

Lancashire County Council

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 2nd September, 2020 at 10.30 am in Skype Virtual Meeting - Skype

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

M Dad	J Mein
Mrs S Charles	E Nash
A Cheetham	J Purcell
S Clarke	M Salter
J Eaton	D T Smith
N Hennessy	P Steen
S Malik	B Yates

Co-opted members

Dr Sam Johnson, Representing CE Schools
Oliver Moores, Representing Youth Council

County Councillor Barrie Yates replaced County Councillor Andrew Gardiner for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Janet Hamid (Co-Optee Voting) Representing Parent Governors (Secondary) and Simon Smith (Co-Optee Voting) Representing RC Schools.

2. Constitution: Chair and Deputy Chair; Membership; Terms of Reference

The report presented set out the constitution, membership, chair and deputy chair and terms of reference of the new education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2020/21.

Resolved: That the following be noted:

1. The appointment of County Councillors Andrea Kay and Munsif Dad as Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.
2. The membership of the committee following the County Council's Annual Meeting on 16 July 2020

3. The new Terms of Reference of the committee.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 7 July 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

5. The Role of the Local Authority with Schools

The Chair welcomed Sarah Callaghan, Director of Education and Skills Lancashire County Council, to the meeting.

A presentation was provided to the committee and aimed to do three things:

- Set out what Local Authorities had the legal powers to do to support schools and settings.
- Present an overview of how these duties were met in Lancashire where a number of schools were no longer maintained by the Local Authority.
- Set out how schools and settings would be supported to open fully this September within the scope of the local framework the Local Authority operated in.

Members were informed that the Academy Act 2010 gave powers to all schools to choose whether to become a single sponsored academy or part of a multi-academy trust which was a group of academies with a shared executive governing body. This had seen a shift towards a more autonomous school system and a move towards sector led school improvement.

The Local Authority still retained some statutory duties that it had to fulfil and some formal powers for intervening in some underperforming maintained schools. As the 'champion of the learner' the Local Authority continued to play a unique role in understanding and shaping arrangements to meet the holistic needs of its citizens.

In all schools regardless of status, governing bodies were responsible for:

- The appointment of the head teacher (in maintained schools the Local Authority must advise but not make the decision).
- Performance management of the head teacher.
- Financial management.
- Accountability for use of the pupil premium to support eligible pupils.

The committee was informed that throughout the Covid-19 crisis, 500 of Lancashire's schools had remained open. Across the county attendance numbers

varied but the attendance figures throughout this period were comparatively higher than other neighbouring authorities especially regarding vulnerable children.

The Local Authority had provided detailed advice to support schools in applying guidance from central government regarding lockdown and the wider opening of schools. It had also supported schools in providing free school meals and emergency PPE.

In terms of the opening of schools in September, the Local Authority had worked with Public Health colleagues and Social Care colleagues. Guidance had been developed around access to testing in localities and also developed transport arrangements guidance which had been shared with all schools.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- Regarding children using public transport for travelling to school, parents had raised concerns over this and that some of the guidance had been confusing. In response it was confirmed that two areas of funding had come through to support transport. One to support public networks of transport and one to support the county council's commissioned transport. Schools had direct contact with officers in the transport service for any concerns with the guidance. Schools must have a register of all pupils using public transport and commissioned transport and submit this to the county council.
- In terms of face masks the advice was for children to wear them on public transport. However on the county council's commissioned transport, it was not mandatory at the present time to wear face masks.
- Members were informed that the relationship between the county council and academies was as positive as it was with maintained schools.
- Through the LASSH (Lancashire Association of Secondary School Headteachers), the local authority worked closely with secondary schools. It was also acknowledged that the secondary schools were positive about sharing their data and working together.
- It was noted that outcomes for SEND children tended to be poorer in areas of deprivation and Advisors have had to be used more effectively in those areas to challenge the outcomes of vulnerable children.
- It was stated that governors had a critical role to play in schools especially in support of headteachers. Leadership was the key factor in terms of school improvement and the local authority have regular and consistent dialogue with governors. Although it was acknowledged that dialogue could be improved.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

6. Joint Area SEND Revisit in Lancashire

The Chair welcomed Sarah Callaghan, Director of Education and Skills Lancashire County Council, and, Hilary Fordham, Chief Operating Officer Morecambe Bay CCG.

The report presented explained that between 9 March and 12 March 2020, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited the area of Lancashire to decide whether sufficient progress had been made in addressing each of significant areas for improvement detailed in the written statement of action issued on 8 January 2018. The report provided members with details and the outcome of the revisit.

239 pieces of evidence were provided for inspectors and 89 people were interviewed. Inspectors spoke with council colleagues and partners, a range of education representatives, parents, carers and children and young people.

Ofsted and the CQC judged that of the 12 significant areas of concern identified in the 2017 inspection Lancashire had made sufficient progress in addressing 7 areas and had not made sufficient progress in addressing 5 areas.

It was reported that an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) was to be submitted to the DfE and the NHS by 28 September 2020. The plan had to set out what the Local Authority was going to do to address the 5 areas where sufficient progress had not yet been made. The Health and Wellbeing Board would oversee the Accelerated Progress Plan. Formal monitoring would take place at 6 months and 12 months from 28 September 2020. For all other areas of improvement a broader improvement plan would be developed, agreed and monitored by the SEND Partnership Board.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- Concerns were raised over the transition in health care from Children's Services to Adult Services. A Provider Forum had been set up to address this. Services for children were provided through paediatric services. Services for adults were provided from many service areas. The Local Authority had to engage with Adult Services to ensure they understood their responsibilities in supporting the transition of young people from a single service into the adult services areas.
- Regarding the areas where sufficient progress had not been made, the committee enquired if there were timelines in place. It was confirmed that the APP included the timescales when each of the areas would be fulfilled.
- The inspectors were complimentary in their report of the support measures in place for people on the waiting lists. However, parents and carers must be encouraged to access these support services whilst they await a full diagnosis.

Resolved: That:

- i. The information provided be noted.
- ii. Comments from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- iii. The Accelerated Progress Plan be circulated to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
- iv. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee be provided with a progress update in six months.

7. Schools Causing Concern Task Group - Response to Recommendations

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Phillippa Williamson, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, to the meeting.

The report presented informed committee members that in March 2020, the Education Scrutiny Committee published a task and finish group report on 'Schools Causing Concern'.

In accordance with agreed protocols, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools had been asked to provide a response to the recommendations included as part of the task and finish group's report.

The Cabinet Member thanked the members of the task and finish group for all their effort and work in putting the report together. The Cabinet Member supported and commented on all of the recommendations of the task and finish group.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- Lancashire County Council was committed to supporting head teachers whatever the status of their school and use their wealth of experience and knowledge. Positive relationships had to be maintained.
- There must be a proactive approach to supporting schools focusing on prevention of problems and performance improvement.
- The Local Authority must increase its support for Lancashire's school governors. They were crucial to the success of their schools and the performance of their head teachers. Ongoing training for governors was essential.
- Members enquired about the finances for schools during the Covid crisis. Funding for schools was very tight in some areas of the county. The county council was trying to obtain as much funding as it could to support additional expenditure schools might have. It was also lobbying Central Government to obtain as much funding as possible for its schools. Schools could claim back for Covid related expenditure.

Resolved: That;

- i. The response be received.
- ii. A progress update on recommendations be provided to the committee in six months.

8. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021

The report presented provided information on the single combined work programme drafted for all of the Lancashire County Council scrutiny committees.

The topics included were identified at a work planning workshop for members of the Internal Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2020 and from a previous combined meeting of both Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Committees.

Regarding the October meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee and the item on Children's Social Care it was agreed to discuss Child Poverty with this item.

In terms of the November meeting and preparations for a second wave of Covid and local lockdowns, it was felt that the committee should review earlier than November what was in place already for a second wave.

A suggestion was put forward to have an update on Lancashire Break Time in six months.

A briefing note would be circulated to the Education and Children's Services Committee on school finance issues.

Resolved: That;

- i. The work plan presented be noted.
- ii. The additional topics be noted for potential inclusion in the work programme.

9. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next virtual meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee would take place on Wednesday 14 October 2020 at 10.30am.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston

