

CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN'S SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2016 AT THE KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Lay (Vice Chairman), Cllr Pat Aves, Cllr Mary Douglas, Cllr Sue Evans, Cllr Chris Hurst, Cllr Atiqui Hoque, Cllr Philip Whalley, Rev Alice Kemp, Tracy Cornelius, John Hawkins and Cathy Shahrokni.

Also Present:

Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Richard Gamble and Carolyn Godfrey.

50 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ricky Rogers, Cllr Simon Jacobs and Sarah Busby.

51 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

52 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

53 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

54 **Department for Education White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere**

In March 2016 the Department for Education published the White Paper 'Education Excellence Everywhere' which outlined the Government's plans to 'transform England's schools and build on progress that has already been made'. At this meeting of Committee, members were provided with a two-part policy briefing on the white paper which built on the Education and Adoption Act April 2016.

David Clarke, Head of School Effectiveness, outlined that the key aim of the White Paper was to attain educational excellence everywhere, by tackling a variety of inequalities, eg. geographical location and socio-economic background of pupils etc. The key guiding principles to support this approach were outlined as follows: a focus on achieving outcomes, high expectations for every child, capacity building through supported autonomy and a system responsive to need and performance.

A summary of the initial chapters of the White Paper was provided. It was highlighted that there would be a focus on obtaining 'great' teachers in locations where they were most needed; Initial Teacher Training would be central to this in its training and placement of teachers in schools. Beyond the individual teacher level, the Government wished to focus on achieving different levels of strong leadership within schools, their governing bodies and also system leaders. The White Paper was clear that high expectations should be set for schools and pupils and that academies should have a sound curriculum to build on. Under the proposals, schools would be accountable for their performance and measures should be put in place to assess Multi Academy Trusts. It was also noted that a 30 month period without school inspection would be permitted to allow time for schools to realise improvement following a poor Ofsted report.

Members were invited to discuss part one of the briefing and agreed that, although the paper was not formally being consulted on, committee members would feedback through officers and also their elected member representatives on associated bodies. Councillors were invited to ask questions and it was confirmed that under the new proposals Regional School Commissioners would have the same powers as the Secretary of State. Members debated the benefit of positive discrimination to attract quality leaders into schools and expressed concern over a potential reduced role for parents in the governance arrangements of schools. Concern was also raised over the current low recruitment and retention of teachers which was not addressed in the White Paper. It was noted that leadership demands from the new proposals could be a further burden for teachers already fatigued by many recent school reforms. However, it was suggested that the removal of an orthodox strategy for teaching could allow teachers more flexibility and it was positive to see the encouragement of part-time teaching contracts. Councillors understood that schools required time to make changes following a bad Ofsted report but questioned the potential impact of no intervention or assessment for such a long period after this.

Officers continued to the second half of the briefing which suggested that the responsibility for school improvement would move away from the Local Authority and would be more school-led. The original intention of the proposals had been for every school to become an academy, however it had since been confirmed that only underperforming schools would automatically be converted to an academy, other schools would be expected to form or join Multi-Academy Trust by 2020. It was explained that the role of the Local Authority (LA) would

still be securing school places for pupils, ensuring the needs of vulnerable children were met and to be a champion for parents and children. The role of the LA to drive school improvement was expected to reduce as more academies were created. A summary was given as to the actions the Council had taken on the White Paper to date, including contacting all Schools, seeking clarification from the Minister and holding meetings with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman thanked officers for their presentation and requested that the Council's response to the White Paper be circulated to members. The Committee were invited to ask questions and it was confirmed that the DfE had commissioned further work on the changed role of the LA arising from the White Paper; it was expected that the LA would have more of a safeguarding, rather than educational, role. The Chairman expressed concern over the statement that there would be a review of the 'responsibility of the LA in relation to children' as it was unclear what this meant. It was confirmed that Wiltshire was to form an Education Transformation Board and it was agreed that a member of the Select Committee could sit on this Board. The Committee questioned how the allocation of school places would be affected by the creation of more academies and it was thought that it had potential to become more difficult as academies would not have the same obligations to the LA upon them. It was anticipated that LAs would continue to consult with neighbouring authorities to ensure sufficient places could be provided. Officers advised that special schools would be treated differently in terms of the Multi-Academy Trust. Members also heard the LA was awaiting further information on the national funding formula, however since Wiltshire schools already received low levels funding from government, the funding level was unlikely to reduce further.

The Chairman thanked members and officers for their attendance and was confident that Wiltshire had a firm base from which to make school improvements since 92% of pupils in the county attended 'Good' or 'Outstanding' schools.

Resolved:

To note and pass on the Committee's thanks to Julia Cramp and David Clarke for providing the briefing.

To request that Wiltshire Council's response to the white paper is circulated to members.

To seek expressions of interest for a member of the Children's Select Committee to provide representation on the Education Transformation Board, and to appoint at the next meeting of Children's Select Committee.

To establish an Academisation rapid scrutiny exercise to investigate with the executive options for Wiltshire Council to explore what routes are

available to continue to support schools, such as county wide multi academy trusts and other options.

55 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was to be held on 19 July 2016, 2:30pm.

56 Urgent Items

There were no urgent items of business.

(Duration of meeting: 2.40 - 4.25 pm)

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