



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Minutes

## SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

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### AGENDA ITEM: 3

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2003, IN THE SEMINAR ROOM 2, GREEN PARK, ASTON CLINTON, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.20 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

##### **Schools Group**

Mr C Brownlee, Dr J Maynard (for Mrs C Bevins), Mrs P McNeish, Mr D Richardson and Mrs J Wainwright.

##### **Buckinghamshire County Council**

Mr B Allen, Mrs M A M Aston (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P Bacon, Mrs M Clayton, Mrs B Lay and Mrs C Martens

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

Mr J A Loarridge (Chairman)  
Mr D Sullivan

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

Mr B O'Byrne

##### **Learning and Skills Council**

Ms M Wilkes

## **Officers Present**

Ms C Gray – Democratic Services Officer  
Mr P Holmes – Acting Head of School Organisation  
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor Education/Secretary to the Committee

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

Buckinghamshire County Council  
Mrs M Baldwin

Northampton RC Diocese  
Mrs M Bull and Ms F Image

Oxford Diocese  
Mr L Stephen

Schools Group  
Mr R Butcher  
Ms C Bevins was temporarily replaced by Dr J Maynard for this meeting.

Members were informed that Catherine Hinds had resigned from the Schools Group and they expressed their thanks for her contribution to the Committee.

## **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **1 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

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

Ms Wilkes reported that all schools had been sent their allocation letters for 2003/04. She informed Members that if there had been a reduction in any allocation, Mr Croft who was responsible for 6<sup>th</sup> form funding had visited the schools to discuss this. Once agreement had been reached, the allocation would be confirmed in February.

S Rosby had attended the Schools Forum as an observer where LEA funding for schools had been discussed.

During discussion Ms Wilkes agreed to check on the following points:-

- Whether Special Schools were included in the funding allocation from the Learning and Skills Council [The LSC has subsequently responded as follows – The LSC does not fund these schools but gives the funding in block to the LEA for all special needs. The first call on these funds is for statemented students. The process has not changed since the formation of the LSC].

- Whether the area uplift applied to individual schools or across Buckinghamshire [The LSC has subsequently responded as follows – If the Area Uplift becomes applicable this will be allocated as a percentage of the funding for 6<sup>th</sup> forms for individual schools. Currently some schools in the South Bucks area attract an increase by way of Area Uplift at 5% of their funding allocation – a review of the mechanism is in course with the outcomes likely to be known in February/March].

### **3 SEN UPDATE**

Members of the Committee expressed disappointment that there was no officer representation from Special Educational Needs.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People reported that there was now one consortium of all headteachers who were working to try and push forward the complex special school initiative.

The Acting Head of School Organisation reported that a capital bid had been targeted for a primary complex school and an answer was expected at the end of March.

One Special School was likely to be closed this year because of falling numbers but no formal decision had been taken on this issue. Parents and students would be consulted through the statutory notices. If the school was closed the staff would be redeployed and it was hoped that any capital receipts would be used for special educational needs, although a bid would need to be made through the appropriate CAPS procedure.

### **4 CORRESPONDENCE**

The Committee noted the responses received from the Department for Education and Skills regarding schools changing category. The letter stated that it was laid down in the regulations that the prescribed information should be submitted to the Committee for consideration. Different Committee had different ways of handling information; some send Members all the information, others summarise. The Committee must be satisfied that they have enough information to reach a valid decision.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful for a summary to be prepared as long as there was written information from the Secretary that all the prescribed information had been submitted by the school. It was suggested that the prescribed information from schools could be put on the Council's website where the committee papers were located.

The second letter was in connection with closing sixth forms. Proposals concerning 6<sup>th</sup> forms would be considered by this Committee and if no agreement was reached it would be referred to the School Adjudicator. A Member commented that the question they had raised, which had not been specifically answered, was if the Committee had a different view from the LSC, whether the Adjudicator would take the view of the LSC.

It was suggested that the Chairman should write back to the Department asking for further clarification. In addition a further question was asked on the implications if a 6<sup>th</sup> form was below its expected number, with a particular concern over funding.

Members then discussed the issue that the LSC retained 10% of the funding in case pupils did not achieve the required grade. This funding would then be given retrospectively. This had funding implications for schools. A Member referred to the situation that happened last year, where a number of A levels had to be remarked.

In answer to a question, Ms Wilkes reported that vocational courses attracted funding from the LSC and that they had increased their flexibility in this area. A mixture of programmes had been supported in Aylesbury, Wycombe and South Bucks.

## **5 DETERMINATION OF STATUTORY NOTICES**

The Committee received and noted the report from the Strategic Manager for Schools/Chief Education Officer on the following Statutory Notices:-

### **Determination of Statutory Notice – Future Arrangements for Primary Education at Coppice Nursery and Booker Hill Combined Schools, High Wycombe**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People took a decision on 9 December 2002 that the amalgamation of the Coppice Nursery School and Booker Hill Combined School should take place with effect from 1 January 2003 to create a 210 place combined school with nursery/early years facilities.

### **Statutory Notice: High Wycombe CE Combined School: Standard Number**

#### **RESOLVED**

**That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to change in standard number at High Wycombe CE Combined School from 35 to 30 at 4+ with effect from September 2003.**

### **Statutory Notice: High Ash CE Combined School: Prescribed alteration**

#### **RESOLVED**

**That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to the change in age range at High Ash CE Combined School from 4 – 12 years to 4 – 11 years with effect from 1 September 2004.**

**Statutory Notice: Newton Longville CE Combined School: Prescribed alteration**

**RESOLVED**

**That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to the change in age range at Newton Longville CE Combined School from 4 – 12 years to 4 – 11 years with effect from 1 September 2003.**

**Statutory Notice: Thomas Hickman Combined School: Prescribed alteration**

A Member commented on children starting a nursery class at the age of 3, which he felt was too young for the formal teaching of English and Numeracy and this was also the view of the Early Years Partnership.

**RESOLVED**

**That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to the change in age range at Thomas Hickman Combined School from 4 –11 years to 3 – 11 years with effect from 1 January 2003 by providing a nursery for a maximum of 40 three year old children.**

**Statutory Notices: Ashmead Combined School, Bearbrook Combined School and Elmhurst Infant School: Standard Number**

**RESOLVED**

**That approval be given to the Statutory Notices relating to changes in standard number at:**

**Ashmead Combined School from 60 (5+) and 28 (7+) to 60 (5+)**  
**Bearbrook Combined School from 43 (5+) and 10 (7+) to 50 (5+)**  
**Elmhurst Infant School from 65 (5+) to 60 (5+)**

**with effect from September 2003**

**6 CHANGE OF STATUS FOR MARSH GIBBON CE INFANT, WESTON TURVILLE CE COMBINED AND CURZON CE COMBINED**

The Committee received and noted the oral report of the Secretary to the Committee on the change of status for the schools above. Copies of the decision letter from the School Adjudicator, which had approved the change in category for all the schools, had been copied to all of the Group Leaders.

With all three proposals the LEA and the Schools Group objected on two main grounds. Firstly, there was no evidence that the change in category would benefit the pupils in any way. Secondly, the assurances about future admission arrangements were insufficient. In all three cases the Adjudicator had rejected these as valid grounds for objection.

On the first one, the Adjudicator concluded that the school do not have to prove that standards would rise as a result of the change in category. All that the Committee need to be satisfied about was that the change of category would not adversely affect standards of educational provision. On the second one the Adjudicator pointed out that there were adequate statutory safeguards in the event that a Voluntary Aided School wanted to change its admission policy.

The Secretary pointed out that whilst any Group still had the right to object to these types of proposals, there have been five different decisions from three different Adjudicators. If a Group objected on these same grounds again, then the objections would not be upheld. The Secretary also pointed out that any matter referred to the Adjudicator took a lot of resources and time.

A Church representative reported that the majority of voluntary aided schools inherited the LEA admission policy and did not want to radically change this. Members noted that all C E aided schools were now statutorily required to consult with the Diocese Board of Education on admission policy and to note their comments. However, if any school ignored the advice of the Board and the matter was referred to the Adjudicator, the views of the Diocese would be critical.

## **7 UPDATE ON NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS: UPDATE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

The Committee received the tabled report of the Strategic Manager for Schools/Chief Education Officer on the above item. The report set out the new requirements of the Schools Admissions Code of Practice 2002 to be implemented in the September 2005 admission round. Catchment areas would be reviewed as part of this process. In particular, the Head of School Organisation commented that pupils would only be able to hold one offer for a school and informed Members of the new rules for 6<sup>th</sup> form admission criteria and admission numbers. Members noted that if a child was turned down for 6<sup>th</sup> form they could now appeal.

During discussion, a Member suggested that it would be helpful to give parents advice in filling in their application forms for schools. It was also emphasised that it was important to have good communication between the school secretary and the admissions team.

Members noted that the relevant areas for consultation included all schools within 5 miles radius of the secondary school. Parents would be informed of any changes to admissions one year in advance.

It was agreed that admission arrangements should be discussed at the next meeting and Carol Neill, Independent Consultant should be invited.

## **8 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE – BUILDING TO COPE WITH GROWTH**

The Acting Head of School Organisation tabled a report informing the Committee of the progress made since 1999 in providing permanent accommodation in secondary schools.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- The net capacity will measure the capacity of schools in the future and will indicate the admission number of the school.
- The extensions achieved by January 2003 and those planned in future were listed.
- Those schools included had been identified as a requirement by the Asset Management Plan to be delivered through the capital programme.

Members felt that an update on this issue should become a standing item for the Committee, including admission arrangements.

## **9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 9 April 2003

Wednesday 9 July 2003

Wednesday 10 September 2003

**CHAIRMAN**