

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th April, 2016 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	D Lord
C Henig	Y Motala
S Holgate	Mrs S Charles
K Iddon	Wood
A Kay	

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 received and noted from County Councillor Bernard Dawson, County Councillor Sandra Perkins, County Councillor Anne Cheetham and County Councillor Gareth Molineux.

The Chair welcomed:

Frances Molloy, School Attendance and Children Missing Education Lead
Debbie Ormerod, Pupil Access Manager
Andy Walker, Head of Service Business Growth
Lisa Moizer, LEP Skills Coordinator
Ellie Bradley and Brian Wood, Youth Council
Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Service School Improvement

The Chair confirmed that as he was retiring this was the last meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee that Jonathan Hewitt would attend and gave thanks to Jonathan for all his support.

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 Deputy Chair

The Committee noted the appointment of County Councillor Peter Buckley to replace County Councillor Susie Charles as Deputy Chair for the Education Scrutiny Committee.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2015

Resolved: That the minutes from the meeting held on 17th November 2015 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

5. School Attendance

The report introduced by Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Service School Improvement and Frances Molloy, School Attendance and Children Missing Education Lead provided the Committee with an update on the levels of school attendance within Lancashire and included Lancashire's attendance data headline figures.

Frances reported that the attendance data related to authorised and unauthorised absence was collected from schools on a termly basis through the schools census and more recently there had been a focus on overall absence and persistent absence as a more accurate indicator of school non-attendance.

The data showed there has been a downward trend in absence and Lancashire reflected this trend and consistently outperformed national figures. In addition, district level data showed that the position was largely the same across districts with some variances.

Frances confirmed that there was a need for constant focus on attendance and recent research had shown that just a drop below 95% in attendance could affect attainment.

The threshold of persistent absence was reported to have changed from 85% attendance or less to 90% attendance or less which would increase figures in this category.

A concern was raised and noted on the potential safeguarding issues where it was reported that the authority does not have the right to inspect the admissions and attendance registers of non-maintained schools to establish which pupils are missing out on education. All schools are required to notify the local authority of absences (including academies).

Jonathan commented that schools were very innovative in addressing individual issues. In addition, the local authority provided strategies for all schools to

challenge behaviours which could include addressing barriers to attending school (such as domestic abuse situations and online gaming) and to assist, for example, single parent families who may not have a support network in place.

Resolved that:

- i. Officers be thanked for the report and their attendance at the meeting
- ii. The Committee's concerns and comments be noted
- iii. Further data be provided on numbers of children and ethnicity for circulation with the minutes

6. School Admission Process and Transport to School

The report introduced by Debbie Ormerod, Pupil Access Manager provided an overview of admissions to publicly funded schools and academies including the statutory functions of the local authority and the interaction between different admissions authorities in managing processes.

Debbie reported that one of the statutory requirements of the service was to provide application systems. Current data showed that 96% applied online and through feedback obtained, 97% of those preferred this process.

Debbie clarified for the Committee that the admission criteria for schools had to be fair and legal with clear tie breakers which were also required to be fair and transparent.

The non LCC schools were reported to be able to set their own admission numbers depending on the capacity assessments based on accommodation.

It was confirmed that where Supplementary Information Forms are used, they must only ask for information which is directly related to admissions. Any information requested that was not relevant could be challenged.

The Committee were advised that due to a consultation currently taking place, a report on the Transport to School would be produced for a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved that:

- i. Officers be thanked for the report and their attendance at the meeting
- ii. The Committee's comments on the report be noted

7. LEP Skills and Employment Board

Andy Walker, Head of Service Business Growth and Lisa Moizer, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Skills Coordinator presented information to the Committee on the work of the Skills and Employment Board and its priorities (a copy of the presentation appended to the minutes).

Part of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board remit was to produce a Skills and Employment Framework which identified key priorities and key indicators (see below link).

[Lancashire Skills and Employment Framework 2016-2021](#)

The Growth Deal Skills Capital was reported to have three fast tracked approved projects for Myerscough College (precision farming) £3m, Runshaw College (IT infrastructure) £204k, and Edge Hill (University Technology Hub) £3m. A further six projects were awaiting approval.

Lisa confirmed that a Careers Enterprise Advisor Network pilot was ongoing in Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley areas to look at increasing engagement and communication between local business and the schools and colleges. 10 advisors had already signed up since January 2016. The Committee raised concerns around career development and the lack of careers advice for young people which as a result had become a postcode lottery for job opportunities. In addition, a previous Youth Council report highlighted concerns around the pathways to careers. It was acknowledged that the current careers advice landscape across Lancashire are fragmented. Lisa confirmed that events had taken place for careers advice staff and increased information sharing to schools. In addition, if the pilot proved to be successful, it would then be rolled out countywide. Andy highlighted that there was a need for a local resource for local priorities with a strong element of local control.

Lisa reported that as part of the Apprenticeship reforms with the levy due to be introduced in 2017 to create three million apprenticeships by 2020, another initiative would be to support businesses in understanding the levy. There was also a need to focus on potential implications on the small/micro businesses and to support them through the provision of information events and build relations.

The Area based Review starts in September 2016 which will look at further education colleges to ensure that the structures in those institutions meet the educational and economic needs of learner and employers, delivered for maximum value for public investment. A working group had been established to look at this review.

A question was raised on the accountability for the LEP and how the work was scrutinised. Andy confirmed that there were a number of checks and balances in place with a strong democratic check through the Local ESIF Partnership. In addition, the LEP was reported to have a Performance Board and scrutinised on a national level.

Ellie provided feedback from the Youth Council where it was agreed that this was a good initiative but foresaw potential problems around colleges focussing primarily on LEP priorities. Lisa responded that colleges must follow the national curriculum and therefore would be unable focus primarily on LEP but acknowledged this concern.

Further to this, Brian Wood, County Lead for Youth Work Strategy confirmed that part of their service was to track young people from when they leave school and contact those who have not engaged in further education.

Resolved that:

- i. Officers be thanked for the report and their attendance at the meeting
- ii. The CEIAG Burnley/Blackburn pilot be included for further discussion at a future meeting
- iii. The Area Based Review be included for further discussion at a future meeting
- iv. The report from Youth Work Strategy to come back to a future meeting
- v. Links to the LEP website and Lancashire Skills and Employment Board meeting papers to be circulated with the minutes (see below)

[Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Website](#)

[LEP Lancashire Skills and Employment Board - Meeting Papers](#)

8. Impact on Education Service of the Regional Schools Commissioners Agenda

Jonathan Hewitt, Head of Service School Improvement provided a verbal report to the Committee on the guidance for local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) on 'schools causing concern' (a copy of which has been attached to these minutes).

Jonathan advised the Committee that there are eight RSCs in England. Vicky Beer covers Lancashire and parts of West Yorkshire and all are supported by the Headteacher Board. Previously the remit of the RSC was to challenge, improve and establish free schools and academies. They will now be involved in challenging maintained schools.

Jonathan outlined the guidance description of the three groups of schools which would be eligible for intervention:

- Schools judged inadequate by Ofsted - The RSC, on behalf of the Secretary of State, would take on the powers of intervention in maintained schools. They would issue an academy order for all maintained schools that have been judged inadequate by Ofsted, requiring them to become sponsored academies.
- Schools that are low performing/attaining - Local authorities to work together with the RSC to consider if intervention is required where they have concerns about unacceptable performance. The RSC can chose to override the local authority and intervene directly if deemed necessary.
- Coasting schools (new category) – The RSC would be able to take formal action in schools which fall within the definition of coasting. Identification of those schools within this category would take place in spring 2017 as the data

to be used to identify those schools would not be published until December 2016 for primary schools and January 2017 for secondary schools.

The white paper set out strategies, outlined the key role of the RSC and identified that the local authority role in school improvement would diminish and then cease. The RSC would take on the role of overseeing quality in schools. Jonathan reported that the guidance outlined the role of the local authority which included the responsibilities for place planning, SEN and hard to place children and safeguarding. It was also confirmed there would be no requirement upon schools to have parent governors.

The Committee requested information on the definition of a coasting school. Jonathan advised that this is a new group of schools and they are identified using performance data which shows that year on year they are failing to ensure pupils reach their potential. Coasting schools would be identified for the first time once the performance tables containing final 2016 results for key stage 2 and key stage 4 had been published using performance data for 2014, 2015 and 2016. He confirmed that there was already an awareness of schools who would currently fall into this category

Jonathan highlighted to the Committee that intervention in Lancashire schools would very small as over 90% schools are good or better with 100% of nurseries. Lancashire schools exceeded the national average. In addition, for this strategy to work, there would be a need for a sufficient amount of schools to take on the role of leading other schools through a multi academy trusts (MATs) model.

Resolved that:

- i. Officers be thanked for the report and their attendance at the meeting
- ii. A further report to come back to the next meeting of the Committee following the outcome of the consultation
- iii. Suggested bite sized briefings on the white paper, schools funding and formula funding be considered
- iv. Bob Stott to keep the Committee informed of updates in-between meetings

9. Work Plan

The Committee noted that the current workplan was not circulated with the agenda papers. The Chair requested that a working group be established with volunteers from the Committee to pull together a new workplan for the next municipal year.

Resolved that: The Committee members noted and agreed the request to form a working group to consider items for the work plan.

10. Urgent Business

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

11. Date of the Next Meeting

Next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 19th July at 10am, Cabinet Room C, County Hall, Preston

I Young
Director of Governance, Finance
and Public Services

County Hall
Preston