

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Executive Director of Children’s Services

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THE VISION FOR EDUCATION IN PETERBOROUGH – UPDATE REPORT

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee on the report presented in April and November 2013 which outlined the vision for supporting education in Peterborough. Significant work has been undertaken to review functions and improve outcomes and this report aims to finalise the proposals for the education service. The report will also reflect on the recent Ofsted visit and proposed actions moving forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee is asked to discuss the position outlined by the report and endorse the Lead Member’s support for the proposed model of education delivery in Peterborough. The committee is also asked to review the proposed strands of work arising from the Ofsted inspection action plan and consider their role in monitoring progress.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Single Delivery Plan - Programme 1 – Creating jobs through growth and improved skills and education.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In November 2010, the Department for Education published the schools’ White Paper, ‘The Importance of Teaching’, which set out a radical reform programme for the schools system with the implication that schools would be freed from the constraints of central Government direction and teachers placed firmly at the heart of school improvement. One of the key elements of the paper was an expectation that school improvement should be school-led, replacing top down initiatives from both central and local government.
- 4.2 In June, a conference was held with headteachers to share and open the debate around the development of school to school support models and the future of Local Authority Education Services. It was agreed that an alternative education services model for the LA would be considered and a final decision about its future implemented in 2014.
- 4.3 As a result, two strands of work were considered at this time -
1. The development of a school to school support and challenge model for school improvement (Peterborough Self Improving Schools Network).
 2. A review of how Peterborough City Council delivered its education service and potential future operating models.
- 4.4 Since the previous Scrutiny meeting, Ofsted have visited the Local Authority to inspect our School Improvement arrangements. The inspection helps bring together the two strands of work

and set the future direction for the service and the schools more widely.

5. KEY ISSUES

Ofsted Inspection of Peterborough's School Improvement Arrangements

- 5.1 On the 3rd February, a team of 3 inspectors from Ofsted reviewed our arrangements for school improvement. The inspection lasted 5 days. The inspection of a local authority provides an independent external evaluation of how well it carries out its statutory duties in relation to promoting high standards in schools and among other providers so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential as defined by the Education Act 1996 (all schools including academies). This includes support for schools causing concern as set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (maintained schools only).
- 5.2 Ofsted inspections of local authorities perform four essential functions and lead to a published report of findings that:
- provides parents, elected council members, schools and other providers, and those who lead and manage the local authority with an assessment of how well the local authority is performing in supporting and challenging its schools and other providers to improve
 - provides information for the Secretary of State for Education about how well the local authority is performing its role in promoting high standards, ensuring equality of access to opportunity, fulfilling children's potential and providing support to schools causing concern
 - promotes improvement in the local authority, its schools, children and young people and the education system more widely
 - requires the local authority to consider the actions that it should take in the light of the report and prepare a written statement setting out those actions and the timetable for them.
- 5.3 The inspection is a targeted review and authorities are selected on the basis of a number of factors including relative attainment and progress nationally, Ofsted judgements of schools in the area and complaints received. The reasons stated for selecting Peterborough were –
- Low percentage of pupils attending settings judged good or better by Ofsted
 - Attainment at ages 11 and 16 and FSM performance
 - Expected progress from 11 to 16 – below national, especially for boys
 - Young people aged 16+ who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) being higher than national.
- 5.4 5 days' notice was given of the inspection to allow meetings to be arranged with stakeholders. Prior to the inspectors' arrival, we submitted a self-evaluation against the 40 elements of the inspection framework including supporting documentation and evidence. Over 65 headteachers and governors and all tiers of management in the council formed part of panels during the inspection and all our processes and evidence were reviewed. We expect to receive a formal report by the 19th March. Verbal feedback was given on the last day of the inspection and we are pleased with the provisional outcome. If available and allowable by Ofsted, the report will be circulated to Scrutiny in advance of the meeting.
- 5.5 We are required to respond to the Ofsted report with a written statement setting out what action we propose to take in light of the report of inspection findings, including setting out a timetable for those actions. We are required to publish the report and an action plan to our stakeholders and to the wider public.
- 5.6 3 areas for improvement were identified in the inspection. We have added to these based upon the challenge these inspection have brought. These areas are -
- Embed high quality school to school support to improve self-sustaining primary schools, i.e. developing the Peterborough Self Improving Schools Network.
 - Refresh our School Improvement strategy to include -

- Developing milestones to measure progress and targets for individual / groups of schools on an annual basis
- Specific focus upon improving outcomes for key groups including EAL (English as an additional language), high attaining, FSM (free school meals), LAC (looked after children) and early years.
- Reviewed focus on the leadership of EAL, FSM and Early Years.
- Developing system leaders in education to support targeted schools to improve and add capacity to the school improvement offer.
- Develop a pupil premium leadership group across the city to share best practice, improve outcomes and raise the profile of this group.
- Improving information, advice and guidance (IAG) and choice of level 2 provision in post-16 provision across the city.
- Continue improvement of Scrutiny process to wider challenge / understanding through working with schools.
- Target improvements in attendance / exclusions to ensure we exceed national average.

Future Delivery of Education Services

- 5.7 Prior to the Ofsted inspection, Serco were commissioned to undertake a review of the School Improvement and SEN Services and provide options for both improving the service and reducing the costs. These service areas are relatively small having been rationalised over an extended period. A 5-month review was undertaken, ending in December and 3 options were considered;
1. In-house transformation of the service to reshape the delivery to meet the changing requirements of customers and legislation;
 2. Outsourcing of the service following a procurement exercise;
 3. Service take on through the Peterborough Serco Strategic Partnership
1. In-house transformation of the service to reshape the delivery to meet the changing requirements of customers and legislation
- 5.8 The City Council can decide to continue with its present arrangements and aim to fulfil both the statutory duties and to carry out its desired discretionary activities for as long as resources and the statutory framework permit. The Local Authority retains the ability to influence the vision and strategic direction for their community. Within a changing political and economic climate the model provides enough flexibility to enable a change of approach or direction to be implemented. It enables practice to be driven by an evidence base that clearly indicates the strength of partnerships and relationships as the key baseline for successful change.

Advantages	Disadvantages
The Council retains control and ownership of the transformation	Potential for school scepticism and disengagement
Little or no disruption to existing service	Pace of internally driven transformation may be slow
LA acts in a leadership role	Existing relationships may maintain the status quo
The Council has high degrees of leverage over the work of its funded agencies and can require a commitment to collaborate and innovate	Vacancies and interim/temporary staff remain due to difficulty of recruiting
Flexible, adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances	Schools losing confidence in ability of the service to retain its standards
Existing positive relationships can be utilised and nurtured	Lack of flexibility and ability to respond to

	changing nature of schools and national legislation
Clear lines of accountability and performance monitoring	The model may not be affordable or sustainable
Provides future agility and flexibility and enables the Council model to respond to future changes in policy and capability	Service unable to respond to changing needs of schools and LA
Ensures maximum fidelity to the underpinning strategic principles	

2. Outsourcing of the service following a procurement exercise

5.9 There is a market to outsource Children's Services Education functions to a private sector partner and this has been used in other authorities to variable success. Contracts are typically five years and appropriate consideration will need to be given to procurement processes. This model initially creates a commissioner/provider split. The commissioner (Local Authority) becomes the client and the provider is the out-sourced provider. The discipline of setting out clearly the role and responsibility of each party is in itself helpful to focus on achieving the outcomes sought. It is important to retain an internal commissioner expert and a strict monitoring regime and this is especially true for the out-source model, where the authority will need to protect its statutory obligations. Delivering a successful out-source procurement and negotiation within the highly regulated process, while keeping a wide range of stakeholders engaged, can be a challenge.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Peterborough strengthens its strategic overview and provides strategic direction	The Council relinquishes a degree of control and agency for the operational provision of services
Costs can be effectively controlled	Schools may be uncertain of their relationships with Outsourced Partner
Some LA risk – financial, reputational and educational - is passed to Outsourced Partner	Complexities of procurement through a tendering process may cause significant delays to implementation and will be costly
Contract determines the scope of the work and establishes essential challenging outcomes	Outsourced Partners may recommend or initiate changes that create short term political difficulties
Outsourcing Partner could inject fresh capacity, expertise and leadership into the local system	Contractual arrangements may be insufficiently flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances
Timescales for transformation of services and strategy development can be enshrined in contract	The implementation of the restructuring of services will need to be completed prior to outsourcing in order that financial challenge can now be met
Outsourcing to a large organisation with national reach will forge connections for Peterborough schools	The restructuring will have commenced prior to outsourcing and this will limit the ability of a strategic partner to shape its own service delivery plans
Relationships with partners – and specifically schools – are remade and reinvigorated.	Outsourcing to small local organisations or consortia may limit the extent to which new approaches are adopted and the status quo may be hard to disrupt

3. Service take on through the Peterborough Serco Strategic Partnership

5.10 As the City Council is in a strategic partnership with Serco, it removes the requirement to enter into time consuming and costly procurement processes. It enables the strengthening of the existing partnership between PCC and Serco. In order to keep this proposal within the realms of the PSSP (Peterborough Serco Strategic Partnership), it is proposed to include this activity within the already established governance of the Strategic Partnership Board.

Advantage	Disadvantage
The partnership and governance model is well established	Clarity needed about roles and responsibilities.
Access to wider expertise for effective management and development of the service	Dependencies between Council and strategic partner need to work effectively.
Contract determines the scope of the work and establishes essential challenging outcomes	The Council relinquishes a degree of control and agency for the leadership and operational provision of services
Partner provides strategic leadership capacity and expertise as well as operational management	Transformation partners may recommend or initiate changes that create short term political difficulties
Ability for partnership to change in response to needs	The partner may be unwilling to accept risk transfer if the responsibility for delivery is not in its hands
Remove the management burden from PCC and allow senior staff to focus on the core legal/statutory requirements	Schools may be uncertain of their relationships with Outsourced Partner
Costs can be effectively controlled	
Flexible, adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances	
Existing relationships can be utilised and nurtured	

5.11 In considering the best option to proceed, the following issues need to be considered:

- Our results continue to improve and the validated 2013 data shows significant improvement in the league tables. 2014 forecasts show further improvement.
- The challenges of continuing growth in pupil numbers and the need to ensure school improvement is closely linked to school place planning and other council services.
- The need for stability and consistency of management, given the new Ofsted inspections of Local Authorities. Other inspections across the country have been critical around the reliance of education services on third party providers.
- The new school to school improvement model relies significantly on local knowledge and engagement of heads – further turbulence might undermine this relationship.

5.12 These options have been carefully reviewed and both the Corporate Management Team and the Lead Member agreed that option 1, to retain the services in house, would be in the best interests of improving outcomes in education. This has been endorsed through the recent Ofsted inspection. It was however agreed to continue to review the service but to put in place permanent recruitment to the vacant leadership posts in the structure.

5.13 The budget for 2014/15 makes a reduction of £524k in education services (assumed through an outsourced option) but plans have been put in place to deliver this saving through voluntary redundancy and increasing traded services income.

Peterborough Self Improving Schools Network

- 5.14 At the November scrutiny meeting, the results from the consultation on the proposed self-improving schools network were shared. Further developments have taken place and good progress has been made in setting up the network.
- 5.15 We are now into the pilot phase of the initiative. 3 secondary schools have piloted the triad (groups of 3 schools working together) work, and are reporting positively about the process and outcomes. In addition, special schools are working as a group of 6 schools, including the PRU.
- 5.16 There are 12 primary schools operating the pilot, formed into 4 triads and therefore a total of 20 schools involved at this stage. The pilot phase ends at the end of the spring term, when evaluation and further development will begin.
- 5.17 There will be a pilot of a School Improvement Board meeting on 21st March. There will be a "Pilot Evaluation" meeting for all schools involved in the pilot on 8th May, and a full "Dissemination Event", where pilot schools will feedback on the pilot to all schools, will be held on 22nd May, at which all triads for operation from September 2014 will be formed.
- 5.18 5 headteachers have so far been appointed as lead or deputy lead headteachers for collaborative groups, with further recruitment to these positions to take place from April 2014.
- 5.19 Peterborough Learning Partnership are providing the lead for the development of a Directory of Services for schools to access, and the School Improvement Team are providing the lead on provision of data to schools and to the School Improvement Board. Protocols and Terms of Reference have been agreed for the processes. A further report will be shared on progress after the evaluation session in May.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As a result of the decision to deliver in house, vacant posts will be filled. The outcome of the Ofsted inspection and the resulting action plan will help to shape focus over the coming months and year.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Not applicable. Schools will be notified of the final decision to retain the education function in house.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 A further paper will be brought to the committee to outline the action plan arising from the Ofsted and the outcomes of the pilot of the self-improving schools network.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

- 9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 None

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