



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
HELD AT 7PM ON 3 JULY 2017
BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

Committee Members Present: Councillors J Goodwin (Chairman), D Over (Vice Chairman), R Bisby, G Casey, B Rush, A Dowson, D Fower, A Iqbal, J Johnson, M Mahabadi, B Saltmarsh
Liz Youngman, Education Co-opted Member
Alistair Kingsley, Co-opted Member
Rizwan Rehmatullah – Co-opted Member
Susie Lucas – Parish Councillor, Co-opted Member

Also Present: Councillor Sam Smith, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services
Councillor June Stokes, Cabinet Advisor for Children’s Safeguarding and Education
Councillor Ed Murphy, Labour Party Group Leader

Officers in Attendance: Wendi Ogle-Welbourn, Corporate Director People and Communities
Gary Perkins, Assistant Director, Education
Terry Reynolds, Service Director, Education
Lou Williams, Service Director for Children’s Services and Safeguarding
Brian Howard, Head of School Infrastructure
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Joanna Morley, Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2017 were approved.

4. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call-in to consider.

5. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report. The purpose of the report was to propose the appointment of two non-voting Co-opted Members to the Committee. The addition of co-opted members would allow a wider, more diverse input to discussion, drawing on the relevant expertise of the additional members.

The Committee agreed unanimously to appoint Alistair Kingsley and Rizwan Rehmatullah as non-voting Co-opted members of the Committee for municipal year 2017/2018 to be reviewed on an annual basis.

The nominated persons were in attendance at the meeting and the Chairman invited both Alistair Kingsley and Rizwan Rehmatullah to join the Committee for the remainder of the meeting.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. That Alistair Kingsley be retained as a non-voting independent co-optee member of the Committee for the municipal year 2017/2018. This to be reviewed on an annual basis.
2. That Rizwan Rehmatullah be appointed as a non-voting co-opted member to represent the Muslim Communities for the municipal year 2017/2018. This appointment to be reviewed at the beginning of the 2018/2019 municipal year and then annually going forward.

6. PETERBOROUGH READING STRATEGY 2017 - 2020

The Service Director for Education introduced the report which provided an update on the joint development of the Reading Strategy with Vivacity, the National Literacy Trust and Peterborough City Council.

The Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- In light of the poor KS2 reading results from last year Vivacity had approached the Council about formulating a Reading Strategy to engage readers. The benefits of such a strategy would not only lead to better outcomes in schools but also in the long term, improve results in the workplace.
- Members of the business community would be encouraged to engage in and support this scheme.
- The final Reading Strategy would come before Cabinet in September.
- 2018 had been designated as the Year of Reading and Peterborough needed to be actively involved in this by trying to recruit a large cohort of reading buddies from all of the different communities in the City.
- The purpose of the pledge was to engage organisations. Businesses would be required to identify at least one person to be trained as a reading buddy. The idea was to start off slowly and gradually increase the numbers. Organisations would also be asked to encourage whole family reading not just school children therefore encouraging their staff to read more.
- It was not proposed that there would be any reduction in the use of mobile libraries. The strategy was to enhance library services.
- The Reading Strategy was designed to complement existing reading programmes and not to duplicate or substitute schemes that were already in place.
- There was no intention to ignore visual literacy and digital reading material but the central core of the strategy would be the engagement with whole traditional texts, fiction and non-fiction books.
- The strategy would provide a defined objective and organisational framework for the next three years.
- Although the target levels for attainment and progress in reading appeared to be low they needed to be realistic. At the same time the targets were aspirational as they were twice the rate of improvement of the national average.
- Reading was a central skill and if improved it would benefit other areas for example difficulties with Maths often involved the comprehension of questions.

- Achievement in reading in Peterborough was significantly lower than national averages, partly because the number of children moving into and leaving Peterborough schools at non-standard times was the second highest in the country and had a disruptive impact. The Council wanted and needed to run twice as fast with initiatives such as the Reading Strategy in order to catch up.
- The strategy would be taken out to schools in order to get refinement through further comments and suggestions.
- The use of the word 'will' within the report was to engender confidence.
- The outcomes would be measured by national tests and other factors such as increased library membership and usage, readiness surveys and the number of reading buddies recruited.
- It was absolutely critical that reading levels were improved and especially for children where English was not their first language. Different communities across Peterborough would be encouraged to take part in the reading initiatives and use of libraries.
- There was a need to ensure that parents were involved in the scheme as it was recognised that children who were read to from a young age developed a better vocabulary.
- Thorough engagement with early year providers was also advocated.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and requested that a progress report be presented at the November meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. This date would allow for schools to respond to the strategy in September at the start of the new academic year and their response to be included in the report.
2. The Committee requested that the strategy take into account digital reading material.

7. SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN 2015 - 2020

The Head of Schools Infrastructure introduced the report which provided the Committee with an update on school place planning across primary and secondary education within Peterborough.

The Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- School place planning within Peterborough was especially challenging because of migration levels and also the City's aspirations to grow.
- Increasing secondary school places was a problem with the main challenge occurring in 2019. Alongside the proposed new Paston Reserve secondary school there were plans to expand both Ken Stimpson and City of Peterborough Academy.
- There were currently feasibility studies being undertaken to look at the possibility of expanding Stanground Academy, Newark Hill, Parnwell, Woodston and John Clare.
- There was approximately 5% spare capacity in primary schools at present however the greatest pressure for school places in the primary sector came from 'In Year' demand. If numbers continued at the present rate then bulge years would have to be considered which often meant the installation of mobile classrooms.
- School Place planning had previously operated with one resource but recently the Council had joined forces with the Cambridgeshire School Place Planning Team to improve the service and provide more resilience.
- The Free Schools bid for the Paston Reserve primary school had been approved in April. The Council was waiting for the Government to announce Wave 13 of Free School funding to put in a bid for the proposed Paston Reserve secondary school and had scheduled 2020 as a realistic target (for both schools to open).
- Catchment areas still existed nationally but there were also other allocation considerations such as parent preferences and subject to the distance from the school allocated places.

- The sites of current village primary schools in the main tended to restrict further expansion.
- The 125 year lease generally granted to academies contained several clauses that restricted the use of the buildings and land. These clauses stated that the land could only be used for educational and community purposes. Any abuse of the terms of the lease could be referred up to the Regional Schools Commissioner and then on to the Secretary of State for Education.
- Approval for 80 additional homes had just been granted in Barnack. However there were no plans to expand the village school, in particular due to the site constraints. There was potential to expand John Clare which would mean that children from Helpston may in the future be more likely go to John Clare rather than Barnack. This would free up places at Barnack for the children from the village including those from the new development.
- The greatest demand for places had always been from the central area of Peterborough. The schools in this area were the most difficult to expand because of the housing density and lack of available land. The easier schools to expand where they had the land had already been done and the Council was now looking at new ways to expand the more difficult sites.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the present status of the School Organisation Plan (2015-2020) as updated and published in January 2017 and requested that in future reports an Executive Summary be provided at the front of the plan which would include any significant changes.
2. The Committee requested Officers provide a briefing note on school place provision for new developments such as Cardea and that Officers investigate why the needs of such developments had been much greater than anticipated.

8. ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL – OUTCOMES 2016

The Assistant Director for Education introduced the report which informed the Committee of the rates of absence at Peterborough schools in 2015/16.

The Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The biggest challenge to improved attendance at school was around the rates of persistent absence especially in secondary schools.
- Most schools including Academy Trusts were receptive to receiving support and guidance from the Council regarding improving attendance rates.
- The Council endeavoured to allocate places at the same school for children from the same family but unfortunately sometimes this was not possible. Transport was provided for those children who had to travel further away and hopefully this ensured that late arrival did not become a problem for children of families who had to deliver children to two different sites.
- Comparative data at an individual school level could not be provided as it was not produced. Attendance data was released very late in the year which was why data for each individual school had not been included in the report.
- 75% of secondary schools were Academies and they had their own attendance officers in place and programmes for dealing with persistent absentees. Academies tended only to liaise and consult with the Council about the legal aspects of persistent absenteeism. The majority of primary schools accessed attendance support from the Council. Each school held contextual data regarding the reasons for absence.
- The number of penalty notices issued was much higher now compared to five years ago. The Code of Conduct for penalty notices would be changed in light of the Platt v. Isle of Wight judgement. The Law stated that where there was an absence which was not exceptional each parent of each child could be issued a penalty notice. If there were exceptional reasons then there would be no legal recourse. There were three reasons why

a penalty notice could be issued: 1) a leave of absence of at least two consecutive school days which was neither for exceptional or unavoidable reasons, 2) persistent absence of at least 10% over an eight week period, 3) the child being present in a public place in the hours of school whilst being excluded.

Councillor Murphy, Labour Group Leader was in attendance and made the following comments:

- There was now a significant number of young people aged 16 who were in school and were not in receipt of an education allowance and sought clarification as to whether this had had an effect on the number of absences from school.
- Clarification was also sought as to whether the increased number of home schooled pupils had had an impact on resources and whether officers could be sure that the children were being educated at home.
- The Officer advised that in recent months there had been an increase in children being home educated. The Council had an Elective Home Education Officer who arranged annual visits to these children. All visits were recorded and monitored and if it was felt necessary additional visits would be put in place. The Council had a statutory duty to make sure that home school provision met acceptable standards. The Local Authority did not receive funding for home educated children.
- There had been no impact on the number of absences for students aged 16 as the data only covered students up to the age of sixteen and not post 16 students.
- Most academies adopted the Council's attendance policy and monitored attendance in the same way that maintained schools did.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and acknowledged the outcomes stated in the report and offered their support to relevant officers in pursuing actions to promote continued improvement in attendance at school.
2. The Committee requested a briefing note giving information on the number of fines issued over the past three years, detailing the specific reasons they were handed out, which schools issued fines and whether those that did saw an improvement in attendance levels.

8.41pm Councillor Fower left the meeting.

9. CORPORATE PARENTING 6 MONTHLY REPORT

The Service Director for Children and Safeguarding presented the bi-annual Corporate Parenting update report to the Committee in accordance with its current Terms of Reference: Part 3, delegations, Section 2 – Regulatory Committee Functions 2.4.4.2 PERFORMANCE MONITORING, paragraph 2.4.4.4.

The Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- The Corporate Parenting Committee held both informal and formal meetings. Children in care could attend the informal meetings without the presence of the press and members of the public. The Children who attended seemed impressed that Members were committed to supporting them.
- Those children who wanted to contribute to a debate about their care made their voices heard at meetings or to officers who went out into the community and listened to their concerns.
- Children in Care could also contribute directly via an app that the Council used called MOMO (Mind of My Own) Application. It was designed to support Children in Care

participation.

- Children had been asked where they wanted meetings held and they had requested the Council meeting rooms. The Town Hall was centrally located and therefore made access by public transport easier on those occasions when social workers and the minibus were unavailable.
- Due to the reduced frequency of the formal Corporate Parenting meetings it was proposed that the report to scrutiny be presented annually rather than six monthly. The Committee agreed that an annual report rather than a six monthly report would be acceptable but the timing of its presentation to the Committee was critical as it needed to be considered alongside such things as the educational attainment figures.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted that the report was an accurate reflection of the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee over the last 6 months.
2. The Committee agreed that the Corporate Parenting Committee report to Scrutiny would be presented on an annual basis going forward.

10. REVIEW OF 2016/17 AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the report which considered the 2016/17 year in review and looked at the work programme for the new municipal year 2017/18 to determine priorities and agree the proposed way forward for monitoring future recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommended that the monitoring of future recommendations as proposed in paragraph 5.2 of the report be agreed and that a report be provided at each meeting to note the outcome of any recommendations made at the previous meeting held thereby providing an opportunity for the Committee to request further monitoring of the recommendation should this be required. The Committee also requested that the Senior Democratic Officer would ask officers to provide a more comprehensive response to any recommendations going forward.

ACTIONS AGREED

1. The Committee noted the report and requested that Officers provide a briefing note on some of the final destinations of Peterborough school pupils and to explore the possibility of having Opportunity Peterborough who organised the successful careers fair for young people report to the Committee.
2. The Committee approved the draft work programme for 2017/18.
3. The Committee noted the Terms of Reference for the Committee as set out in Part 3, Section 4, Overview and Scrutiny Functions and in particular paragraph 2.1 item 1 Children and Education Scrutiny Committee as attached at Appendix 3.

11. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive 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.

ACTIONS AGREED:

1. The Committee noted the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and requested that the Corporate Director provide a briefing note on the remit of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

12. Date of Next Meeting

- Thursday, 7 September 2017

CHAIRMAN
7.00 – 9.11pm

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