

MINUTES of the meeting of Education Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Brockington, Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 14th March, 2005 at 10.30 a.m.

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| Present: | Councillor | B.F. Ashton (Chairman) |
| | Councillor | J.P. Thomas (Vice Chairman) |
| | Councillors | N.J.J. Davies, G. Lucas, R. Mills, Mrs. S.J. Robertson, J. Stone, D.C. Taylor, Ms. A.M. Toon and W.J. Walling |
| | Church Members | J.D. Griffin (Roman Catholic) and Revd. I. Terry (Church of England) |
| | Teacher Representatives | M. Carter (Special Teachers), C. Lewandowski (Secondary Teachers) and J.D. Pritchard (Primary Teachers) |
| | Headteacher Representatives | Miss S. Peate (Primary Sector Headteachers) |

In attendance: Councillors R.J. Phillips and D.W. Rule MBE (Cabinet Member – Children’s Services).

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ms K. Fitch, and Councillors H. Bramer, R.M. Manning, and Mrs J.E. Pemberton.

Apologies were also received from Mr S. Boka who, due to work commitments had tendered his resignation from the Committee. The Committee Officer (Scrutiny) reported that arrangements were underway to find a replacement Secondary Sector Parent Governor member.

48. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G. Lucas substituted for Councillor Mrs J.E. Pemberton, Councillor R. Mills substituted for Councillor R.M. Manning and Councillor J. Stone substituted for Councillor H. Bramer.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

50. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December, 2004, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. TEACHERS' WORKLOAD AGREEMENT - MONITORING OF PROGRESS

The Committee were informed of progress, both locally and nationally, in implementing the National School Workforce Remodelling Programme.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that the costs to schools of the programme had to be met from the budgets to schools under LMS arrangements. Extracts from a statement by the previous Minister of State for School Standards on school funding in 2005/6 in relation to workforce reform were appended to the report at Appendix 1. He also reported upon the use of the 100% grant to help the LEA develop capacity to support schools in remodelling their workforce; to enable training programmes and conferences and financially support schools through the programme. A significant number of schools had now established a "School Challenge Team", as expected by the NRT (National Remodelling Team), to look at how they may re-model to achieve the contractual changes by September 2005. Six tranches of schools had been launched with a further tranche being launched on 18th March 2005.

The Committee noted that nationally a number of issues had arisen, particularly over the planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) with the Trade Unions being involved in negotiations. However, on the whole, there seemed to be a good degree of co-operation locally.

The Committee debated the subject and the following principal points were raised:

- In response to questions concerning invigilating at examinations, the Committee were informed that teachers should not routinely be required to invigilate at external examinations. The Headteacher was responsible for employing, on a temporary basis, suitably experienced personnel to keep order during invigilation, as some local schools had started to do. This did not preclude teachers from occasionally undertaking the duty.
- Headteachers may adjust the school timetable to make better use of teachers not involved in invigilating exams.
- In response to concerns over whether teachers would be on the premises during their PPA time the Committee were informed that the decision was up to the Headteacher. While there were issues, particularly at small primary schools, over accommodation for teachers while on PPA time, the current expectation was that they would be on hand.
- While schools received extra grant payment to help implement the PPA, including an increased budget from the Council, this was still thought to be insufficient to employ supply cover.
- While teachers were on PPA time pupils were expected to continue to receive quality curriculum teaching. Concern was expressed that teaching assistants may be expected to assume the role of teacher while the teacher was on PPA time. A suggestion was made that graduate teachers could be employed to gain experience while covering PPA time.
- The Committee greatly appreciated the time and effort school staff voluntarily put into providing after school clubs and activities.
- Concern was expressed that some pupils viewed study or activity time as a free period and had been seen outside school premises, an issue that should be closely monitored by the Truancy Team.
- It was suggested that, in view of the wide range of issues affected by the implementation of the Workload Agreement, a Members' seminar be arranged on the subject.
- The Committee noted that schools were still developing the PPA and it was already evident that some schools were finding some innovative individual solutions.
- The Head of School Effectiveness reported that, while the subject raised a number of complex issues, training sessions had been held for Headteachers and Governors and he was cautiously optimistic that Herefordshire would meet the September 2005 implementation target.

RESOLVED: That subject to the concerns raised above the report on the Teachers' Workload Agreement be noted and a Members' seminar on the issue be arranged.

52. BANDING INTO SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered progress in expanding banded funding, available in primary schools since September 2003, into secondary schools and considered the proposed development of monitoring arrangements.

The Head of Children's and Students' Services reported that, in response to increased pressure from Government agencies to reduce reliance on the statutory assessment process as a mechanism for delegating SEN funding to schools, Herefordshire had adopted a banded funding model to reduce bureaucracy and give schools more flexibility in the way they used their funds. Following trials the banding arrangements had been introduced into primary schools in the autumn term of 2003. No banded funding had been allocated to Year 6 pupils in the summer of 2003 as no mechanism existed for them to take this funding into Year 7. Following consultation a mechanism had been found and from summer term 2005 secondary schools would be able to bid for funds for children then in Year 6 who would transfer in September 2005. She also reported that a mechanism had been implemented to monitor the arrangements, which included the appointment of a Monitoring Officer. This would ensure that the process was robust; that improvements to the monitoring process were identified, including the development of an SEN database, and that work with advisory teachers for SEN on future training needs could be identified.

The Committee noted that, where appropriate, statutory assessment of a pupil's need would continue, especially when entry to a special school was considered. However, following the introduction of the more streamlined banding arrangements there had been a reduction in the number of statutory assessments.

The Committee also noted that pupils attending private schools, particularly those pupils from other authorities who brought with them their own funding arrangements, were not eligible for banded funding.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the development of a mechanism for monitoring the arrangements as set out in the report be supported.

53. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION AND SUPPORT SERVICES STAGE 4 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the Stage 4 Improvement Plan arising from the Best Value Review of the Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services.

The Head of Children's and Students' Services reported that arising from the Best Value Review, the Stage 4 Improvement Plan, attached to the report at Appendix 1, had been produced to achieve the improvements identified from the review.

On questioning the Service's ability to reduce the levels of statutory assessment (Best Value report paragraphs 5.1 & 9.4) the Committee was informed that, as reported in the previous agenda item, where appropriate, statutory assessment of a pupil's need would continue, especially when entry to a special school was considered. However, the introduction of the mechanism for delegating SEN funding to schools (banded funding) had already resulted in a reduction in the number of

statutory assessments.

RESOLVED: That the Best Value Stage 4 Improvement Plan for the Special Educational Needs Provision and Support Services be accepted and referred back to the Cabinet Member (Children's Services) for implementation.

54. SUPPORT FOR "GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS"

The Committee were informed of the current provision made in Herefordshire for "Gifted and Talented" pupils.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that schools had a duty to provide for the needs of all pupils, including pupils in the "Gifted and Talented" category. This was a cross-phase activity and the report highlighted the support actions or programmes that were in place within the various local education sectors to promote this provision.

The Committee noted that specialist high schools (currently 8 out of 14 High Schools in Herefordshire) were required to have "Gifted and Talented" identification programmes for their specialisms. While all high schools were expected to comply, it was further noted that the criteria for specialist status were likely to change in the near future.

In response to concerns that high performing pupils should not be singled out in case they were subject to bullying the Committee was informed that schools were very mindful of this potential situation.

Questioned about the potential additional cost to parents of supporting a high performing pupil e.g. in music, where instruments had to be provided, the Head of School Effectiveness reported that schools decided their budget priorities. However, the services provided by the County Music Service provided good value for money.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

55. EDUCATION REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2004/05

The Committee considered a report on the education revenue expenditure for 2004/05.

The Head of Policy and Resources reported a forecast net underspend of approximately £480,000. The main variations were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. School balances, which were difficult to forecast, were indicated in the report. Headteachers, together with governing bodies, had been asked to review their level of balances when setting their 2005/06 budgets particularly taking into consideration potential budget pressures arising from job evaluation, workforce reform and falling pupil numbers. He further reported that the presentation of the report was being revised to reconcile the report to the cost centre structure used by the Council's 'Cedar' accounting system and to comply with the expected auditing arrangements for the Dedicated Schools Grant 2006.

The Committee noted that the consultancy fees for setting up the PFI project had been increased by £600,000. This had been due to changes to the national legal framework governing the Whitecross PFI agreement and the inclusion of ICT services in the agreement. The Head of Policy and Resources explained the reasoning behind the inclusion of ICT in the contract and the procurement and maintenance safeguards that had been put in place.

In response to a question concerning the computerised accountancy systems operated by schools the Committee was informed that schools had a free choice as to what systems they used. Many primary schools used the PFP system, which supported the small budget systems. High schools used the SIMS system, which was supported by the Council's ICT services. One high school had successfully piloted using the Council's Cedar system and a further pilot would be run with a number of primary schools.

While welcoming the savings on transport (£606,000) the Committee were concerned that new school transport routes should not adversely affect parents getting their children to school. The Committee wished to be kept apprised of the results of the pilot project into the further co-ordination of education/social services transportation requirements.

On questioning the use of this year's anticipated £480,000 underspend the Committee was informed that it had been allocated to school budgets on a one-off basis to support the implementation of Job Evaluation in 2005/6. A note of concern was raised over the degree of support that may be possible in subsequent years.

The Committee requested that details of next year's education budget (2005/6) and further details of the DFES proposals for the 3 year budgeting for schools be presented for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the 2005/6 education budget and the DFES proposals for 3 year budgeting for schools be presented to the next meeting for consideration.

56. PROGRESS OF MAJOR CAPITAL SCHEMES (AND TARGETED CAPITAL FUND)

The Committee considered progress on the education capital programme in the current financial year, implications for the service and the recently announced DfES allocations for the future.

The Head of Policy and Resources reported that capital resources allocated for education had risen by £1,442,294 to a total of £7,220,425 as indicated in Appendix 1 to the report. The total anticipated budget expenditure for 2004/5 would be £5,314,628. Although considerably lower than resources available, £5,134,401 needed to be spent to avoid any risk of losing resources. The County Treasurer had indicated that remaining funds would be carried forward to 2005/2006.

It was also reported that the DfES had invited bids under the Targeted Capital Funding Stream. The Authority was permitted to make bids to the total value of £12m, but could bid for no more than two projects for community schools and two projects in voluntary aided schools. He reported that schemes for merging Hunderton Junior and Infants school; a major re-development of The Minster College, Leominster, or the relocation of Barrs Court Special School, Hereford, to the Hereford College Campus were being considered for submission. In the redevelopment of The Minster College it is proposed to relocate Westfield Special School, Leominster, to that site. Discussions were to take place with both Diocesan Authorities concerning the voluntary aided sector.

The Committee appreciated that while smaller funding bids for improvements could be made e.g. for The Minster College, the authority didn't want to prejudice any potential major funding bid for the total re-development or a new school, which was what was really heeded at The Minster.

The Committee noted that the proposed new school at Credenhill was now on hold pending the new Unitary Development Plan and that site acquisition problems were delaying a project to provide a playing field at Fairfield.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

57. YEAR 2004 RESULTS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

The Committee considered the Summer 2004 final results at Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for Herefordshire schools.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that, overall, the results indicated an encouraging position, however, the results for Key Stage 3 were still provisional. Due to the range of providers, difficulty had been experienced in obtaining a fair assessment of pupils entered for advanced level GCE and VCE exams. While the points score measure, indicated in the report, gave an indication of relative performance, he highlighted a range of factors that affected this method of comparison, the score for The Minster College, Leominster, being a prime example.

In debating the report the Committee questioned the drop in the results for KS2 and KS3 in science. It was commented that, while this seemed to be a national trend, in the local context, the retirement or vacancy in a teaching post of a specific subject was a contributory factor.

The Committee requested that they be supplied with copies of the 'Key Stage Results for Herefordshire 2004' publication.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the 'Key Stage Results for Herefordshire 2004' publication be supplied to Committee Members.

58. SCHOOLS INSPECTED BY OFSTED SINCE SEPTEMBER 2004

The Committee considered the outcomes of schools inspected by Ofsted since the start of the new academic year beginning September 2004.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that since the last report 10 schools had either completed their inspection or had been notified that an inspection was imminent. Summary paragraphs from the Ofsted reports for those schools where inspection reports had been published were contained in Appendix 1 to the report. Weobley High School, which was currently in special measures, had been judged to be making 'reasonable' progress when last visited by the HMI in the autumn term.

He further reported that the 2004-2005 academic year would be the last in which the current Ofsted school inspection schedule would be used. From September 2005 all schools would be inspected every three years. The inspections would be shorter, sharper and make more use of the school's own evaluation of its performance. Marlbrook Primary School had been invited to pilot the new inspection arrangements.

The Committee noted the summaries contained in Appendix 1, particularly the excellent inspection results for Pencombe CE Primary School.

The Committee further noted that the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) had debated the weaknesses in religious education identified at The John Masefield High School and Wigmore High School.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Chairman write to Pencombe CE Primary School to congratulate the school on their excellent inspection results.

59. DRUG EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

The Committee considered the current situation regarding drug education in schools.

The Head of Children's and Students' Services reported that drug education was not, in itself, a National Curriculum subject although the science element of the curriculum did cover aspects. The report described how other aspects of drug education was being incorporated into other existing curriculum teaching at each Key Stage. She reported how, in addition to providing training to teachers, the Children's Services Directorate and its partners had developed a range of resource packs, which could be adapted by schools, for use in other curriculum areas. Drug education and drug incidents procedures had been published by the DfES earlier in the year.

The Committee appreciated the work being undertaken to educate pupils in the danger of drugs. In relation to further co-ordination, a suggestion was made that there should be a national campaign highlighting the issue. However, it was noted that a previous drug campaign and the anti-smoking campaigns had not been particularly successful.

The Committee requested further information, in general terms, on the interrelationship between the Council's policy towards drugs in schools; schools own policies, such as zero tolerance policies, and the practical consequential effect on the exclusion of pupils from school for drug related matters.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a report on the interrelationship between the Council's policy towards drugs in schools; schools own policies and the practical consequential effect on the exclusion of pupils for drug related matters, be presented to a future meeting.

60. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were informed of the current position concerning the Education Scrutiny Committee work programme.

The Head of School Effectiveness reported that a review was currently underway concerning the remit of the Committee in light of the Children Act 2004 and establishment of a Children's Directorate and Cabinet Member portfolio for Children's Services. Following the review, and in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, a draft work programme would be compiled for consideration by the Committee.

In response to a question, the Committee noted that Denominational Transport was currently a matter of national debate. A report would be presented at an appropriate time, when the national picture was clearer.

The Committee suggested that the following issues be considered for scrutiny:

- A further up-date on pupil numbers and the implication for schools of falling numbers on roll.
- Banded Funding – monitoring progress on its implementation.

- The position of Education Systems Support (ESS) in the wider Council's corporate structure.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the suggested items be considered for inclusion in the work programme and recommendation to the Strategic Monitoring Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.47 p.m.

CHAIRMAN