

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 11 March 2014 at 10.00 am in Cabinet Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Cynthia Dereli (Chair)

County Councillors

P Buckley	C Henig
Mrs S Charles	K Iddon
A Cheetham	B Murray
C Crompton	R Newman-Thompson
B Dawson	M Perks

Co-opted members

Mrs Janet Hamid, Representing Parent Governors
(Secondary)
Miss Teresa Jones, Representing RC Schools
Mr John Withington, Representing Parent Governors
(Primary)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Fred Kershaw and County Councillor Sandra Perkins.

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 Tuesday 5 November 2013

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2013 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

4. Dates of Future Meetings of the Committee

Resolved: That future meetings of the Committee be held at 10.00am in Cabinet Room 'C' at County Hall, Preston on the following dates in accordance with the decision of the Full County Council on 12 December 2013:

Tuesday 15 July 2014

Tuesday 21 October 2014
Tuesday 24 March 2015

5. Lancashire School Term and Holiday Arrangements

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate of Children and Young People presented a report which set out the current position and future arrangements for Lancashire School Terms and Holidays. Margaret Scrivens, Liaison and Compliance Officer, Directorate for Children and Young People joined Mr Stott in presenting the report.

It was reported that in June 2005, following consultation with schools and other relevant partners the Cabinet Member decided to adopt the Standard School Year recommended by the LGA and this was introduced in Lancashire Schools for the 2006/07 school year. Under the legal framework all community and voluntary controlled schools were required to follow the pattern. The Standard School Year pattern was commended to voluntary aided and foundation schools and, in the main, the pattern was followed. In recent years most academies had also followed the Lancashire pattern. Following a review the LGA found that less than half of councils were following the pattern of the Standard School Year, and in 2011 they took the decision not to recommend standard school dates in future years. In Lancashire the patterns recommended for 2012/13 and 2013/14 had already been published to all schools which were working with these dates.

It was noted that in the future, arrangements nationally for School Term and Holiday dates in maintained schools would no longer be steered by any central guidance but that there were two legal requirements – one setting the number of half day sessions as 380 and the other stating that in relation to community and voluntary controlled schools, the local education authority would determine the dates when the school terms and holidays were to begin and end. In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools the governing body would be responsible for determining when the school term and holidays were to begin and end.

With the County Council's commitment to the Standard School Year, it had been agreed by the Children and Young Peoples' Directorate Leadership Team that in respect of the school years 2014/15 and 2015/16, the Authority would continue to determine the School Term and Holiday pattern based on the Standard School Year principles for community and voluntary controlled schools. The patterns would be commended to voluntary aided and foundation schools.

Keeping a pan Lancashire framework for school term dates and holidays rather than individual schools determining their own holiday dates was felt to be preferable so that, for example, families with children who attended different schools, would not be subject to extra child care costs if the dates set for the long summer break were all different. Many schools, it was felt, welcomed guidance on what the dates should be.

It was reported that there were also other implications should Lancashire County Council not set a common framework:

- Governing bodies would need to negotiate with other local schools, staff, unions and Diocesan/Church Authorities. For example, given the freedom to negotiate and set their own patterns, schools in the east of the County may decide to return to wakes weeks' patterns
- Without a school term and holiday framework, Lancashire County Council could be looking at considerable increase in home to school transport costs
- Monitoring the compliance of the 190 pupil/195 teacher days presented a Human Resources issue
- There could be issues in the provision of school catering
- There was the potential for an increase in staffing costs with respect to School Crossing Patrols

Members commented on the report as follows:

- That schools could be consulted to find out their views on the patterns for school terms and holidays and in particular for a four term year and the consequent reduction in the length of the summer break. Any changes made to the current framework would preferably be adopted on a County wide basis.
- That a four term school year might fit better with the modern working life and would be less disruptive to children's learning, especially the transition between Year 6 to Year 7
- In east Lancashire, before the introduction of the Standard School Year, following the pattern of wakes weeks holidays had worked successfully for schools
- That it would be helpful for all members to be circulated with the current legislation/briefing note on pupils' absence during term time. (Schools were now only able to grant absence in 'exceptional circumstances,' and family holidays did not fall into this category)
- That figures on the impact of pupils being taken out of school during term time also be circulated. (National evidence of this was also available allowing for comparison with Lancashire)
- When parents were fined for unauthorised absences, the money was fed back into the Service supporting attendance. It was suggested that a report on the work of the attendance teams be brought to a future meeting of the Committee

Resolved: That:

i Schools across the County be consulted on the school term and holiday pattern and a report brought back to the October meeting of the Committee.

ii A report on the work of the School Attendance Service be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

6. A summary of the validated results at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 at Lancashire and District level

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services from the Directorate for Children and Young People, (CYP) presented a report on the validated data giving the overall attainment in Lancashire schools at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 in 2013. The results had been analysed at District level and showed progress over the past three years.

Mr Hewitt, Head of Quality and Continuous Improvement, CYP, reported that with regard to the 2013 Key Stage 2 results, in Lancashire overall attainment had risen compared with 2012 and was 1% above the national average at 77%. Attainment in 8 districts was above the national average of 76% of pupils attaining level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics. This showed a slight change in the figures as presented in the report to the Committee on the provisional results, at its meeting in November 2013, which suggested that Lancashire overall would be 2% above the national average. It was noted that the reading test at Key Stage 2 was comprehension based.

With regard to the Key Stage 4 results, it was reported that overall attainment in Lancashire rose compared with 2012 and remained around 1% above the national average. There was greater volatility in attainment at secondary stage and this could be attributed to the volatility in results around English, an issue which affected schools across the County.

Members welcomed the improvement in overall attainment at both Key Stages 2 and 4 in Lancashire.

Resolved: That the report setting out the overall attainment in Lancashire at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 based upon the validated data be noted.

7. Lancashire County Council's Governor Services - a traded service for schools.

Mr Stott, Director of Universal and Early Support Services, Directorate for Children and Young People presented a report which set out the traded services arrangements for Lancashire County Council's Governor Services.

Helen Brownjohn, Head of Governor Services, reported that Lancashire County Council had provided traded Governor Services to school governing bodies since the introduction of Local Management of Schools following the 1988 Education Reform Act. The service was highly regarded both in the North West and nationally and this was reflected in the number of school governing bodies buying into the services.

It was further reported that school governing bodies were able to buy into:

- Governor Services Clerking provision (a fully traded service) which a significant proportion of Lancashire maintained schools did. The number was increasing as Ofsted became more focused on evaluating the effectiveness of governing bodies. The options for buy-in clerking were

set out Appendices Bi and Bii to the report, for Maintained Schools/Pupil Referral Units and Academy Schools respectively.

- Governor Training and Development (fully traded). Over half the total number of governors in the County were attending training courses and the number of Academies returning to buying training from the service had increased year on year over the past three years
- Governor Information – provided in a number of ways via, amongst others, the Schools' Portal and the magazine 'the Lancashire Governor'
- Statutory and Strategic functions and co-ordinating school-based complaints on behalf of the Directorate and the Authority

It was noted that feedback from service users was a credit to the Service.

In considering the report, members made the following comments:

- The 'Lancashire Governor,' an information magazine produced each term was very well received by governors
- That Governor Services also worked with Diocesan bodies, providing work of the highest quality
- In response to a query on changes being made to governing bodies, Mr Stott explained that governing bodies were to move away from the stakeholder model to a skills based model with only one Local Authority representative. Ofsted had recommended smaller governing bodies but there was no minimum or maximum size in legislation.

Members thanked Helen Brownjohn, Head of Governor Services, for the high quality of work provided by the Service.

Resolved: That the report setting out the arrangements for Lancashire County Council's Governor Services be noted.

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business for discussion at the meeting.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 15 July 2014, at 10am, County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston