

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 21 July, 2015 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	G Molineux
Mrs S Charles	B Murray
C Crompton	S Perkins
Dr M Hassan	A Schofield
C Henig	D T Smith
D Lord	

Co-opted members

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

1. Apologies

Apologies were presented on behalf of Mr Fred Kershaw (representative for Church of England schools) and County Councillor Andrea Kay.

The Chair welcomed County Councillors Carl Crompton, Alan Schofield and David Smith who were attending in place of County Councillors Bernard Dawson, Keith Iddon and Anne Cheetham respectively.

Guests

The Chair welcomed:

- Bob Stott, Director Children's Services.
- Mike Heaton, Skills Co-ordinator.
- Steve Palmer, Operations Director, The Lancashire Colleges
- David Wood, Principal, Lancaster & Morecambe College and Chair The Lancashire Colleges
- John Doyle, Head of Ormskirk School
- Ajay Sethi, Head of Service, Traded Services (Start Well)
- Raeleen Duthoit, Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum

- Kirsty Houghton, Youth Council Development Worker
- Hal Meakin, Member of the UKYP(Fylde)

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

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

3. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Resolved: That the appointment by Full Council on 21 May 2015 of CC Cynthia Dereli as Chair of the Committee and CC Susie Charles as Deputy Chair for the following year be noted.

4. Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference

A report was presented on the Membership and Terms of Reference of the Committee.

Resolved: That the Membership, Terms of Reference of the Committee, and programme of meetings for 2015/16 as now reported be noted.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2015

The minutes from the meeting held on 24 March 2015 were presented and agreed.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2015 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

6. The breadth and quality of the 14-19 learning offer for young people in Lancashire

The report introduced by Bob Stott, Director of Children's Services, provided an overview of the current position regarding the offer of learning available to young people aged 14-19 in Lancashire.

It explained that local authorities had a statutory duty to secure sufficient and suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area, by influencing and shaping provision through local partnerships and by identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market. The young people covered by this statutory duty were those aged 16-19 and those aged 19-24 who had a learning difficulty and/or disability and were the subject of a learning difficulty assessment.

From 2013 all young people were required to continue in education and training to the end of the academic year in which they turned 17. This would rise to their 18th birthday from 2015. Raising the Participation Age (RPA) defined the three primary routes to participation as:

- Full-time education (school, college or home education)
- An Apprenticeship
- Part-time education or training alongside full time employment, self-employment or volunteering for at least 20 hours a week.

Mr Stott pointed out that the RPA was not the same as ROSLA (Raising of the School Leaving Age) that had been introduced in the 1970s. The participation route through the RPA was diverse and the options for young people were many and varied.

Mr Stott drew attention to the Education and Adoption Act 2015, which focused mostly on education and which was to bring changes to the academy process across the country; he suggested that it would be appropriate to bring an update report to the Committee later in the year when the implications of the Bill were clearer, particularly how the academy process would be taken forward.

Invited guest speakers had summarised information about their provision as set out in the various appendices to the report and now attended the meeting to present the information and answer members' questions.

David Wood, Principal Lancaster and Morecambe College, and Chair of the Lancaster Colleges, explained, in some detail, the offer from the nine further education colleges in Lancashire, the financial pressures, the size and quality of the sector, and progression routes from FE.

He also referred to challenges ahead which would be brought about by the forthcoming Government review of the FE sector. He emphasised the need for Lancashire to be clear about what it wanted in the future. He was confident that Lancashire had many strengths in terms of its financial position and the quality of its provision.

Members were invited to ask questions at this point and a summary of the main points arising from the discussion is set out below:

- A question was asked about how FE colleges were changing as a result of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Skills Board, and what the findings were from research commissioned into the local labour market, referred to in Appendix A. In response, it was explained that the ageing population was leading to skills gaps; there were now more people leaving the labour market than there were coming into it and replacement demand was huge even in declining industries. The FE sector was moving towards a very challenging scenario. All areas were similarly affected and it was vital therefore for Lancashire to make itself an attractive employer and attract the right sort of business. Research had indicated that the highest demand was at

GCSE and supervisory skills levels, and demand for health and social care skills was high. There was a need to understand future workforce requirements and align the curriculum, and local FE providers were working closely with employers such as BAe and Heysham Power Station.

- The Committee was informed that it had been emphasised to the Skills Board that more careers advice and information should be made available to young people to enable them to make informed choices. The Chair confirmed that improved careers provision would be welcomed by the Committee.
- It was confirmed that the county council would have an input to the BAe training centre for engineers currently being built.
- One member observed that Lancashire had a long and proud tradition of providing inclusive, post-16 education through its tertiary system. He felt that it was important for Lancashire to retain its inclusive and all-embracing vision in a way that met the needs of post-16 learners. The Committee was assured that the county council was passionate about maintaining a clear vision for the future and recognised that it was appropriate to formulate views with the FE sector and other partners to provide a bold and robust offer that was right for the people of Lancashire, in the national context.
- In response to a question about the potentially negative affect on attitude and aspiration that lack of parental and family support can have, it was emphasised that lack of parental support was not causal and much could be done to overcome such barriers; there were many examples of success from disadvantaged backgrounds and performance among young people in receipt of free school meals and Children Looked After was strong.
- It was recognised as most important that young people needed to understand their potential pathways and for there to be clear, positive messages about apprenticeships; the number of 16-18 year olds taking up apprenticeships had reached a plateau and apprenticeships were not currently the preferred choice for many employers.
- Members were interested to know whether college leavers were tracked in terms of their future pathways and particularly whether information was gathered about those young people who struggled to get work and to find out why that was the case. Mr Wood confirmed that 89% of leavers from Lancaster and Morecambe College had moved on into Higher Education, further training or employment and it was also possible to determine how many had progressed into employment relevant to their college course. It was, however, impossible to track young people further because the response rate from leavers was very low both locally and nationally.
- In response to a question about potential for lack of parity across the county if FE colleges were focusing on providing courses to meet local need, it was explained that large employers, whatever the sector, required a range of skills, for example, caterers, administrators, electricians. Most colleges provided a broad range of courses, however, if demand changed so would supply.
- It was confirmed that support funds were available for disadvantaged young people, often Income Support related, for example a young person on a catering course could be provided with a set of knives, or a uniform. Those in receipt of free school meals would receive the same arrangements in college. Free transport was also available.

John Doyle, Head of Ormskirk School then gave an overview of the offer from school sixth forms and academies in Lancashire.

He explained that many of the issues affecting FE, as described above, were relevant to sixth form schools also. The 23 institutions listed at Appendix B represented a diverse, high quality mix of providers; it was important for them to complement each other in terms of demand from the 'market'.

Schools were also facing financial pressures and challenges and it was important to ensure that courses provided through sixth form colleges matched what young people wanted and also that they were financially viable.

Young people were now recognising that 16 was not the natural end to their education and it was considered unfortunate that, at a time when young people were in need of advice and counselling about their future, it was left for the institution to provide that advice. Many young people would continue to follow the traditional route to Higher Education, but changes in HE funding would lead to a significant number of young people looking at alternative routes to level 4 and 5 qualifications such as higher level apprenticeships. It was very important to ensure that young people were aware of what routes were available to them.

Members were invited to ask questions at this point and a summary of the main points arising from the discussion is set out below:

- In response to a question whether the provision of Further Education had reached saturation point, it was explained that changes in funding from the Education Funding Agency would mean that some sixth form colleges would not be big enough and that Further Education and sixth form colleges would look very different in the next five to 10 years.
- The report had briefly listed the main family of qualifications being accessed by Lancashire residents to give a flavour of the most popular subjects; Anjay Sethi offered to provide a more detailed breakdown if the Committee would like one.
- It was noted that there was a cohort of colleges in the Lancaster area providing complementary course, which was a good example of joint working.

Raeleen Duthoit, Support and Development Manager, Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum, gave an overview of work based learning and apprenticeships.

She explained that an apprenticeship required significant commitment from both the employer and the apprentice. The majority of apprenticeships were provided by SMEs (small to medium enterprises) and it could be much more time intensive for a small employer to provide an apprenticeship.

It would be important to carefully match young people with employers and ensure that all necessary arrangements were in place for the apprenticeship to work well and succeed.

One member suggested that employers generally did not fully understand how apprenticeships work and did not know where to start if they were considering employing an apprentice. It was accepted that further education of employers was required and the Committee was assured that many training providers and colleges were working towards this. The Committee was informed that an employer levy was to be introduced which would complicate the situation further.

In terms of the longer term position, members were reassured that apprentices had the same contractual and employment status as other employees and that it was not expected that employment would cease at the end of the apprenticeship.

It was acknowledged that tracking was important and work was planned to improve tracking in the coming months.

The Chair commented that the increasing status of apprenticeships was most encouraging.

Resolved: That,

- i. Officers be thanked for their reports and for their attendance at Committee.
- ii. Comments and concerns expressed by members, as set out in the minutes, be noted.
- iii. A representative of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Skills Board be invited to the November meeting of this Committee, to provide an update on progress being made by the LEP Skills Board.

7. Young Peoples perspective on the routes to 14 -19 Education & Training provision

The report explained that Lancashire Youth Council had been invited by the Education Scrutiny Committee to carry out a piece of research to find out young people's perspective on the routes to 14-19 education and training provision and to report their findings.

The Youth Council had now conducted their research through group discussion and by distributing a questionnaire to young people across Lancashire and had consulted 220 young people. A copy of the questionnaire was at Appendix A and the results of the consultation were at Appendix B to the report now presented.

Hal Meakin, Member of Lancashire Youth Council, drew attention to the finding that 31% of young people consulted felt that they did not know what provision was available to them, with the most attributed reason for this being lack of careers guidance in school.

It was noted that there had been varying level of responses from the twelve districts, indeed there had been no responses at all from four districts. Hal

Meakin confirmed that there was a desire to carry out further research to gather a more representative response.

The Lancashire Youth Council had made the following recommendations:

- i. That provision for advice and guidance of 14-19 Education and Training should be of a high quality throughout the county. It was felt that, at present there did not appear to be a consistent approach.
- ii. In light of the findings from the questionnaire it may be beneficial to carry out a further piece of work focusing on the 31% of young people who were not aware of what routes were available to them and identifying how this could be resolved.
- iii. That the findings of the consultation be shared with the Lancashire Association of Secondary School Headteachers (LASSH) and Lancashire County Council Cabinet Members with whom the Lancashire Youth Council currently meet on a quarterly basis.

The Committee supported the recommendations and agreed that:

Recommendation i - that the words "and this could be investigated" be added to the last sentence. Bob Stott said that he would ask Jonathan Hewitt, Head of School Improvement, to provide an update on the models of provision provision of IAG (Information and Guidance) currently in use across the county for the next meeting of this Committee.

Recommendation ii - Hal Meakin confirmed that the Youth Council would carry out a further piece of work focusing on the 31% of young people who were not aware of what routes were available to them and identify how this could be resolved.

Recommendation iii – Bob Stott confirmed that the report would be presented to the LASSH Executive. It was noted that to some extent the findings were positive in that many young people, generally, knew where to go for information and advice, however, since the removal of the National Careers Advice service, particularly the funding, it was most important to maximise good quality Information and Guidance in a consistent manner. He was confident that Children Looked After would receive attention through the Youth Service, but there were other vulnerable young people in schools who needed face to face guidance and support, and this was a challenge

Resolved: That the recommendations of the Youth Council, as slightly amended and as set out above, be supported.

8. Work Plan

Appendix A to the report now presented set out a draft work plan for the Education Scrutiny Committee, including current Task Group reviews.

The Chair noted that it had been agreed earlier in the meeting that the following be added to the agenda for the November 2015 meeting:

- Update report on the implications of the Education and Adoption Act 2015, particularly how the academy process is to be taken forward.
- Update on the progress being made by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Skills Board.

The Chair also noted from the minutes of the March 2015 meeting that the following items were to be included on the agenda for the April 2016 meeting:

- **Pupil Premium Task Group Final Response** - A further update report be provided in twelve months, to include:
 - information about progress with schools where there are community or locality barriers to achievement,
 - information about progress regarding the longer term objectives in response to the Task Group's recommendations; and
 - Achievements for this cohort of students.
- **School attendance of pupils in Lancashire and the rate of exclusion from school** - A further update report be provided on the school attendance of pupils in Lancashire and the rate of exclusion from school.

Resolved: That the work plan, as now amended, be noted.

9. Urgent Business

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

10. Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday 17 November 2015 at 10:00am, County Hall, Preston.

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall, Preston