

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 17 MARCH 2014**

Present: Councillors C Harper (Chairman), J Peach, L Serluca, B Saltmarsh, N Thulbourn, D Fower

Also present Alastair Kingsley Co-opted Member
Miranda Robinson Education Co-opted Member
Cllr Holdich Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University

Officers in Attendance: Sue Westcott Executive Director, Children's Services
Jonathan Lewis Assistant Director Education and Resources
Gary Perkins Head of School Improvement
Jawaid Khan Community Cohesion Manager
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Marie Southgate Lawyer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Day, Councillor Nawaz, Councillor Rush and Councillor Shearman. Councillor Peach, Councillor Serluca and Councillor Thulbourn were in attendance as substitutes.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of Interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of the meetings held on:

- 3 December 2013
- 6 January 2014
- 17 February 2014

The minutes of the meetings held on 3 December 2013, 6 January 2014 and 17 February 2014 were all 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. Scrutiny in a Day Overview Report

The report was introduced by the Community Cohesion Manager and provided the Committee with the overview report detailing the outcomes from the Joint Scrutiny in a Day event held on 17th January 2014. The event looked at understanding and managing the impacts of welfare reform on communities in Peterborough. The approach had been an innovative one which cut across the remit of all the Scrutiny Committees in order to look at welfare reform comprehensively and gain a deeper understanding. The Committee were asked to agree the recommendations made by the committee on the day and advise on how they wish to take them forward.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to the recommendation '*To identify barriers to work and explore how early years provision, support and related services can help parents into employment*' and asked what actions could be expected with regards to identifying barriers to work and getting parents back into work. *The Community Cohesion Manager stated that this was a recommendation from Members on the day deferred to Members to respond.*
- One Member responded that one strand of feedback on the day was an introduction to support for single-parent families. To look at ways that the systems could be used to support parents into employment whilst ensuring that children were still able to attend school and ensuring there were no barriers to parents accessing employment.
- Members asked what an example would be of a barrier to get work. *The Co-opted Member stated that working hours could be impractical with young children or it could be parents making sure that children were in attendance at school when they were working in shift work jobs. There were different support mechanisms available to help with these types of barriers.*
- The Chair sought approval from Members for each of the recommendations. All agreed.
- Members wanted to know what practical actions would be taken to implement the recommendations in the report. *The Senior Governance Officer responded that the report would go to each committee for approval. The recommendations would then be developed into a piece of work for each committee and scrutinised and monitored by the relevant committee. There would also be a piece of work to look at the 'return on investment' for the recommendations which would come back to the Committee to show the impact of the event.*
- Members asked if there would be a practical implementable policy at the end of the piece of work. *The Community Cohesion Manager responded that each recommendation would be worked through following an endorsement from the Committee. Actions would then be put in place to work through those recommendations but it could possibly take up to a year to measure. The outcome of the recommendations would be measured through the 'return on investment model'. The Executive Director, Children's Services responded that the work was urgent and in some cases had already commenced. An example was that Connecting Families was already up and organised and the impact on those subject to benefits needed to be demonstrated. An action plan needed to be worked on for each recommendation and the results brought back to the Committee at a later date.*
- Members in attendance on the day commented that the early part of the day was about setting the local context for attendees and Members had been provided with various data sets. It was therefore suggested that there should be updates issued once a year in order for Councillors to have the broadest possible context regarding the impact in Peterborough. *The Community Cohesion Manager responded that information sharing had had very positive feedback from councillors.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and endorsed the recommendations in the report:

1. To explore the impact of welfare reform on young people and their attainment in mainstream education.
2. To identify barriers to work and explore how early years provision, support and related services can help parents into employment.
3. To understand the impact and needs arising from welfare reform and ensure that initiatives such as Connecting Families can meet these needs.

The Committee also requested that reports on the progress of the recommendations be brought before the Committee over the next year.

6. Presentation of 2013 Validated Examination Results

The Assistant Director Education and Resources introduced the report which provided the Committee with a summary of the 2013 validated assessment and examination results for the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS – Reception Year – YR), Year 1 Phonics Check, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. The figures were final and formed part of the assessment for the league tables. The report therefore represented a holistic view of examination results across Peterborough. The Head of School Improvement went through the report highlighting the following:

- Early Years Foundation Stage – this was the first year of measure. There had been a good level of development and consistent achievement across the curriculum. 6% above local comparators and 2% below the National Average.
- Year 1 Phonics – there had been a big improvement but the gap had not closed. 11% below the National Average and 8% below the Local Comparators.
- Key Stage 2 had seen some good improvement and now had the closest gap to the National Average. The rate of expected progress particularly in maths and writing had been pleasing and the gap was closing.
- Key Stage 4 had seen a 7% improvement from 2012 and this was being sustained. The gap to National Average was closing.
- Key Stage 5 – The gap to National Average was narrowing.
- Floor standards at KS4 remained the same.
- Key actions to address underperformance.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members commented that whilst the report had been good in some aspects there was still a lot of negative aspects when comparing to the national average and in particular the gap in relation to the average point score. *The Head of School Improvement responded that he was in discussions with teachers, Heads of Faculty, etc. to ensure they were focusing on all students including those attaining low grades to ensure they made progress. The Assistant Director Education and Resources responded that there had in some schools been a focus on the high-performing pupils getting 5 GCSEs at the expense of those at the lower end.*
- Members asked if this therefore meant that there was going to be greater focus in future on pupils at the lower end of attainment. *Members were advised that schools had taken the message on board and were considering the average point score with greater significance. The average point score would become more significant because in the future the best eight subjects measure would ultimately replace the 5 A* - C including English and Maths.*
- The Head of School Improvement advised Members that Peterborough had done particularly well in 5 A*-C not including English and Maths and were above National Average.
- Members noted that the report showed final figures and did not include young people who had not been in education for less than two years. Members wanted to know if by not including new arrivals on the report it made the figures slightly better or worse. *Members were informed that if a student had been in this country for two years or less the school that they attended were allowed to exclude them from their final attainment data should they wish to. This was why there was a difference between the validated data and the unvalidated data which included all the children.*
- Members commented on the reference to the National Average and the fact that Peterborough was getting closer to the National Average. Members also noted how limited the control was that the Local Authority had over the schools. They also noted that the UK average was low in comparison with the rest of the world and therefore Peterborough being behind the National Average was very poor. They asked what the council could do in order to ensure that Peterborough improved its standards. *The Head of School*

Improvement stated that the Local Authority was entitled to have a representative during Head Teacher selection. In addition, there were also good relationships with academies. In terms of comparison with countries other than the UK, the PISA tests were a problematic test because they might compare a city like Shanghai with the whole of England. With regards to the National Average there was a greater focus on the National Average and there was no reason why Peterborough should not reach the National Average by 2015. The aim was also to have 75% of schools rated 'good' or better by 2015.

- The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University advised the Committee that there was a need to take into account the improvement in schools over the past five years. The Ofsted report noted that the money invested in schools had been effective. Teaching was getting better and there was a new teacher training college.
- Members referred to paragraphs 5.20 and 5.21 in the report regarding schools issued with a Letter of Concern or Formal Warning Notice. Members wanted to know if Ward Councillors were notified when schools in their wards were sent these letters and notices. *Members were advised that they were internal documents put in place to support schools and help them focus on improvement. Some were confidential as they might relate to individuals but others were more generic notices regarding performance. The focus needed to be on schools improving rather than on media gossip around schools. Some schools had received notices which were not just around performance and therefore it might often be inappropriate to issue them more widely.*
- Members noted that there was a positive trend in results but there were concerns regarding sustainability of that trend. The core mainstream seemed to be achieving sustained improvement. Members asked if there was therefore more of a focus on high and low achievers now? *The Head of School Improvement responded that there was a level of comfort around sustainability of the narrower measures and the scope could now be widened in future around, for instance, children who received free school meals. There would be a focus on more group analysis data.*
- Members asked about the attainment of level 3. *The Head of School Improvement responded that an issue with attainment of level 3 was that many teachers were concerned about awarding a level 3 as this then predicted that the child would attain a level 5 later. If the child did not achieve a level 3 it could impact negatively if the child did not subsequently achieve a level 5. Level 3 was therefore often only awarded to those deemed to be highly likely to achieve a level 5. Children less likely to achieve a level 5 would be assessed as a 2a or 2b.*
- Members referred to the figure on page 84 in which the percentage of pupils attending schools judged good or better reaching 82.1% and then dropping significantly was correct. *The Head of School Improvement responded that it was correct but reflected the schools which would have been tested at that time rather than a drop in quality across the area.*
- Members asked how the percentage of pupils attending schools judged good or better compares with the National Average. *The Head of School Improvement stated that Peterborough was at 71.7%, the aim was to increase it to 75% by 2015, which would be slightly above the National Average. The Assistant Director Education added that the percentage difference would only need one school to improve its rating.*
- Members asked the relevance of the figures and how they were being used. *The Head of School Improvement stated that they were used to target schools and identify areas for improvement. The data was also used to position the Local Authority in the league tables. The Executive Director, Children's Services responded that they would also be beneficial to parents in assessing how their child's school was performing and to find out what the Local Authority were doing to address attainment levels.*
- Members stated that the primary purpose of the data was to let parents know how their school were doing however the more relevant data was what percentage of students in a school receive a good education.
- Members wanted to know if reception children were rated to help inform future plans. *The Assistant Director Education responded that the challenges for the youngest children were different. 35% of the intake at reception level were EAL which meant that the challenges were bigger. This did not however change the fact that there was still an intent to get the*

best possible results for young children. The work around Early Years provision was key to this.

- The Chair commented that the Committee might want to look more in depth at the work being done with Early Years provision and reception children.
- Members stated the importance of measuring the youngest children in order to effectively plan for the future. *The Head of School Improvement stated that data on reception classes had been taken in recent years but there was not yet enough to identify trends.*
- Members stated that once the new measures around free childcare were implemented there would be scope to evaluate.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and supported the School Improvement Team in challenging and intervening in schools to improve educational attainment across the city.

7. The Vision for Education in Peterborough – Update Report

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director Education and Resources and provided the Committee with an update on the reports previously presented to the Committee in April and November 2013 which outlined the vision for supporting education in Peterborough. Significant work had been undertaken to review functions and improve outcomes and the report aimed to finalise the proposals for the future delivery of the Education Service. The report also reflected on the recent Ofsted visit and proposed actions moving forward.

Members were informed of the recent Ofsted Inspection of Peterborough's School Improvement Arrangements and advised that Ofsted had judged the service as effective. A copy of the Ofsted report was tabled at the meeting (attached at Appendix 1).

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members congratulated the officers on the positive Ofsted report. Members wanted to know whether officers had felt that Ofsted had missed any areas during their inspection. *Members were informed that they had not looked at Looked after Children education or Early Years in any depth. It had taken Ofsted a little while to understand the context of Peterborough but it had been a fair inspection. The Executive Director, Children's Services stated that the Ofsted report was a huge accolade and endorsement as to the amount of effort that the School Improvement Team had put into schools. The Ofsted team had gone in to schools and meet with Head Teachers to validate what officers were saying. The Cabinet Member also congratulated the officers and Improvement Team on the outcome of the Ofsted report and it was commendable that Peterborough had performed better than many other Local Authorities.*
- Members wanted to know when the Ofsted report had been received and why it had not been sent to Members before the meeting. *The Assistant Director Education and Resources responded that it had been received during the middle of the previous week but had been embargoed until the day after the scrutiny meeting.*
- Members asked how the outcome was arrived at to keep an in house School Improvement Team. A report had been presented to the Committee a year ago suggesting that this service may be outsourced. *The Executive Director, Children's Services responded that that when she first took up the post there was confusion as to whether to retain in-house services or outsource. There had been a number of reviews under the previous Director but she felt that there was no evidence or justification or improvement to be gained by outsourcing the service.*
- Members followed-up asking that since the focus of the school improvement team had decreased was the conclusion the same. *The Assistant Director Education responded that there were budgetary constraints but the change in focus did not put performance improvement at risk. Councillor Holdich responded that the Ofsted report had validated the decision.*

- Members noted that Serco had been commissioned to undertake a review and wanted to know if that had had some kind of financial implication. *The Assistant Director Education responded that Serco had managed the service for a while by taking a vacant post and at the going rate for the position. The costs associated were therefore those of the vacant post. The person that had been brought in from Serco had considerable knowledge of school improvement at another authority and provided an independent review.*
- Members referred to the Peterborough Self Improving Schools Network and asked if there was engagement with other schools aside from those in the pilot scheme. *Members were informed that there was engagement with other schools. Secondary Heads had met and shared their experience with all schools. Primary Heads had this on their agenda for a meeting to be held next week and there would be a dissemination event towards the end of May. This would not replace the school improvement work but to complement it.*
- Members referred to paragraph 6.1 in the report and the mention of vacant posts being filled and asked what sort of vacant posts were being referred to. *Members were advised that the vacant posts were for the Head of SEN and Inclusion and the Lead for Education.*
- Members added that the school-to-school improvement scheme would help those schools currently rated as outstanding remain outstanding schools themselves through reinforcement of standards. *The Assistant Director Education and Resources responded that this was the case and teachers from better performing schools were nonetheless learning things through the scheme.*

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and endorsed the proposed model of education delivery in Peterborough.

8. Children's Services Improvement Programme Task and Finish Group Final Report

Alistair Kingsley, Independent Co-opted Member of the Committee and a member of the Task and Finish Group introduced the report which provided the Committee with the findings of the Children's Improvement Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The Committee were asked to endorse the findings of the Children's Improvement Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and accept the recommendations. The Committee were informed that the Task and Finish Group had felt confident in the sustained progress that had been made. Mr Kingsley thanked the Executive Director of Children's Services for the amount of data that had been shared with the Group and the openness and willingness to accept challenge.

Observations and questions were raised and discussed including:

- Members referred to page 138, the Audit of Contact and Referral Thresholds and noted that two cases which resulted in No Further Action should have progressed to referral and asked what exactly had happened in those instances. *The Executive Director, Children's Services responded that there was a clear threshold document in place whereby staff apply the criteria for referral against that to see whether they should be accepted into social care. However when this was looked at it was felt that the criteria had not been properly applied. The case therefore had not progressed to initial assessment when it should have done.*
- Members of the Task and Finish Group advised the Committee that whilst the review was taking place they had gained a lot more information on the Children's Services Department and the procedures and policies. It had given them the opportunity to meet staff and follow the procedures through rather than just hearing about them. The continuation of the Members visits to the service areas had been very helpful and it was felt that the staff appreciated the visits from councillors. *The Executive Director, Children's Services responded that when she first took the post of Executive Director one of the biggest complaints from councillors had been that the service was not transparent. She stated that there was now much greater transparency and openness but there was still a need to scrutinise and monitor the service at meetings.*

The Chair thanked the Task and Finish Group for the thoroughness of the review and thanked the Executive Director, Children's Services for her co-operation and openness during the review. Members also thanked the Senior Governance Officer for her support of the Task and Finish Group.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee noted the report and accepted and endorsed the recommendations within the report.

9. Appointment of a Co-opted Member

The Chair introduced the report which proposed that the Committee consider retaining Alistair Kingsley as a Co-opted Member of the Committee with no voting rights for the municipal year 2014/2015.

The Committee unanimously agreed to the proposal and agreed to review the appointment at the end of the municipal year.

ACTIONS AGREED

The Committee agreed:

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.

10. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Forward Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

11. Work Programme 2014/2015

The Senior Governance Officer introduced the report which provided the committee with a list of possible items to be included in the committees 2014-15 work programme.

Additional items for consideration included:

- School to School Partnership
- Reception Intake Assessment
- Pupil Premium

ACTION AGREED

The committee noted the report and agreed to discuss in further detail at the next group representatives meeting.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 9.05pm

CHAIRMAN

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