



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes School Organisation Committee

AGENDA ITEM: 5

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 JULY 2002, IN SEMINAR ROOM 1, GREEN PARK CENTRE, ASTON CLINTON, COMMENCING AT 2.00PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.50PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Schools Group

Mrs P McNeish, Mr D Kemp, Mr C Brownlee, Mrs J Wainwright, Mr D Richardson

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mrs P Bacon, Mr B Allen, Mrs C Martens, Mrs M Clayton, Mrs E Lay

Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Mr J Loarridge (Chairman)
Mrs E Cracknell
Mr D Sullivan

Northampton RC Schools Commission

Mr B O'Byrne

Learning and Skills Council

Apologies

Officers Present

Mr David Ayres – Head of School Organisation
Mr L Brazier – Special Education Services
Ms J Hall – Democratic Services Officer

Mr P Holmes – Education Officer (Capital Programme)
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor Education

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Schools Group

Mr R Butcher

Learning and Skills Council

Ms M Wilkes

Officers

Mr J Frank

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the held on 17 April 2002, were confirmed.

2 MATTERS ARISING

In relation to item five of the minutes, Change of School Category, relating to Great Kingshill CE Combined School, Mr Popat, Senior Solicitor, explained that a letter had been received from the adjudicator on 21 June 2002 outlining his decision, a copy had been circulated amongst members. Mr Popat explained that the Adjudicator had looked at the proposal and objections and decided to approve the application proposal to take effect from 1 September 2002. The committee were reminded that there was much discussion on this item about the additional educational benefits to the pupils of the school as a result of the change in category. In the decision letter the Adjudicator gave an important steer on this aspect – his view was that it would be difficult for a successful school with good Ofsted reports to satisfy an objection on this ground. Mr Popat referred the committee to the DfES guidance, Section A(2) on Factors to be Considered in Deciding Proposals for Changes in Category and the section on Standards of Provision, reporting that the Adjudicator's views appeared to be in conflict with this guidance.

During discussion Mr Sullivan assured the Committee that the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education reconfirmed its policy that when a change in category was agreed, there should be no change to the schools admission policy.

The Cabinet Member for Schools commented that for a change of category a school should demonstrate the real benefit for pupils and felt that where a Church of England ethos was already in place, there was no reason for going down this route. In reply Mr Sullivan reminded the Committee that historically all schools were aided and part of the thinking of Government was that controlled schools could become aided if that was what the Governing Body wanted.

David Ayres updated the Committee on item six of the minutes, Annual Consultation on Buckinghamshire LEA Admission Arrangements for September 2003. He reported that following the consultation some contentious issues had been raised with comments that parents did not see the process as being inclusive and wanting to be informed at a much earlier stage. He further reported that officers were looking closely at ways to draw in more interest groups. It was noted that by the Autumn term meetings would have been held with Headteachers and Governors on school admissions for consultation at the end of the year with a view to establishing clear proposals for admissions in September 2004. He emphasised that all interested groups would be included in the consultation process.

3 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

It was agreed that this item be deferred until the next meeting as apologies had been received from the Learning and Skills Council.

4 SEN UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

Len Brazier, Education Officer (SEN Services), updated the committee on the latest developments relating to Special Educational Needs.

He reported that the development of departments in mainstream schools was continuing and providing an opportunity for statemented children to gain a mainstream education. At present there were 46 departments and although requests had tailed off the emphasis was still on getting children into mainstream.

He reported that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) required that the authority have a policy in place by September 2002 on access for children with disabilities. It was noted that budget constraints would limit what could be provided by schools.

As more and more children were being recognised to have complex needs, there was a real need to develop Complex Schools in both Primary and Secondary. A scheme in the North of the County was currently being considered to help match needs.

He reported that the number of statements was rising and there was a need to look at trends and how to reduce the number. Three SEN Monitoring Officers had been appointed to link with officers and attend annual reviews. He emphasised that a target of 2.5% had been set for statements and a way to reach this must be found. More requests for statements were currently being

received and a large percentage of these were going through. The rise was mainly in EBD and Autism. He added that a review of existing statements was needed in order to assess children for de-statementing. The rise in the number of statements meant there was not enough provision available. He also emphasised the difficulty in employing qualified and experienced support staff for statemented children. A number of issues needed addressing relating to Health and Safety for SEN following the Disability Discrimination Act.

During discussion it was noted that there are statemented children placed in out of county schools (some of which were independent or non maintained). In reply to a comment on reducing statements to 2.5% and if the motivation was financial or for the benefit of the child, he reported that both were part of the equation together with keeping within targets through the provision of 'needs led' statements. He continued that there was a need to look at 'house-keeping' as some had statements for 11 years. For those who were de-statemented, their needs would still be met. The Committee commented on early intervention and the need to keep up the momentum and work closer with Health. It was also highlighted that the performance of children with statements was not included in league tables, although Buckinghamshire was moving towards 'value added', members felt that pressure should be placed on OFSTED and the DfES because if they were putting an emphasis on inclusion, it should also mean inclusion in the league tables.

5 **DRAFT SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**

Paul Holmes, Education Officer (Capital Programme) reported to the Committee that three comments had been received on the Draft School Organisation Plan, one from an Upper School, one from a Grammar School and one from another LEA, although there was still time for comments to be received. A member requested and it was agreed that a report would be submitted to the Committee (at future meetings) as a method of monitoring the Plan.

It was noted that the final version of the Plan would be submitted to the Committee at its meeting in September.

RESOLVED

That an update monitoring report be submitted to the Schools Organisation Committee at every meeting on a quarterly basis.

6 **DETERMINATION OF STATUTORY NOTICES**

Weston Turville 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 Weston Turville CE Combined School for the change of 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 abstained (unanimously)

Schools Group

The following Groups were against the proposal:-

Buckinghamshire County Councils Members (Unanimously)

As there was no unanimity the issue could not be resolved. Accordingly, the matter should now be referred to the School Adjudicator.

Marsh Gibbon CE Infant School – Change in Category

The Committee received and noted the report from the Strategic Manager for Schools/Chief Education Officer on the Statutory Notice for Marsh Gibbon CE Infant School for the change of 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 abstained (unanimously)

Schools Group

The following Groups were against the proposal:-

Buckinghamshire County Councils Members (Unanimously)

As there was no unanimity the issue could not be resolved. Accordingly, the matter should be referred to the School Adjudicator.

Following the decisions on the two proposals it was agreed that the four group leaders would let the Chairman have their letters setting out their reasons for voting as they did on each proposal. Also it was agreed that the

Chairman/Secretary would write to the DFES to seek clarification on relevant parts of the DFES guidance and its interpretation by the Adjudicator in his recent decision on the Great Kingshill proposal.

7 UPDATE ON NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

It was reported that the regulations on the National Consultation on Admission Arrangements had still not been received. Mr Ayres reported that when the regulations were available he would submit a paper for discussion to the Committee. He highlighted three areas which the Committee would need to consider:

1. Mandatory arrangements for Admissions Forum
2. Expectations of a lot of objections resulting from the proposals
3. Parent's rights to express a preference when selecting a school.

Mrs Lay, as a member sitting on the Admissions Forum agreed to presenting a joint report to the Committee with Mr Ayres.

**8 PAGE HILL/BUCKINGHAM AMALGAMATION
COPPICE/BOOKER HILL AMALGAMATION**

Page Hill/Buckingham Amalgamation

The Committee were informed of the amalgamation between Page Hill and Buckingham noting that the Statutory Notice Period had ended and no objections had been received. Therefore the Cabinet Member would determine the notices.

Coppice/Booker Hill Amalgamation

It was noted that the first stage of consultation (local Stage) had ended and the formal consultation and publishing of Statutory Notices would begin. It was noted that the Coppice was one of only three remaining nurseries and by amalgamating with Booker Hill a neighbourhood nursery with provision for children from 0 – 4 years would be provided, representing the end of a separate nursery.

During discussion it was reported that Early Years had received a grant of £800,000 for five years and includes a capital element. A member welcomed the move following the success of a similar previous amalgamation.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that no reply had been received from Mrs Hodge, Member of the DfES to the letter from the Chairman on Post 16 issues.

A member requested an update report on the progress of Highcrest School, the former Hatters Lane School, including a financial report. The Cabinet Member for Schools reported that the school was doing extremely well – a

more detailed report will be provided at the September meeting of the Committee.

10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The dates of the next meetings were agreed as set out in the agenda.

Mrs Clayton, Cabinet Member for Schools offered her apologies for the next meeting to be held on Wednesday 11 September.

CHAIRMAN