



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 5

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2003, IN MAIN HALL 2, COACH HOUSE, GREEN PARK TRAINING CENTRE, ASTON CLINTON COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 5.00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Schools Group

Mrs J Wainwright, Mr D Richardson, Ms A Coneron, Dr K Simmons, Mr C Brownlee

Buckinghamshire County Council

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

Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Mr J A Loarridge OBE (Chairman)

Mr L Stephen

Northampton RC Schools Commission

Mr B O'Byrne

Mrs M Bull

Learning and Skills Council

Ms Marion Wilkes

Officers Present

Ms Sue Butt – Democratic Services Officer

Mr Paul Holmes – Acting Head of School Organisation

Mr Andrew Tusting – Assistant Education Officer

Mr Raj Popat – Senior Solicitor Education

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Schools Group

Mrs C Bevins

Buckinghamshire County Council

Mrs M Baldwin

Northampton RC Schools Commission

Ms F Image

Members welcomed Katy Simmons and Angela Coneron as new members of the Schools Group to their first meeting of the Committee.

Members noted and congratulated Leslie Stephen on his recent appointment as Director of Education at Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, replacing Danny Sullivan.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2003, copies of which had previously been circulated, were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Minute 6 – Determination of Statutory Notices

Amendments attached as Appendix 1.

Minute 7&8 Admissions Update and Catchment Area Review

Deletion of the sentence “where it was received as per the number of children educated within the county on the age rated pupil ratio”.

The Acting Head of School Organisation, Paul Holmes, updated members on the progress of the Admissions and Catchment Area Review work to date. The consultation period closed on 12 September 2003 from which 4500 responses had been received as well as a large number of separate correspondence. From this, the following hotspots had been identified:

- Chorleywood
- Flackwell Heath
- Hurley
- Jordans/ Seer Green

There had been a generally positive response from parents that attended the drop in sessions held around the county with the majority of parents in favour of the selective system. It was also reported that some refinement would need to be carried out around secondary school catchment areas in Hawridge, Cholesbury and Stokenchurch where postcode classification used to identify catchment areas had caused some errors.

Minute 10 – Draft School Organisation Plan

It was noted that all amendments put forward by the committee at the last meeting, as outlined in the minutes, had been included in the updated plan and appendices. It was noted that in Appendix 1, Planning Area 2 of the Appendices, approval for the housing developments in Haddenham had been withdrawn and details would be deleted from the final School Organisation Plan.

4 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to discuss.

5 DETERMINATION OF STATUTORY NOTICES

- a) Bedgrove Infant School**
- b) Bedgrove Junior School**

The Committee received and noted the report from the Secretary to the Committee, Raj Popat, on the Statutory Notices for the change in category for Bedgrove Infant and Junior Schools from Community to Foundation. Members agreed at the last Committee to defer the decision on the determination of Statutory Notices in order for proper consultation, as required, with the LEA and local schools to be carried out. Since the last meeting the Secretary wrote to the two schools not originally consulted, Ashmead Combined and Elmhurst Junior School. The response from Ashmead Combined was circulated to the Committee for information and members noted that no response had been received from Elmhurst Junior School. Paul Holmes, Acting Head of School Organisation, reported that he had recently visited Bedgrove Infant and Junior School to ensure all consultation, as required, had been carried out and that the Headteachers were made fully aware of all liabilities involved in the change of category to Foundation schools.

The Headteachers for Bedgrove Infant and Junior School addressed the Committee. The following main points were noted as supporting reasons for the schools applications for change in category from Community to Foundation status:

- All support staff would receive the same pay and employment conditions as were currently available to staff on Bucks pay
- Governing bodies for both schools had been made fully aware of extra responsibilities (including responsibility for health and safety) and comprise a range of professionals and parents all based within the Aylesbury area
- Governing bodies will become their own admission authorities and be responsible for establishing their own Independent Appeals Panels
- Management of and linked admissions arrangements between the two schools to ensure continuity of primary education for all pupils and siblings
- Commitment to continuation of long standing relationship developed with the LEA
- Establishment of a group of Trustees to hold the land and intention to buy back into LEA insurance scheme

The Headteachers were asked if the present working relationships between the schools and the LEA would remain if a change in Headteacher occurred. The Headteachers confirmed that the governors were committed to working with the LEA and would advise any new headteacher to continue this commitment.

The Headteachers confirmed that there were no plans to increase the number of buildings at either school.

The Headteachers commented that the logisticals and geographic make-up of the school would not be conducive to making the school of combined status.

The Headteachers confirmed that any child that lived within the catchment area of the schools would be guaranteed a place.

The Headteachers confirmed that they had not considered the option of joining an existing Foundation Body to hold property for the purposes of the schools and preferred the establishment of a group of trustees to hold the property.

Following discussion an adjournment was made so that each group could discuss how they would vote on the proposal.

The Schools Group, Buckinghamshire County Council and Northampton RC Schools Commission abstained. All groups declared an objection to the proposals for change of category but cited insufficient grounds to vote against the proposal as the reason for their decision to abstain.

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education voted in favour of the proposal as they could not find any reasonable evidence to vote against.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to Bedgrove Infant and Junior School change of category to Foundation status subject to modification of the implementation date to 1 January 2004.

The Committee requested that the LEA responds to and supports the concerns raised by Ashmead Combined School in their consultation letter and that the LEA revisit policy issues relating to Statutory Notices on schools change of status and information pertaining to inclusion in applications for change of category.

6 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

Marion Wilkes updated the Committee on the work of the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

Members noted the following points:

- The Strategic Area Review began in the summer to look at provision for 14-19 year olds and adults. The Review is planned to take 2 years to complete and the Local Lifelong Learning Partnerships will be facilitating consultation groups.
- A Learning Partnership Event would be taking place on Tuesday 7 October 2003 at Green Park Training Centre to ensure all stakeholder groups were included in the consultation. The outcomes from this work are set to be implemented in the 2005/08 plan
- It was confirmed that the sixth form funding allocation had now been distributed and that site visits with schools with 6th Forms not already visited by the LSC person responsible were currently underway.
- The Buckinghamshire Increased Flexibility Partnerships launched last year had proven to be extremely successful, where 1400 14-16 year olds joined the programme in 2003 bringing the total number of young people experiencing new programmes up to 2000 in the county

- The DfES had confirmed £50,000 core funding with substantial additional funding being allocated from the local LSC to support pupil numbers in the county.
- It was confirmed that following the submission of proposals against the tender specifications funding from the local Intervention and Development Fund Initiatives had now been agreed and projects begun.
- It was confirmed that funding for special sixth form schools was allocated through the LEA

A representative from the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education welcomed consultation with the LSC and the development of a close working partnership as had been developed between the Board and the LEA.

7 SEN UPDATE

The Committee expressed disappointment that there was no officer representation from Special Education Services and requested an update be included in the minutes. A report updating the Committee on special education needs (SEN) is attached.

8 DETERMINATION OF CLOSURE OF VERNEY AVENUE SCHOOL

The Committee received and noted the report from Andrew Tusting, Education Adviser, and were asked to consider the proposal to close Verney Avenue School with effect from 31 December 2003 and to agree whether or not to determine the Statutory Notice.

One objection to the possible closure of Verney Avenue School had been received following the publication of the Statutory Notices and this was presented to the Committee for consideration.

A member of the Schools Group sympathised with the objector as they had experienced similar problems with the transfer of SEN pupils to their Upper School. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People reported that they were not aware of any problems with the transfer of SEN pupils to mainstream schools but would ensure an officer investigated and responded to the concerns raised by the member.

The Schools Group, Buckinghamshire County Council, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and Northampton RC Schools Commission all voted in favour of the Statutory Notice for the discontinuance of Verney Avenue School.

RESOLVED

That approval be given to the Statutory Notice to close Verney Avenue School with effect from 31 December 2003.

9 SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN

Paul Holmes, Acting Head of School Organisation and Andrew Tusting, Education Adviser presented the updated School Organisation Plan (SOP) to the Committee. Members noted the changes that had been made to the plan and the additional responses received from consultation.

It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged between the new Head of School Organisation and those of the Committee to routinely monitor the developing accommodation programme for schools as outlined in the School Organisation Plan

The following amendments to the plan were discussed and noted as follows:

Page No	Amendment
p2 Appendix10	Inclusion of Ethnicity Data (included in other LEAs School Organisation Plans but not originally included in the Bucks draft plan)
p5	Inclusion of the term SCN in the glossary (new term for Social Communication)
p6	Information updated to include revised planning development data
p7	Figures amended
p8	Updated information on Special Education Needs included, provided by Len Brazier
p9	Amended bullet point on Primary Complex Special School
p10 (onwards)	Updated information from Wycombe District Council and the 2001 Census included
p12	Updated information on number of pupils on roll
p14	Updated information on Special Education Needs included, provided by Len Brazier
p17	Members questioned the relatively low staying on rate of 33% for Upper Schools in comparison to the 100% rate for Grammar Schools. Andrew Tusting agreed to investigate and clarify this figure.
p17	It was requested that a paragraph on post 16 provision should also be included under the remit of the School Organisation Committee.
p19	It was noted that Waddesdon School had also recently achieved Arts Special Status. It was reported that Beacon Schools for Secondary Schools ended on 1 September 2003 and had now been replaced by a scheme called Leading Edge Status which the LEA were hoping would be applied for by a number of secondary schools.
p21	Paragraph on the Promotion of Community Cohesion to be updated to include the LSC in the promotion of community cohesion.
p23	Accessibility and Travel section slightly amended with additional sentence included on accessibility strategy.
p25	Additional bullet point on Buckinghamshire Academy of School leadership
p27	Andrew Tusting to clarify the wording of the Council Plan aims
p28-35	Data in tables updated
p36	The number of children on role in the EBD department at The Misbourne is 12 and not 4 as reported in the Draft plan
p43	Members questioned the need to publish the exact sixth form pupil count for Secondary Schools where those for Upper Schools were often considerably lower than Grammar Schools. Andrew Tusting to speak to LSC to ascertain if a ">100" figure could be used instead of exact numbers.
p44	The LSC Strategic Objectives table to be included
P45	Typing error 'co-coordinating' to be amended

The Committee requested that the Racial Equality Council and other Faith bodies be consulted on the School Organisation Plan.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members from Buckinghamshire County Council asked for patience to be exerted over the coming months with Schools and the Children and Young People Portfolio where Social Services Inspectorate and the OfSTED inspection would be taking place.

11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- Wednesday 14 January 2004, 2.30pm, Green Park
- Wednesday 21 April 2004, 2.30pm Green Park
- Wednesday 7 July 2004, 2.30pm Green Park

CHAIRMAN