

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 22 APRIL 2013**

Present: Councillors S Day (Chairman), Harper, N Arculus, B Rush, B Saltmarsh,
J Shearman, D Fower

Also present Alastair Kingsley Parent Governor Representative
Councillor J Holdich Cabinet Member for Education, Skills & University

Officers in Attendance: Sue Westcott Executive Director, Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis Assistant Director for Education and Resources
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Marie Southgate Lawyer

1. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Councillor Saltmarsh declared that she was a Member of the Peterborough Referral Unit (PRU) Management team.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2013

The minutes of the meetings held on 11 March 2013 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

5. Appointment of a Co-opted Member

The purpose of the report was to request that the Committee consider retaining Alistair Kingsley as a co-opted Member to the Committee. Members were informed that Alistair Kingsley became a co-opted member of the Committee as a Parent Governor Representative in May 2010, his term of office had been for three years which was due to end in May 2013. Alistair would be unable to continue for another three years as his role as Parent Governor had changed and was therefore no longer eligible to be co-opted to the Committee as a Parent Governor Representative. In accordance with the Constitution Part 4, Section 9 – Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Commission Procedure Rules, paragraph 3 the Committee shall be entitled to co-opt, as non-voting members, external representatives or otherwise invite participation from non-members where this is relevant to their work. Members were informed that Alistair Kingsley had been an active and valuable member of the Committee providing effective and challenging scrutiny at all meetings.

Members were also informed that the two vacancies on the Committee for Parent Governor Representatives had been advertised by the Governor Services Team but no one had applied and therefore the positions remained vacant. Members were concerned that the vacancies

remained open and requested that the Assistant Director for Education and Resources actively sought suitable candidates to fill the vacancies.

The Committee considered the request and agreed to retain Alistair Kingsley as a Co-opted Member of the Committee with no voting rights. The position to be reviewed on an annual basis.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee agreed:

1. To retain Alistair Kingsley as a Co-opted Member of the Committee with no voting rights and that this arrangement be reviewed on an annual basis.
2. That the Assistant Director for Education and Resources take action to actively market and fill the Parent Governor vacancies as Education co-opted members of the Committee.

6. The Vision for Education in Peterborough

The purpose of the report was to consult the Committee on the proposed draft Education vision for Peterborough in light of the changes at national level around the increasing role of school self-improvement and the new roles of local authorities in supporting education.

In November 2010, the Department for Education published the schools White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching', which had set out a radical reform programme for the schools system with the inference that schools would be freed from the constraints of central Government direction and teachers placed firmly at the heart of school improvement. Changes in the education system provided a new Education Act in 2011 and the key implications had been:

- An increase in the number of Academies and Free Schools
- Local Authorities seeing significant funding reductions including grants and in school improvement services
- Floor standards for schools being raised
- The revised Ofsted framework increasing pressure on schools with satisfactory schools now becoming "requires improvement"
- A requirement for low performing schools to join Academy chains and the encouragement of Academy led federations
- School-led school improvement replacing top-down initiatives.

The key roles for Peterborough as a Local Authority for education in the future will be as advocate for parents and children in which the LA:

1. Support parents and families through promoting a good supply of strong schools – encouraging the development of Academies and Free Schools which reflected the local community and ensuring outstanding maintained schools.
2. Ensure fair access to all schools for every child through providing sufficient school places and a range of different schools to support the community.
3. Use their democratic mandate to stand up for the interests of parents and children.
4. Support vulnerable pupils including Looked After Children, those with Special Educational Needs and those outside mainstream education.
5. Support maintained schools performing below the floor standards to improve quickly or convert to Academy status with a strong sponsor, and support all other schools which wish to collaborate with them to improve educational performance. Likewise work with academy governors to ensure all schools exceed the government floor targets on standards and progress.

6. Support schools to develop their own school improvement strategies and work between schools within the city and traded with those schools outside of the area.

Members were informed that the overall performance in Peterborough had not been good, the population continued to grow and was becoming more ethnically diverse. The LA had now become the Strategic Commissioner and the biggest challenge was the change in relationship between the LA and schools. Schools now had to take responsibility for their improvement but the Education Act 1996 firmly placed responsibility of outcomes for education of all children with the LA. There was now a need to get better value for money and not provide all services but focus on some. A key role for the LA was to provide education data and intelligence.

A recent review of the current services delivered by the LA had put them into three categories':

- Retained – those services / activities that were either statutory and needed to remain within Children's Services or those services which were considered to be of high importance to the organisation.
- School-to-School Support Partnership / Devolved to Schools – services that over time could be devolved / commissioned to the school to school partnership for the wider benefit of schools. There was emerging evidence that effective school-to-school collaboration was central to whole system improvement strategies, it was also a responsibility of local authorities to take the initiative in promoting them. A model for developing School to School support was included in the report which put schools into clusters both in secondary and primary schools. The schools would work together to discuss and resolve issues.
- Potential Areas for External Commissioning / Trading – these were areas which intend to be retained but further work would be undertaken to see whether these could be externalised or be expanded to operate on a trading basis.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members agreed that the Education Strategy was a move in the right direction but were concerned about the speed with which the change might happen. *Members were advised that some parts of the strategy were already in place or being developed. Other services would not be needed going forward. Quality assurance would be the key to commissioning services going forward.*
- Members wanted to know what would happen if services were outsourced and the proposed strategy did not work. *Members were advised that if the strategy were to be implemented the low profile services would go first and the high profile services last. There would be a need to sell to schools that Peterborough would perform better with a school-to-school partnership working together. Peterborough already had a school-to-school partnership working of which the majority of schools were members. The Peterborough Learning Partnership was originally formed in 2002. Other Local Authorities had stripped out their resources and devolved responsibility to schools and by doing this it had proved that the schools have been driven to work together and share best practice.*
- Members commented that they had thought best practice was already being shared across schools. *Members were advised that this was the case but on an ad hoc basis and was reliant on individual Heads knowing where to go for the best practice. The school-to-school partnership model brought knowledge and best practice to a single forum and passed it on to others.*
- Is the Peterborough Learning Partnership (PLP) set up as a charitable trust and did the model include reaching out to other authority public schools and independent schools. *Members were advised that the PLP would be set up as a charitable trust and its model had reached across borders and had expertise built in from elsewhere. It also had the capacity to include independent schools. An example of this was Oundle School who had worked with Thomas Deacon Academy.*

- Not all schools were obliged to join the PLP. How can you therefore ensure the model will work? *Members were informed that the role of the LA was to encourage schools to join the PLP and to help the PLP to develop. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources advised that he would be visiting schools and asking them why they had not joined the PLP and what they would want from the PLP to encourage them to join. All schools did already access something from the PLP and they did not have to be a subscribing member to attend conferences.*
- Members sought clarification between the Peterborough Learning Partnership and the Primary School Improvement Board. *Members were advised that they were primarily the same thing. The Primary School Improvement Board asked the PLP to commission pieces of work for them.*
- Who funds both the Secondary and Primary School Improvement Boards? *Members were advised that there was £500,000 in the school improvement pot which had been top sliced from the schools budget and the Local Authority would also contribute to this. However it was the decision of the Schools Forum whether the money would be spent on this strategy.*
- What would happen if the Head of a successful school left and the school started to decline? Could the LA intervene? *Members were informed that the LA was still accountable for improving education outcomes and could intervene at anytime. The LA used data to see how schools were performing and looked at other issues like staff leaving, children not going to school in catchment and any other areas of concern. The aim was to make all schools within the Local Authority outstanding.*
- Councillor Holdich thanked the Committee for their input into the strategy.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Education and Resources for his report and requested that the Members working with the Assistant Director for Education and Resources to develop the Vision for Education in Peterborough continue to do so.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee requested that:

1. A further update report on the Vision for Education in Peterborough to be brought back to the Committee in September.
2. A report covering a summary of Ofsted visits to schools to be provided to the Committee on a monthly basis.
3. The Member working group to continue to work with the Assistant Director for Education and Resources on the Vision for Education in Peterborough.

7. Draft School Organisation Plan 2013-2018 – Delivering Local Places for Local Children

The purpose of the report was to outline to the Committee the proposal for meeting the statutory requirement for school places in Peterborough. The report drew together the latest demographic data, the capital programme and identified the need for further school places. The School Organisation Plan had previously been a statutory requirement for Local Authorities but was no longer a requirement. Given the demand for school places in Peterborough the plan had been revived to support the planning and transparency of school places in Peterborough. The Assistant Director for Education and Resources gave an overview of the School Organisation Plan to the Committee highlighting the scope of the plan, the current position and processes of school place planning. The document had been shared with schools and had received positive feedback.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that it was an excellent in-depth report giving a consolidated picture and a positive step forward for school place planning.

- Members commented and discussed issues relating to schools in their wards including the development of the old Peterborough District Hospital site and a new primary school within the new development, the two schools at Dogsthorpe becoming one primary school and the conversion of St Georges School to a single entry primary school.
- The Assistant Director for Education and Resources informed Members that in the past there had been some disconnect between planning and development for the growth of the city and the requirement for school places. The School Organisation Plan would be a live document that would help to show at any time where pressures for school places were and would be used in conjunction with planning documents to help planners and developers prior to deciding on new developments. Future new school buildings would be built to try and future proof for growth to allow for expansion if required.
- Members sought assurance that lessons had been learnt from the Hampton development and that negotiations with developers would ensure that land would be made available for any new schools much sooner than had previously been. *Members were advised that this was the case and it was in the developer's interest to get the infrastructure in place sooner. Schools were an integral part of attracting people to new developments.*
- The Thomas Deacon Academy (TDA) had an admission policy that was totally different from any other secondary schools in the city. Members wanted to know if the TDA admission policy were to change and become similar to the other secondary schools would that relieve the pressure of school places. *Members were advised that the TDA set up in 2007 and at that stage signed a funding agreement with the DfE which lasted for seven years and was due to expire in August 2014. Within the contract was the agreement that the school use 'fair banding' as its admission criteria. There would be an opportunity to review the process when the agreement ended. When the new Head is appointed the LA would discuss the possibility of changing the admission criteria. If the change were to be agreed it may help to relieve pressures around some of the geographical issues within the city but would not help with school places overall.*
- Members requested that more detail be provided for schemes mentioned in the plan that were going to happen imminently.
- The Assistant Director for Education and Resources advised Members that the School Organisation Plan 2013-2018 would be a live document and would be refreshed annually.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the report and School Organisation Plan 2013-2018 and requested that the Plan be brought back to the Committee when it is refreshed on one year's time.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.55pm

CHAIRMAN

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