

Lancashire County Council

Education Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 22nd July, 2019 at 10.30 am in Committee Room 'C' - The Duke of Lancaster Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Christian Wakeford (Chair)

County Councillors

M Dad	J Mein
A Cheetham	E Nash
S Clarke	J Potter
B Dawson	D T Smith
J Eaton	D Stansfield
A Gardiner	P Steen
A Kay	C Towneley

Co-opted members

Stephen Whittaker, Representing CE Schools

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillor Jenny Molineux, Mr Ian Beck, Mr Ken Wales, Mr John Withington, Mrs Janet Hamid and Dr Sam Johnson.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

County Councillor Peter Steen declared a non-pecuniary interest on items, 5, 6 and 7 on the agenda, as he is a governor at Bacup Primary School and a governor at Whitworth High School.

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

The report presented sets out the constitution: membership, chair and deputy chair and terms of reference of the Education Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

Resolved: That;

- i. The appointment of County Councillors Christian Wakeford and Munsif Dad as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Committee for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year be noted;
- ii. The new membership of the Committee following the county council's Annual Meeting on 23 May 2019 be noted; and
- iii. The terms of reference of the Committee be noted.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2019

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 26 March 2019 be confirmed and as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

5. Early Years Education

The Chair welcomed Paul Duckworth, Acting Head of Service for Education, Quality and Performance; Mel Foster, Operational Delivery Lead (Business & Early Years); Kate Dewhurst, Childcare Sufficiency Team Leader and Andrew Good, Head of Service Financial Management (Development and Schools) to the meeting.

The report presented provided information about Lancashire's providers of funded early education for 2, 3 and 4 year old children, including an update on the take up and the quality of provision.

Following the presentation of the report to the Committee, the following had been noted:

The take up of funded Early Year Education in Lancashire was above the national average and the take up remains high among 3 and 4 year old's.

It was reported that all Local Authorities have been advised of the Department for Education's (DfE) goal to halve the percentage of children leaving reception year without the communication, language and literacy skills they would need to thrive by 2028.

The Committee was informed of the next steps in providing Early Funded Education, as detailed in the report.

The Chair invited members' of the Committee to raise any questions on the information provided and the following had been clarified.

It was reported that due to the decline in number of children leaving reception year with a lower Good Level of Development (GLD) than the national average, the council had put several strategies in place to address the decline, both internal to the council and nationally.

In terms of the strategies internal to the council, this included:

- Working more closely with the council's Early Education Consultant's team.
- More focused work in priority areas.
- The 1000 days Morecambe project, which works with families before birth and until the child is 2 years old.
- The Healthier Fleetwood project, which works to ensure a child is school ready.

In term of the national projects, the council had accessed various projects such as:

- The PACT (Parents and Children Together) project.
- Working with the EasyPeasy App, which allows parents to promote learning while at home.
- The Hanen programme, which is a language speech therapist and communication specialist.

Following a concern raised regarding the take up of the funding entitlement for eligible children the Committee was informed that the following work had been carried out:

- A targeted social media campaign to encourage take up of places; and
- Writing out to the families eligible for a place but who hadn't taken up a place, to make sure they were fully informed of the benefits the places could offer.

In relation to sufficiency of places, it was acknowledged that parental choice is a significant factor. However, the sharing of good practice to assist schools with capacity is currently being considered. The Committee requested more information on the sufficiency of places in the districts to be provided to all councillors to help to support and encourage parents to consider schools where there is capacity.

Further to this, it was suggested that taster sessions could be considered through the libraries and open days at nurseries with places to raise awareness and promote schools with capacity.

At this point in the meeting, County Councillor Munsif Dad declared a non-pecuniary interest that he is a Trustee on Adventure Hyndburn.

Resolved: That;

- i. The information contained in the report be noted.
- ii. The next steps be outlined be noted.
- iii. All county councillors be provided with details on the local offer of early year's places for all districts including service planning areas to support the service and parents in the consideration of early year's providers where there is capacity.

6. Maintained Nursery Provision

The report presented provided an update on the financial position of Lancashire's maintained nursery schools.

Following the presentation of the report to the Committee, the following had been noted:

Lancashire's Maintained Nursery Schools had been asked to plan for a future without any sustainable funding due to the continuing funding pressures.

The current position of Lancashire's Maintained Nursery Schools, as well as the next steps for the council were provided to the Committee during the presentation. A copy of the presentation is set out in the minutes.

The Chair invited members' of the Committee to raise any questions on the information provided and the following had been clarified:

It was clarified that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, the School's Forum and the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services had all separately written to the Minister to seek additional funding for Lancashire. It was the councils understanding that the Government would be carrying out a country wide review on the baseline funding available.

The number of children across the 24 Maintained Nursery Schools in Lancashire were provided to the Committee and it were noted that:

- There were 458 out of 3584 children in Lancashire who were 2 years old; and
- There were 2064 out of 21,926 children in Lancashire who were either 3 or 4 years old

Resolved: That;

- i. The information contained in the report be noted; and
- ii. The financial position of maintained nursery schools and the support offered be noted.

7. School Finance update

Andrew Good, Head of Service Financial Management (Development and Schools) presented a report that provided an update on Lancashire school finances and the support being provided for schools in financial difficulty.

Following the presentation of the report to the Committee, the following had been noted:

The total number of schools in deficit had fallen from 47 to 39 schools by the end of the 2018/19 financial year.

The number of Schools in Financial Deficit (SIFD) for both 2017/18 and 2018/19 was provided to the Committee, as detailed in the report. It was reported that the results were compared and showed a slight stabilisation with schools reducing their deficit.

In relation to the high needs block overspend, members were advised that discussions were underway with health authorities to support ongoing pressures through potential additional funding or enhanced provision.

Resolved: That, the report and the information provided be noted.

8. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee would be held on 29 October 2019 at 10.30am in Cabinet Room C at County Hall, Preston.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston