



# 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 14 JANUARY 2004, IN SEMINAR ROOM 1, GREEN PARK TRAINING CENTRE, ASTON CLINTON COMMENCING AT 2.30 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.30 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

##### **Schools Group**

Jenny Wainwright, Doug Richardson, Angela Coneron, Chris Brownlee

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

Bruce Allen, Margaret Aston (Vice-Chairman), Clare Martens, Pam Bacon, Marion Clayton, Betty Lay

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

John Loarridge OBE (Chairman)  
Leslie Stephen

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

Barry O'Byrne  
Maggi Bull

##### **Officers Present**

Nick Powley – Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools)  
Len Brazier – Education Officer, Special Education Services  
Paul Holmes – Group Manager, School Organisation  
Carol Neill - Consultant  
Raj Popat – Group Solicitor, Education and Litigation  
Sue Butt – Democratic Services Officer

#### **1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR 2004/05**

John Loarridge was proposed by Bruce Allen and seconded by Margaret Aston.

**JOHN LOARRIDGE IN THE CHAIR**

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR 2004/05**

Margaret Aston was nominated by Pam Bacon and seconded by John Loarridge. Margaret Aston was duly appointed Vice-chairman.

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

Apologies were received from Frances Image, Northampton RC Schools Commission and Marion Wilkes, Learning and Skills Council.

## **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2003, copies of which had previously been circulated, were agreed as a correct record.

### **Minute 8 – Determination of Closure of Verney Avenue School**

Len Brazier from Special Education Services, confirmed that the concerns raised by the Schools Group member about transfer of SEN pupils to their Upper School had now been resolved where the issue had been in relation to a delayed payment which had now been released to the school.

### **Minute 9 – School Organisation Plan**

The Committee noted that a meeting between the Schools Group and the new Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) had now taken place and further details would be reported under agenda item 10.

## **6 POST 16 PROVISION – LOCAL LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)**

An update from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) was circulated to all members for information and presented by Paul Holmes, Group Manager School Organisation, on behalf of Marion Wilkes who had sent her apologies.

The Committee REQUESTED further information and details from the LSC on the following three issues:

- i) Regarding the LSC consultation on school sixth form funding, the Committee requested an update on the issue of collaboration where it was noted that the current funding systems were considered to be unhelpful and members felt collaboration was an important exercise to be encouraged by the LSC.
- ii) It was hoped that the LSC would take responsibility for the post-16 funding of pupils with special education needs (SEN) where the LEA, although responsible for the placement of pupils with SEN, was accountable for all education funding for all pupils aged 16 and under.
- iii) Regarding the LSC consultation on school sixth form funding, the Committee requested further information on the issue of Free School Meals and the use of postcode and Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) as proxy indicators.

## **7 SEN UPDATE**

Len Brazier, Education Officer from Special Education Services, presented a report on the November 2003 monthly update and end of academic year 2002/03 updates on special education needs in the county.

Clarification was sought on the difference of 906 pupils in July 2003 with moderate learning difficulties compared with 814 in November 2003. Len Brazier AGREED to investigate this difference and present a written answer at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the concerns of Special Education Services on the increased number of challenges the LEA had received against tribunals where parents can now appeal directly to tribunal under the Disability Discrimination Act. It was noted that the council's policy was to defend at a tribunal and any increase in the number of tribunals, increases demands on officer time and resources.

It was confirmed that a meeting was being held on 15 January 2003 to discuss the arrangements to cover the responsibilities of the Strategic Manager for Children and Young People when the current manager leaves at the end of January.

It was noted that the SEN strategy would be discussed at the next meeting of the committee, and copies would be included with the agenda.

Following discussion of the increasing number of girls with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) being accommodated in out-county placements, Len Brazier and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People AGREED to investigate the suitability of developing a department and/ or school to meet these pupils needs.

## **8 ADMISSIONS CONSULTATIONS: OUTCOME OF SUMMER 2003 AND PROPOSALS FOR SPRING 2004 CONSULTATION**

Paul Holmes, Group Manager School Organisation, and Carol Neil, Consultant, reported on the outcome of the summer 2003 admissions consultation and proposals for the 2004 consultation.

The Committee noted that in addition to the areas where changes had been made to proposals and agreed by Cabinet, Jordans had been moved into Dr Challoner's High School (girls) catchment area for girls living in the village.

It was noted that schools would have to publish their admissions arrangements every two years although if the admissions criteria changed, or the school and arrangements were challenged, or the consultation process was not followed correctly, then the school would have to re-publish their admissions arrangements.

Clarification was sought on whether primary schools within the county were oversubscribed for September 2004 intake as a result of a millennium baby boom where a number of members reported that primary schools in their area were experience admissions pressures. Nick Powley, Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools), AGREED to investigate this issue and report back to the next meeting.

The Committee noted that the new 11+ arrangements were likely to affect the timing and number of appeals received where the education appeals team had been made aware of this likely increase in work.

## **9 CORRESPONDENCE**

Paul Holmes, Group Manager School Organisation, circulated a copy of the letter written in response to the correspondence from the Chair of Governors of Oakridge School. The Committee noted the response and supported the officers and LEA decisions. It was noted that the school had also been asked if they would be interested in increased specialist capacity to which a response had not yet been received.

It was AGREED that officers would continue to keep a close eye on the school and any changes in pupil numbers.

## **10 UPDATE ON ACTION AND MONITORING OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**

Nick Powley, the new Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools), was welcomed to the Committee. A meeting was held on 8 January 2004 with members of the Schools Group, the Chairman and relevant officers met to explore ways in which the Committee could develop and be supported in its work.

The following issues were discussed and agreed:

- The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) to investigate best practice in other School Organisation Committees and to report back to the September meeting with findings.
- The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) agreed to provide a six monthly report to the Committee on the Secondary schools building programme and any targets for the next six months.
- The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) agreed to provide an annual report on the removal of surplus school places and any LEA targets in this respect. In addition, the Committee requested further information on the use to which the surplus classroom had been used.
- The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) agreed to report to the July meeting on the outcome of the OfSTED inspection of the LEA and how this relates to the work of the Committee.

Bruce Allen expressed an interest in attending another authority's School Organisation Committee as an observer. The Head of Policy, Planning and Performance (Schools) took on board this suggestion and AGREED to investigate.

It was reported that the DfES in December 2003 put in a 'modernisation/ primary need' criteria to notionally target £2.5m capital allocation to primary schools. The Committee noted that this money was not ring fenced for schools and allocation would only be known when the full budget was set by Council in February. Officers confirmed that they had put forward the 'modernisation/ primary need' as a priority recommendation.

It was AGREED that the Chairman would write on behalf of the Committee to the Chief Officer and Cabinet members advocating that any grants secured for school buildings and development should be ring-fenced for that purpose.

Paul Holmes, Group Manager School Organisation, updated the Committee on the secondary schools building programme and it was AGREED that this would become a rolling item on the agenda every six months. A copy of the update is appended to the minutes.

## **11 ORAL UPDATE ON SCHOOLS COLLEGE VACANCY**

Raj Popat, Secretary to the School Organisation Committee, reported that the close for nominations for the secondary school category vacancy on the Schools Group was at the end of January where so far one nomination had been received. A member of the Schools Group requested and the Secretary AGREED to write to all relevant schools reminding them of the closing date for receipt of nominations. The Committee were reminded that if more than one nomination was received then the vacancy would go to a vote. It was hoped that the new representative would be in place by the next meeting.

## **12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Wednesday 21 April 2004, 2.30pm Green Park Training Centre
- Wednesday 7 July 2004, 2.30pm Green Park Training Centre
- Wednesday 29 September 2004, 2.30pm, Green Park Training Centre

**CHAIRMAN**