

Minutes

LEARNING NEW WAYS: ACADEMIES AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE - SCRUTINY REVIEW

MINUTES OF THE LEARNING NEW WAYS: ACADEMIES AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE - SCRUTINY REVIEW HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2012, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.15 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mrs M Aston, Mrs L Clarke and Mrs A Davies (Chairman)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mrs Davies welcomed Mr Derek Berry, Mr Trevor Fowler, Mrs Molly Fowler, Mr John Bajina, Mr Andrew Walker and Mrs Sue Imbriano to the meeting.

2 NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 19th October were received together with the notes of the most recent meeting, held on 8th November.

3 SUBMISSIONS TO REVIEW GROUP (PAPERS TO FOLLOW)

Mr Berry presented the paper previously circulated on behalf of Mr and Mrs Fowler, Mr Bajina, Ms Derrick and himself.

The group are concerned about the potential decline in education choices and options for families in Bucks as a result of schools moving away from local authority control and administration. The group's primary concern is to ensure that the interests of parents and children are safeguarded when free schools are established and the county schools transfer to academy status. The paper submitted by the group outlined their views on the future responsibilities of the local authority and covered school admissions; school transport appeals; school performance. The role of the local authority as "Champion of Parents" is of particular importance.

The County Council should monitor School Admission policies very closely, it was felt, particularly with the advent of the Academies and potential multiplicity of such policies.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Admission policies should be publicised in a clear way. Good communication with parents, generally, was vital and particularly on admission matters. The local authority needed to make clear its responsibilities. There was a need to build relationships and co-operation.

Andrew Walker presented his submission. He highlighted the local authority's relationship with the new Academies. The Academy, he mentioned, is now the provider of an education service to a commissioner of education within the county. Mr Walker considered the relationship to be three-fold and outlined his reasons:-

- 1 The Authority retains the responsibility for commissioning academies to provide a service to the community;
- 2 The Academy is a customer of the educational support service;
- 3 The Academy is a customer for a range of other services that have historically been provided by the authority

Mr Walker referred to a Government paper entitled "Scheme for Financing Schools and Defining Working Relationships between Governing Bodies, Headteachers and the Local Authorities".

The Review Group thanked the presenters for their contribution towards the issues discussed.

4 REVIEW OF EVIDENCE GATHERED

The notes of previous meetings (17th October with BCC officers & 8th November with Heads) were discussed along with national reports.

5 REPORT THEMES AND APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATION AREAS

After discussion of the issues, the Group agreed the following Recommendations for inclusion in the report to Cabinet;

1. That the local authority clearly defines it's new, but still strongly strategic, role in relation to education and that it develops an implementation plan for communicating and delivering this role.
2. As future working relationships between schools and the local authority are in part dependent on the commercial robustness of the proposed Bucks Learning Trust, that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills provides Overview and Scrutiny with an update on the early operation of the Trust in Spring/Summer 2014, including information on commercial operation, mitigation of identified risks, supporting collaborative working with primary schools, and Councillor membership of the Trust.
3. That options are explored for supporting and inducting on appointment new Heads and governors into the Bucks family of schools, school clusters and the Bucks Learning Trust. In addition, the possibility of an annual meeting of Bucks Heads, governors and councillors should be considered for sharing matters of common interest and importance in education.
4. That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills provides Overview and Scrutiny with interim updates on the progress of the incoming Fair Access Boards at timely points over 2013 to understand progress and to promote to councillors the work of the Boards in supporting vulnerable children.

5. That, building on the formation of the Bucks Learning Trust, work is done to facilitate the sharing of best practice on school-to-school support, for example around continuing to drive up standards. This could include options for peer reviews, establishing linkages between governing bodies, and schools working in improvement clusters. The County Council should consider how its scrutiny function could support such work.
6. That mechanisms are explored around bringing together schools, developers, and district and county councils in the local planning process to discuss and influence potential impacts of any new housing developments on local schools and BCC service planning, and to involve these parties at a much earlier stage in discussions on use of Section 106 monies and the Community Infrastructure Levy.
7. That a link to *Parent View* (an online parent comment website provided by Ofsted) is included on the BCC 'Academies schools information for parents' webpage alongside existing links to Department of Education guidance on academies.
8. That, as part of the Member Induction Programme following the 2013 County Council elections, guidance is provided on why it is important for councillors to get to know their local schools and that options for a 'protocol' around school and councillor working relationships are explored. Guidance should outline the new role for councillors in the changed educational sector, advise councillors on how to get to know Heads and schools, working with parents, and helping to give schools a strong local voice

6 NEXT STEPS

The final report will go to OSCC on the 4th December and Cabinet on the 10th December Cabinet for approval.

CHAIRMAN