

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 28th March, 2017 at 10.30 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Cynthia Dereli (Chair)

County Councillors

P Buckley	Ms L Collinge
I Brown	B Dawson
Mrs S Charles	C Henig
A Cheetham	D T Smith

Co-opted members

Mr Ian Beck, Representing RC Schools
Mr Kenvyn Wales, Representing Free Church Schools
Mr John Withington, Representing Parent Governors (Primary)

County Councillor I Brown replaced County Councillor A Kay for this meeting only.

Officers Present

Bob Stott, Director of Children's Services
Andrew Good, Head of Service Financial Management (Development and Schools)
Paul Bonser, Schools Forum Support Manager
Alison Kenny, Learning Improvement Support Team Leader, School Improvement
Lisa Moizer, LEP Skills Hub Coordinator

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Dorothy Lord and Sandra Perkins, and, Co-opted Member Mrs Janet Hamid.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of interest in relation to matters appearing on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016

County Councillor Chris Henig requested her apologies be noted on the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2016. In addition, County Councillor Lizzie Collinge informed the Committee that her name had been misspelt under item 1 – Apologies.

Resolved: That subject to the above amendments, the minutes from the meeting held on the 29 November 2016 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Schools National Funding Formula (SNFF)

A report was presented informing the Committee that the Department for Education (DfE) had launched stage 2 of their Schools National Funding Formula (SNFF) consultation in December 2016, with responses required by 22 March 2017. The report also set out possible implications for Lancashire.

The Committee was informed that should the SNFF be approved in its current form, it would have a significant impact on Lancashire's smaller schools. This concern had been picked up nationally and there had been a lobby back into central Government around this particularly from the Shire County areas. A response from the Department for Education was awaited on the feedback received for stage 2 of their consultation.

It was reported that the County Council, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools and the Chair of the Education Scrutiny Committee had all submitted consultation responses by the 22 March deadline. In addition, the Schools Forum had sent its response and encouraged Lancashire schools and academies to reply individually. Key themes in the responses related to the overall pressures on all school budgets and the risks to small schools. It was noted that school budgets had been flat since 2013 and had not increased in line with inflation whereupon it was felt that the SNFF, in its current form would not offer any alleviation on this point.

Questions and comments by the Committee in relation to the report were as follows:

- A question was asked in relation to the loss of money to Children Looked After and the impact this would have. It was pointed out that the Children Looked After funding that was part of the funding formula would move to the Pupil Premium Grant Funding and had not been lost to the system. Whilst officers were of the understanding that this should still be at the same level there was no guarantee that it would be like for like funding at this moment in time. It was confirmed that monies would come through a different funding stream. Members were assured that this issue had been highlighted in the consultation responses.

- There were widespread views that the current formula as it was now configured was unfair and a concern that school funding in the future would decrease.
- It was hoped that the Government's response to the consultation would be published before the summer 2017. However, the Committee was informed that publication could be delayed.
- It was clarified that the amount of funding per pupil had not changed, but that any increase in pupil numbers would be met with additional funding to support those additional pupils. Additional funding for new pupils was based upon the existing formula.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted;
- ii. The Education Scrutiny Committee supported the consultation response as submitted by the Lancashire Schools Forum and summarised in the report; and
- iii. The response from the Department for Education's stage 2 consultation be added to the work plan, subject to the outcome of the work planning session for the relevant Scrutiny Committee held after the elections in May 2017.

5. 30 Hours Free Childcare

The Committee was informed that from September 2017 working parents would be able to access free childcare for their three and four year olds for up to 30 hours per week. The report provided set out some of the background to the entitlement, funding rates and what the County Council was currently doing to support the Childcare sector in preparing for the implementation.

It was reported that the County Council was consulting with the Childcare Sector through the Early Years Consultative Group to identify what support was needed. Part of the support already provided included a provider web page where practitioners could access guidance and useful links to other information. The link to the website was: <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/childcare>. In addition to this, the County Council was holding a series of briefing sessions with Child Care Works – a partnership project supported by the Department for Education on the implementation of 30 hours free childcare.

Social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook were also being used to promote information for parents and a communication plan was in place to take this forward.

The Committee was informed that since the agenda had been produced the County Council had received confirmation from the Education Funding Agency

(EFA) that three out of the maximum six projects it was able to submit on behalf of childcare providers had been successful.

Questions and comments by the Committee in relation to the report were as follows:

- Concerns were raised in respect of the wide-ranging eligibility criteria and the offer meeting the need that was required throughout the County. It was noted that the criteria did not include awarding care to children on the basis of need.
- An eligibility checker was provided by central government for parents to check. Parents were also being directed to the childcare choices website which was: www.childcarechoices.gov.uk for further advice.
- It was noted that there were no exemptions from both parents needing to be working especially parents with disabilities or long term conditions. It was pointed out that the first point of eligibility criteria was that both parents needed to be working. It was felt that this was an oversight in establishing the eligibility criteria.
- It was felt there were fundamental issues that needed to be addressed within the system such as training. It was noted that a variety of qualifications would be open to staff to assist in the delivery of services.
- Lancashire had an outstanding record regarding child support. The Committee was reminded that the responsibility for the quality in this childcare system rested with Ofsted.
- It was noted that the 30 Hours Free Childcare offer could be a significant improvement for many working families. Ultimately, there remained an uncertainty on how the market would respond to the offer.
- Members were informed there was a 30 hours free childcare parent survey currently open on the County Council's website ending on 1 September 2017.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted and the officers be thanked for their work in supporting the sector;
- ii. The Committee note the concerns raised for the future of the 30 Hour Free Childcare offer as a potential future topic for scrutiny; and
- iii. The link to the County Council's childcare website be circulated to all members of the Committee.

6. Designated Children's Centres and the Implementation of the Property Strategy

A report was presented on the implementation of the Property Strategy with particular reference to designated Children's Centres and transitional protection.

It was reported that as part of the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service transformation the Children's Centres provision was being reconfigured resulting in the vacation of provision in 23 schools and a revised offer being retained within 21 schools.

Questions and comments by the Committee in relation to the report were as follows:

- Members hoped that the County Council would be working with local planning authorities on future housing development in the areas where children's centres were part of the school. Members were reassured that factors around housing and population growth were being considered in the revised offer.
- It was noted that each school had its own inherent issues that would require resolution. Some of the schools wished to expand when their children's centre had closed and in some cases the County Council had other plans for the children's centre sites. In addition to this there were complex issues with integrated nurse centres to ensure that they remained financially stable.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

7. Apprenticeship Reforms

A report was presented providing the Committee with an overview of the apprenticeship reforms including the apprenticeship levy, and the development of an Apprenticeship Growth Plan to support individuals, employers and providers.

In the spring of 2017 the Government introduced the Apprenticeship Levy for all employers with a pay bill over £3 million, this would impact 2% of businesses in England.

The Government had set a target to achieve 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020 which was underpinned by a series of reforms in apprenticeship policy and funding. It was noted that a significant step change would be required in order to meet this target given the number of apprenticeship starts prior to the Levy. The money taken by HMRC through the PAYE system would only be used by employers for the purposes of training and assessment of apprenticeships. New standards of qualifications would be developed by groups of employers and expanded to include higher and degree level apprenticeships putting employers at the heart of the system. It was noted that the Levy was not just for young people starting their careers but would provide the opportunity for people of all ages and levels to change career path. The Levy could essentially allow any

person to obtain a degree without having to go to university in the traditional sense of attending university on a full time basis and paying tuition fees.

The purpose of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan was to make the apprenticeship system work for Lancashire, encompassing the areas supported by Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Borough Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. The Plan identified key priorities and actions to help deliver the growth targets, local needs and opportunities and skills gaps. It was noted that the Plan was a live document and would be continually updated. A glossary of acronyms would be incorporated.

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework identified growth in apprenticeships as a key priority in tackling replacement demand and skills shortages, as well as improving economic wellbeing in Lancashire. The framework was published on the LEP website. It was noted that the version supplied with the agenda papers was for 2017/18 and not 2016/17 as stipulated.

Questions and comments by the Committee in relation to the report were as follows:

- On skills gaps it was noted that apprenticeship standards could only be developed by a group of employers if there was a gap that needed to be addressed. It was also noted that this approach would be the most suitable way for employers to spend the Levy.
- The Committee was informed that there were now going to be nursing apprenticeships and apprenticeships in many different areas because employers would be paying the Apprenticeship Levy.
- The County Council was in the process of developing two 'trailblazer' apprenticeship standards to meet specific public sector needs. It was noted that the term trailblazer was a reference to the standard whilst it was being developed.
- On the definition of apprenticeship, it was highlighted that apprenticeships would not necessarily include a formal qualification, as this would depend on an employer's needs for the role.
- One of the key criticisms from the Ofsted inspection 2015 was the provision for care leavers and the tracking of them. It was confirmed that a greater emphasis on tracking care leavers after leaving Year 11 through to the age of 18 was taking place. In addition it was reported that if a care leaver was not in education or employment the default position would be that an offer of an apprenticeship would be given.
- The Government had put aside additional support for apprentices in certain circumstances. For 16 to 18 year olds the employer would be given £1000 per year and the training provider would be given £1000 per year to

recognise the additional support required for this cohort. Likewise, 19 to 24 year olds who were leaving care, or had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) the employer and training provider would also receive £1000 each. Additional support mechanisms were also available for smaller employers to take on young people.

- There was European Social Fund money available to support young people who were at risk of disengaging from their curriculum in school. For pre-sixteen year olds mentoring support was available. Traineeships were available for young people who wanted to go on to apprenticeships but were not ready for them yet. For adults there were access to employment projects to help them gain additional skills. The Committee was informed that the European Social Fund was available until 2020.
- Regarding Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and apprenticeship schemes, it was reported the Government would fund 90% for apprentices and 10% for employers. If large employers did not spend their Apprenticeship Levy after two years, 10% of the Levy would go to SMEs.
- Concern was expressed around young people entering into an apprenticeship scheme "of the moment" but may well end up coming back through the system to be reemployed to do another skill along their career pathway. It was confirmed that there would be multiple entrants into the workplace with multiple changes in career patterns. Young people would therefore need appropriate access to information and guidance regarding pathways into employment.
- Concern was also expressed around employers using the Levy as a tool for obtaining basic labour doing basic skills and the affect this would have on people obtaining advanced and higher apprenticeships starts.

Resolved: That;

- i. The report be noted; and
- ii. The Apprenticeship Levy and careers advice topics be added to the work plan, subject to the outcome of the work planning session for the relevant Scrutiny Committee held after the elections in May 2017.

8. Work Plan

The Committee was informed that any outstanding items would be included in the work planning session for the relevant Scrutiny Committee held after the elections in May 2017.

It was agreed that Multi-Academy Trusts and the policy on summer born children be included for consideration at the work planning session also.

Resolved: That subject to the inclusion of the above topics for the work planning session to be held after the elections, the report be noted.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

10. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee is due to be held on Tuesday 18 July 2017 at 10.30am, Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston.

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall
Preston