committee should write to the LLSC to establish who their appointee would be and invite them to attend the Committee's next meeting. Concern was expressed by some members over the provisions of the Learning and Skills Act which would allow LLSCs to propose the closure of a sixth form or LEA 16-19 school. However, members noted that such proposals were unlikely in that they could only be pursued if the sixth forms/schools in question had received two consecutive adverse Ofsted inspections. This, officers suggested, was a situation unlikely to arise. Equally, members noted that it would be for this Committee to ultimately determine such a proposal by unanimity, which it was suggested was unlikely to be forthcoming. Members also questioned the implications for the funding of post 16 provision under the LLSC and whether or not funding allocated to specific sixth forms/schools would follow them were the LLSC to propose the merging of institutions. Officers agreed that such issues would need to be closely monitored once further details were confirmed. One member of the Schools Group suggested that the potential for the amalgamation of sixth forms/schools may lead to a closer degree of co-operation between upper and grammar schools, particularly those based on the same site.

The report was noted.

#### **4 SPEAKING PROTOCOL LEAFLET**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Education, which updated members of progress made in the development of a speaking protocol leaflet. A copy of the draft leaflet had been circulated with the agenda.

Following discussion by the Committee, it was agreed that the sequence of the leaflet should be amended to:

- 1 Introductory statement
- 2 Consultation on proposed change in school organisation
- 3 School Organisation Committee
- 4 How decisions are made
- 5 Schools Adjudicator
- 6 Commenting on or objecting to proposed changes
- 7 Schools Organisation Committee Meetings

The Chairman also stressed the need for the leaflet to make clear that all sides are entitled to speak at meetings of the Committee by prior arrangement, not just members of the public. This was a view supported by the Committee. With regard to the distribution of the leaflet, officers informed the Committee that it was intended to circulate the leaflet every time a Statutory Notice is published. Copies would also be made available at Libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaus, as well as via the Council's website. A representative of the Schools Group asked that copies also be made available to School Management Teams.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1 That the wording of the speaking protocol leaflet be AGREED.**
- 2 That the format of the leaflet be AMENDED to reflect the revised sequence as follows:**

- 1 **Introductory statement**
- 2 **Consultation on proposed change in school organisation**
- 3 **School Organisation Committee**
- 4 **How decisions are made**
- 5 **Schools Adjudicator**
- 6 **Commenting on or objecting to proposed changes**
- 7 **Schools Organisation Committee Meetings**

**5 STATUTORY NOTICE: FARNHAM ROYAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED COMBINED SCHOOL: PROPOSED CHANGE OF CATEGORY FROM VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED TO VOLUNTARY AIDED**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Education, which informed members of the proposals contained within the above Statutory Notice. The Chairman of the Committee agreed that the report, copies of which were circulated at the meeting, should be considered as an urgent item in that the Notice proposed that the changes contained take effect from 1 September 2001, this being the last Committee meeting before this date.

In presenting the report, officers informed the Committee that the Notice had been published on 26 April 2001 and that following the closure of the formal objection period on 26 June 2001, the Notice remained uncontested. Officers further reported that the LEA had considered the rationale for the proposed action, details of which were included in the Notice, and recommended the Committee agree to the proposals. A representative of one of the Diocesan Boards also informed the Committee that the Boards had no objection to the proposals.

In their discussion of the report and Notice, a representative of the Schools Group inquired as to the over-subscription of the School in recent years. In response, officers explained that although some parties believed the School had been over-subscribed, the LEA had always adhered to its agreed admissions policy. Members noted that under the proposal, from September 2003, the School would be able to determine its own admissions and expressed concern over the potential planning issues that may arise as a result of this. In reply to these comments, officers explained that they had discussed the acceptable size of the School with its Governors and informed members that there had been broad agreement over this, therefore, it was hoped that such issues need not be of concern. The Committee also noted that were any planning applications to be made by the School under the proposed changes, the School would have to provide 15% of the costs themselves, through the Diocese. Therefore, the Diocese would consider very carefully at any applications to increase the size of the School.

Following this discussion, it was agreed to approve the Notice.

**RESOLVED**

**To APPROVE the Statutory Notice for Farnham Royal Church of England Voluntary Controlled Combined School to change category from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided from September 2001.**

**6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A representative of the Schools Group asked that the Cabinet Member for Schools, Mrs M P Clayton, consider further the request raised at the 25 April 2001 meeting for an honorarium payment to the Chairman of the Committee.

**7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Following comments by several members that they would be unable to attend the Committee meeting scheduled for 26 September 2001, it was agreed to change this date to 2 October 2001, with the time and venue to be advised.

The Committee further agreed the following dates for meetings of the Committee in 2002:

16 January 2002  
17 April 2002  
3 July 2002  
11 September 2002

**MR J A LOARRIDGE OBE  
CHAIRMAN**