



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 APRIL 2002, IN THE COACH HOUSE, MAIN HALL 1, GREEN PARK, ASTON CLINTON, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Schools Group

Ms C Bevins, Mr C Brownlee, Mr D Kemp, Mr D Richardson, Mrs P McNeish, and Mrs J Wainwright.

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mr B Allen and Mrs M A M Aston.

Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Mr J A Loarridge
Mrs E Cracknell
Mr D Sullivan

Northampton RC Schools Commission

Mr B O'Byrne

Learning and Skills Council

Apologies

Officers Present

Mr D Ayres – Head of School Organisation
Ms C Gray - Committee Administrator
Mr P Holmes – Education Officer (Capital Programme)
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor Education

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mrs P Bacon, Mrs M Baldwin, Mrs M P Clayton, Mrs E M Lay and Mrs C Martens.

Learning and Skills Council

Susan Jones

Northampton RC Diocese

Ms M Ball
Mr P Niekirk

Schools Group

Mr R Butcher
Mr D Kemp temporarily replaced Ms C Hinds for this meeting.

Officers

Mr L Brazier
Mr J Frank

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2002, including the confidential minutes, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

There was no discussion on this item because the LSC representative had offered her apologies for the meeting.

3 SEN UPDATE

Mrs M Aston, as the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People reported that Consortium 1 had received approval from the DfES for their detailed

proposals. Consortium 1 and 2 were meeting in the next few weeks to move forward proposals for the review of Special Schools in the County.

4 CHANGE OF SCHOOL CATEGORY

The Committee received and noted the report on changes in school category from controlled to aided or from community to foundation and in particular considered the advantages for children arising from such a change.

The Head of School Organisation reported that the Authority needed to be formally reassured that, as far as admissions were concerned, priority for local children would continue and that the over-subscription criteria would not be changed in future so as to have a significant effect on the probability of such children gaining admission. The Authority would also need reassurance about the future disposal of assets, the accountability and representative nature of the governing body and arrangements for the appointment and employment of staff.

The key issue, however, was that, the LEA could only support the change in category if it was clear that there would be educational benefits arising for the pupils as a direct result of the change in status and that such a change would contribute to the Authority's core aim of improving school effectiveness and raising pupil achievement.

Mr Sullivan, the Director of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education tabled a paper outlining his presentation on the change of school category. He raised the following points:-

The 1944 Education Act allowed the establishment of aided or controlled schools. The majority of Catholic School became aided, whilst the Church of England left the decision to each local school.

In **September 2000** the **change in category regulations** issued by the Government came into force. It was noted that capital-funding arrangements for Aided Schools had been streamlined and that in future the arrangements for all categories of school had been brought much more into line although governing bodies at Aided Schools would still have to raise a proportion of capital funding.

If there was a major capital project at a Voluntary Aided School it went through a different route. Since April 2002 there was 90% funding for these from the DfES and 10% from the Voluntary Aided School (replacing the previous 85% DfES and 15% Voluntary Aided School).

It was important to **maintain a good partnership with the LEA**, which worked well in Buckinghamshire to ensure an efficient and effective education for all children in the County.

There were a number of **differences between controlled and aided schools**:-

- Employment – Aided Schools had to follow all the current employment guidelines and worked with the Authority to ensure correct procedures were followed.
- Admissions – Aided Schools wrote their own admissions policy but needed to consult locally. This could be referred to the School Adjudicator if there was felt to be an adverse effect on the area.
- Composition of Governing Body – Foundation Governors would constitute the majority of governors. Governors of other faiths were welcomed as long as they supported the ethos and values of the school.
- Religious Education – For Aided Schools the Religious Education Syllabus was the responsibility of the Governing Body. Schools worked in partnership with SACRE and the Diocese.
- Buildings – The school could be held by a Local Trustee. Therefore, if the school closed ownership could be reverted back to the Trustee rather than the LEA.
- The representative from the Diocese reported that the **Diocese and LEA** worked closely together to ensure that all the Governing Bodies were operating appropriately and if it was felt that one of the Governing Bodies was increasing the admission number in favour of religious children as opposed to local children, then the governor(s) would be dismissed.

The following issues were raised following the above presentation:-

- Members of the Committee expressed concern that as a Voluntary Aided School they could legally change the admission arrangements to exclude local children from being admitted. As an example they used the selective admission arrangements at Waddesdon School, which they felt had an adverse impact on a number of LEA Schools in the area.
- A Member of the Schools Group reported that she felt that there had been an adverse effect on Buckingham School when Cottesloe School changed their admission arrangements as a result of being a Foundation School.
- She also referred to the large workload for governors of Aided Schools. It was noted that the Diocese provided support to governing bodies, particularly with regard to Admissions Appeals.
- The Head of School Organisation reported that the Council had a responsibility for co-ordinating admission arrangements which could become more complicated as the number of admission authorities increased.
- The representative from the Diocese emphasised that schools were required to consult on admission arrangements and present parents with the maximum information available.

- A Member asked what benefit a change in category would be for the pupils. In response to this, it was noted that Aided Schools could offer, a moral and religious structure based on a Christian education. In addition alternative funding arrangements could benefit the school e.g. more money spent on maintenance. Furthermore it was suggested that Voluntary Aided Schools had stronger links with the Diocese and this would in turn benefit pupils.
- Aided Schools in the County had adopted LEA policies and governors would have to undergo police checks.

The report was noted and aided discussion for the following item on Great Kingshill CE Combined – Change in Category.

5 CHANGE OF SCHOOL CATEGORY

Great Kingshill CE Combined – Change in Category

The Committee received and noted the report from the Strategic Manager for Schools/Chief Education Officer on the Statutory Notice for Great Kingshill CE Combined School for the change in category to Aided Status.

After discussion, an adjournment was made so that each Group could discuss how they would vote on the proposal.

Each Group put forward the following reasons for their vote in a letter to the County Council which is attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

The following Groups were in favour of the change in category to Aided Status:-

**Oxford Diocesan Board of Education
Northampton RC Schools Commission**

The following Groups were against the proposal:-

**Schools Group (unanimous)
Buckinghamshire County Council Members (unanimous)**

As there was a tie in votes and no unanimity the issue could not be resolved. It was advised that this matter should now be referred to the School Adjudicator.

Winslow CE Combined – Change in Standard Numbers

The Head of School Organisation reported that a letter had been written to Mursley and Swanbourne School regarding the change in standard numbers for Winslow CE Combined. A meeting had also been held involving all of the schools affected by the change in numbers. Members noted that schools more than two miles away should be consulted if they were directly affected by the change.

Members were reminded that in Winslow there were 3 Church Schools where pupils could continue until Key Stage 2 and parents may therefore seek late transfer to Winslow School at Year 4 or 5 (8 or 9+). This year there was a large cohort in year 4 of 120 pupils; the number of pupils in year 4 was usually 90-95. Therefore, the school had to organise 4 classrooms which had implications for the staff and the accommodation. Members emphasised the need to try and ensure that there was enough space for children who transferred over to Winslow School at 8 or 9.

The proposal was to change the standard numbers from 45 (4+) and 20 (7+) to 60 and 30 respectively to accommodate the large cohort.

A Member emphasised the importance of removing the temporary classroom once the large cohort had moved through the school due to development control purposes. The Head of School Organisation reported that this would be put in writing to the School.

The Head of School Organisation reported that further work needed to be done on the overall organisation of schools in the area with, for example, the possibility of confederation or amalgamation of certain of the village schools which could end the necessity of transfer to Winslow. It was noted that an initial meeting had occurred to look at possibilities for the future organisation at Mursley and Swanbourne. A Member of the Schools Group expressed her concern regarding the above suggestion and noted that this issue would be discussed at a future meeting.

Resolved

That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to changes in standard numbers at Winslow CE Combined School from 45 (4+) and 20 (7+) to 60 and 30 respectively.

St Paul's CE Combined – Change in Standard Number

The Committee received and noted the report from the Strategic Manager for Schools and the Chief Education Officer on the Statutory Notice for St Paul's CE Combined School for the change in standard number from 34 (4+) to 30 to assist the school in the management of infant class sizes.

Resolved

That approval be given to the Statutory Notices relating to the change in standard number at St Paul's CE Combined School from 34 (4+) to 30.

6 ANNUAL CONSULTATION ON BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEA ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2003

The Committee received and noted the report of the Strategic Manager for Schools on the outcome from the Annual Consultation on Relevant Areas and Admission Arrangements. Members received a revised version of the paper which was tabled at the meeting.

The Head of School Organisation highlighted the Cabinet Member for Schools decision to incorporate the following changes in the Relevant Areas and Admission Arrangements:-

- To implement the discontinuation of 13+ entry to Dr Challoner's Grammar School for Boys with effect from September 2005 and to increase the intake at 11+ from September 2003.
- To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children with statements of SEN which name a particular school
- To amend the oversubscription criteria to afford a greater priority for admission to children in public care.

The report was discussed and noted.

7 DRAFT SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2002

The Committee received the tabled report of the draft School Organisation Plan 2002. The Education Officer reported that the draft Plan needed to be publicised at the end of May so that a 2 month consultation could be undertaken. The draft Plan would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee on 3 July 2002. The section on Secondary Schools would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting. Members were asked to forward any comments to the Education Officer.

The report was discussed and noted.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Head of School Organisation reported that he would provide information at the next meeting of the Committee on the discontinuation of standard numbers.

A Member referred to funding from the LSC. He referred to the recent Government White and Green Papers which emphasised that IT was a core subject but that the LSC would not provide his local school with funding because it was IT related. The Chairman asked him to send him some additional information so that this could be raised with the LSC.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 3 July 2002

Wednesday 11 September 2002

Wednesday 22 January 2003

CHAIRMAN