



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 3

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 JUNE 2003, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.10 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Schools Group

Mrs P McNeish, Mrs C Hinds (for Mrs J Wainwright), Mr D Richardson

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mr B Allen, Mrs M A M Aston (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Martens, Mrs F Roberts (for Mrs M Baldwin), Mrs M Clayton and Mrs B Lay

Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Mr J A Loarridge OBE (Chairman)
Mr D Sullivan

Members were informed that this would be the last meeting for Danny Sullivan who had resigned from the Oxford Diocesan Group. Members expressed their thanks to Mr Sullivan for his contributions to the Committee over the years.

Northampton RC Schools Commission

Mr B O'Byrne
Ms F Image
Mrs M Ball

Officers Present

Ms S Butt – Democratic Services Officer
Mr P Holmes – Acting Head of School Organisation
Mr A Tusting – Assistant Education Officer
Mr R Popat – Senior Solicitor Education
Ms C Neill – Consultant Project Manager
Mr L Brazier – Education Officer, Special Education Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mrs M Baldwin was temporarily replaced by Mrs F Roberts for this meeting.

Oxford Diocese

Mr L Stephen

Schools Group

Mrs C Bevins
Mr C Brownlee
Mr R Butcher
Dr K Simmons

Mrs J Wainwright was temporarily replaced by Mrs C Hinds for this meeting.

It was reported that Mr R Butcher had resigned from the Schools Group due to increased work commitments.

Members also noted that Dr K Simmons had been duly elected to the Schools' Group but was unable to attend this meeting.

Learning and Skills Council

Ms M Wilkes

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2003, copies of which had previously been circulated, were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- That the date be added to the resolution on p5.
That approval be given to the Statutory Notice relating to the change of category for Hawridge and Cholesbury CE School from voluntary controlled to voluntary aided, **from September 2003**.

Correspondence

A response from the DfES in connection with the decision making process in closing sixth forms had been received.

A copy of the response is appended to the minutes as appendix 1.

4 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING & SKILLS COUNCIL

An update from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) was circulated to all members for information and presented by Mr Holmes on behalf of Mrs Wilkes who had sent her apologies.

Members noted the following points:

- The LSC Annual Plan had been published and was available on the website at: www.lsc.gov.uk
- That 6th Form Funding Allocation letters had been issued to all schools with copies also sent to the LEA
- Substantial additional discretionary funding had been allocated to Buckinghamshire Increased Flexibility Partnerships to expand the offer and increase the number of 14-16 year olds able to participate in the vocational and work-related learning programmes

5 SEN UPDATE

Members of the Committee noted the resignation of Jeff Franks and welcomed Len Brazier, Education Officer, who gave an update on special education needs.

The following main points were noted:

- Currently 3.52% of pupils in the county with special education needs in comparison to the national average of 3.1%.
- The number of referrals had declined by 16.5% which could be linked to the introduction of the new Guidelines .
- Currently 172 pupils in independent out of county special education placements at an annual cost of £6.8million. 75% of these placements are male.
- Currently 31 special education needs departments attached to mainstream schools including departments at Sir William Ramsey, Wye Valley, The Misbourne and The Grange upper schools.

The following 3 main issues were noted as areas of development and work in progress:

- i) Issue of home to school transport for children in out of county placements and within the county
- ii) Issue of lack of available places for the increasing numbers of children that want to come back into the county to receive education
- iii) Issues of inclusion and how it can be promoted and worked towards

Members thanked the Officer for his update and raised the following questions.

A member asked if the waiting time for early years statements had been reduced. It was confirmed that it hadn't but that investigations as to whether savings could be made during the process were being looked into.

Members noted that joint working with Health had also started to take place to enable more strategic planning. In particular information was now more widely shared and areas of concern discussed, in particular the increase in cases of autism.

A member asked for clarification on how children that are statemented and not allocated a special school place are supported in mainstream schools. It was reported that in these cases the Officers would work with the schools to ensure adequate support needs would be met and with parents where statements sometimes do not go through. In addition, early assessments are also carried out wherever possible.

Concern was expressed about the number of special education needs children taken to out-of-county placements. In response, it was reported that although Buckinghamshire provides a range of specialist schools it does not at present have the facilities to accommodate children with more severe areas of special education needs, who are therefore accommodated outside of the county. Members noted that two placement officers had been appointed with a third due to start in September whose roles will be specifically to look at all out-of-county placements and consider what improvement of facilities in the county should be made for children with more severe special education needs.

6 DETERMINATION OF STATUTORY NOTICES

a) Bedgrove Infant School

b) Bedgrove Junior School

The Committee received and noted the report from the Secretary on the Statutory Notice for the change in category for Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools from Community to Foundation. No objections to the proposals had been received although it was noted that neither the Infant nor Junior School had consulted with all schools within a two-mile radius prior to the publication of the notices, which under the DfES guidance should have been consulted by the proposals. A letter to this effect had been sent to the Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools and responses from Oak Green Combined and St Louis Catholic Combined had now been received, with no objections. Responses from Ashmead Combined and Elmhurst Infant and Junior School were still awaited. In addition, the Secretary had also received confirmation from staff at both Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools that they were consulted about the proposals and a number of letters of support from parents of children currently attending the schools. The prescribed information from schools had been put on the Council's website.

Members noted that neither the Strategic Manager for Schools nor the Acting Head of School Organisation had received relevant proposals informing of the consultation regarding the proposed change of category.

The Committee were asked to consider whether they would be prepared to receive statements from the Headteachers of the Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools who had not given the 7 days statutory notice period for addressing the Committee but had arrived to speak. Members expressed concern that a decision would be difficult to make and would be unfair to all concerned where new information about the consultation process and proposals had only just been received.

The Secretary confirmed that under regulation 82e, the Committee could vote to defer the decision on the change of category of a school but that any deferment must be unanimous across all groups.

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, the Northampton RC Schools Commission, the Schools Group and Buckinghamshire County Council voted for the proposal.

RESOLVED

That the Committee would not receive statements from the Headteachers from Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools at the meeting and that the decision on the change of category for Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools from Community to Foundation be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 24 September 2003.

The Headteachers were informed of the resolution and agreed to re-submit the proposals to the Strategic Manager for Schools and Acting Head of School Organisation and agreed to raise any questions at least 7 days prior to the next meeting of the Committee in accordance with the protocol for addressing meetings of the Schools Organisation Committee.

7&8 ADMISSIONS UPDATE AND CATCHMENT AREA REVIEW

Carol Neill, the Consultant Project Manager for the Schools Admissions Review 2003, distributed copies of the parents' consultation booklet and presented the catchment area maps open to consultation.

It was reported that the parents' booklet would be distributed to all parents of children in year 4 or lower and included a questionnaire and free post envelope for responses to be sent in. St Bernards School would not be changing their admission arrangements and a note to that effect had also been included in the booklet.

It was noted that a copy of the consultation booklet for schools was available on the Schools Extranet.

Composite maps of catchment areas for all secondary schools were presented to the Committee illustrating the following:

- Upper Schools catchment areas
- Boys Grammar Schools catchment areas
- Girls Grammar Schools catchment areas

Members noted that analysis had been carried out using postcodes which had proved more useful and accurate for identification of catchment areas than parish boundaries that were previously used.

Following discussion of specific catchment areas, it was noted that there would be adequate numbers of Grammar School places available for the number of qualifying children in Buckinghamshire with the remainder of spaces used to accommodate out-of-county children. It was confirmed that funding would not be affected by out-of-county placements where it was received as per the number of children educated within the county on the age rated pupil ratio.

Buckinghamshire County Council would be able to fully cooperate and co-ordinate admissions with other local authorities operating the PAN London (equal preference) scheme but would only be able to share information with those authorities not cooperating in the scheme.

Members thanked Carol Neill for her work and time she had given to the Admissions Review and Carol Neil expressed her thanks to the various teams and departments that had helped her put the consultation and catchment area maps together.

9 SCHOOL ORGANISATION – REGULATIONS, GUIDANCE, WEBSITE AND FORUM

A copy of the revised regulations and guidance from the DfES was distributed to the Committee for information which included guidance on approving the School Organisation Plan.

Members noted the newly launched DfES website on school organisation, www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolorg, and the areas of information the site provides:

- 1) Guidance (for public and parents; for promoters and proposers; for decision makers; for school governors; on school organisation plans)
- 2) Forum
- 3) Latest news and frequently asked questions
- 4) How to contact the DfES, glossary of terms, other useful links

10 DRAFT SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

The Draft School Organisation Plan (SOP) was presented to the Committee by Paul Holmes, Acting Head of School Organisation and Andrew Tusting, Assitant Education Officer. Members noted that changes from the 2002 SOP had been made in italics and that for the first time the plan covered a 3 year period (2003-2006).

The following amendments to the plan were discussed and agreed:

Page No	Amendment
p4	It was noted that the period of consultation for the draft SOP had been extended to 11 weeks (previously 2 months).
p5	SOC – definition to be amended to reflect the existing establishment of SOC SOP – definition to be amended to reflect the existing establishment of a SOP
p8/9	Following discussion it was suggested that the draft plan should include a list of targets to be achieved to enable the Committee to assess whether actions have been met. It was agreed to include detailed actions and information on partnerships. The specific details would be included in the relevant appendix.
p12	Typing error. “Wycombe’s population is projected to fall by 4,800 between 2000 and 2011 from.....”
p14	It was confirmed that data from Foundation schools would still be collated on an annual basis
p20	Typing error under Small Schools section. “In primary schools it is recommended that at least....”
p21	16-19 provision to be emphasised in more detail
p25	Error under Collaboration between Schools section. To be amended to read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a “Fresh Start” School, Highcrest in Wycombe

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of an “Excellence Cluster” in Wycombe
p27	Amendment to 6.11 Triggers for Review “Circular 281-00 (Appendix 3) was distributed in November 2000 to all Headteachers and Chairman of governors as a means...”
p32-35	Titles for each chart to be included
p36	Department categories to be amended under section 9.2 Special Provision in Mainstream Schools.
p42	Details regarding the establishment of Children’s Centres to be included under the section Some Current Issues.
p44	Alternative table from Learning & Skills Council to be inserted
p45	Amendment to paragraph 2: “ Co-ordinating the provision of up-to-date information.... ” Amendment to paragraph 3: “ Recognising the critical need to work with partners in order to achieve the above. ”

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Committee in 11 weeks time to enable the 11 week consultation period of the draft School Organisation Plan 2003-2006 to be approved. The date for the next meeting was agreed as 24 September 2003 at 2.30pm.

The following amendments to the Appendices were discussed and agreed:

Appendices	Amendment
Appendix 1	Numbers of planned house over the next 5 years for Haddenham to be checked
Appendix 4	New way of dealing with projections to be included
Appendix 5	Dates in planned column to be rechecked as follows: Shortfall in Secondary Sector to be defined. Calculations of net capacity to be rechecked and to show impact of any new build, if appropriate. Totals for each row of data to be included
Appendix 6	Title for table to be included
Appendix 7	Net gain column to be defined as net gain of dwellings
Appendix 8	Updated information from Learning & Skills Council to be included

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their work on the draft plan and asked members to send any further comments/additions directly to the Officers.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs McNeish reported that her terms of office on the Schools Group had reached 3 years and were therefore up for renewal. The Secretary to the Committee agreed to review her terms of office and confirm if re-election or an alternative representative should be sought.

12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 24 September 2003 (previously 10 September)

Wednesday 14 January 2004

Wednesday 21 April 2004

Wednesday 7 July 2004

CHAIRMAN

APPENDIX 1

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Mr J Loarridge OBE
Chairman of the Buckinghamshire School Organisation
Committee
County Hall
Aylesbury HP20 1UA

tel: 020 7925 6412
fax: 020 7925 7472
www.dfes.gov.uk/ulf

Your Ref: E 1/1/180 RP

14 April 2003

Dear Mr Loarridge

Thank you for your letter of 10 March to Tony Jeffery about post 16 school organisation. I apologise for the delay in replying.

School adjudicators decide on school organisation issues and admission arrangements which cannot be resolved locally. They were appointed in response to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

I should emphasise that the adjudicators are independent of the Department and would not inevitably support the LSC proposal. Their role is to look afresh at all cases referred to them, considering each case on its merits and taking account of the reasons for disagreement at local level in the light of the current legislation, the guidance from the Secretary of State and the School Organisation Plan.

Yours sincerely



Sharon Louis
Young Peoples Policy Division

