

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Education Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 9 May 2012.

PRESENT: Mr G Cooke (Chairman), Mr R B Burgess, Mrs P T Cole, Mr H J Craske, Mrs V J Dagger, Mr L B Ridings, MBE, Mr L Christie, Mr M J Vye, Mr J M Cubitt, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr R E Brookbank (Substitute for Mr A R Chell) and Mr R J Parry (Substitute for Mr K Smith)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R J Lees and Mr M J Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Leeson (Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills Directorate), Mr S Bagshaw (Head of Admissions & Transport), Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer) and Mrs S Rogers (Director of Communication)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

3. Election of Vice Chairman

(Item A3)

Mr Craske proposed, seconded by Mrs Dagger that Mr Ridings be elected as Vice Chairman of this Cabinet Committee.

Carried

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2012

(Item A6)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March are correctly recorded subject to Mrs Dagger being noted as present and that they be signed by the Chairman.

5. Post 16 Transport Policy

(Item B1)

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

(Mr S Bagshaw, Head of Fair Access, was also present for this Item)

1. Mr Leeson introduced the decision report and stated that although there was a need to agree the post 16 Transport Policy a key driver behind the proposals is the Authority's responsibility to ensure full participation in learning and work based training for all post 16 students in a fair and sustainable way to age 18 by 2012. KCC will continue to offer a financial subsidy if this policy is agreed.

2. Mr Bagshaw referred to the tabled documents, the completed "Equality Impact Assessment" and the summary of feedback on the "Public Consultation" and

apologised that the information was not published with the agenda due to the consultation closing on Friday, 4 May.

3. Mr Bagshaw set out the process that was followed to reach the stage of having a policy and criteria. This included a six week consultation designed to target schools, colleges training providers, Kent Youth Council and post 16 learners. The key message from the consultees was that this was welcomed. There were suggestions received including; extending the travel pass to 24 year olds and rail travel although this was not part of the consultation.

4. Mr Whiting advised that the decision had to be taken on 31 May 2012 to meet the annual deadline.

5. Following a short time to read the tabled documents, Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions which included the following:-

- a) In response to a question, Mr Bagshaw advised that this travel pass would allow the students to travel by bus out of school and college hours and on weekends very similar to the benefits of the Freedom Pass.
- b) Mr Bagshaw responded to a question explaining that the current yearly travel pass (cost £490) entitling learners to a single journey at the beginning and end of the schools or college day only. This new travel deal was £520 for the year but gave unlimited travelling by bus throughout the day. The true cost to KCC was £750 per pass. There was the option of further subsidy and lower cost to the learners who meet the family income criteria, if supported by the schools and colleges through their government funded bursary.
- c) It was suggested that clear communication and publicity on the travel pass needed to be produced and circulated to young people as quickly as possible. Mr Bagshaw said that work has been undertaken with the schools and colleges on this and the information that had been circulated to date was clear on the travel pass, but recognised that further communication to young people was needed.
- d) It was suggested that as young people had commented on the inclusion of rail travel there may be a window of opportunity to speak with the rail companies as new franchises for the railways were due to be sold. Mr Bagshaw agreed that KCC would be in a position to offer support to the school and colleges in buying rail passes
- e) In reply to a question Mr Bagshaw explained that the schools and colleges already had the facility in place for students to make monthly payments which would be extended to the travel pass. Mr Leeson added that it was important to support the most vulnerable students to stay in learning until they are 18-19 years old and monthly payments would assist with this. The eligibility criteria helped with consistency in how the students request the funds from the schools and colleges.

f) In reply to a question, Mr Bagshaw advised that the total cost of the scheme was £1.1m. (This was £1.55m to be reduced in the year of transition to £1.1m).

g) Mr Whiting gave his assurance that a summary of the details on the travel Pass would be circulated to the Locality Boards.

6. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member decision to approve the policy on the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy and Eligibility criteria to allow schools and colleges to secure a travel pass which will provide extended access to all students in a fair and sustainable way, be endorsed and signed on 31 May 2012.

6. Verbal Update - Cabinet Member and Corporate Director
(Item D1)

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. The Chairman invited Mr Whiting and Mr Leeson to give their verbal updates. Mr Whiting began by congratulating Mr Cooke and Mr Ridings on their appointments as Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively. He then highlighting the following:

- The Draft Plan “Growing Places” was currently being drawn up to look at the provision by district, which he considered would eventually be by Ward so that more detailed information can be gathered on birth rates and housing developments. Members were invited to submit their comments. The Plan would be review bi-annually.
- “Bold Steps for Education” Strategy is being launched charging KS2 Members views were welcome
- He advised that since January 15 schools had improved 15 schools had kept at the same level. There were now 86 academies with 25 further schools of interest.
- The Government has now accepted an application for the proposed new [Tiger Primary Free School](#) in Maidstone with 78 places to open in September 2012.
- Mr Whiting advised that there were a further 5 Free school applications in Kent being considered by the government (1) Dorton House co ed with 100 places, Sevenoaks, (2) Hadlow Free School co ed 180 places, (3) Wye Christian School, Ashford with 600 places, (4) The Wells Free School 154 places, Tunbridge Wells and (5) Sevenoaks Christian School with 790 places.
- The Kent Association of Headteachers had appointed an independent Chairman, Christine Gilbert. Mr Whiting congratulated Mr Nigel Utton for his perseverance in setting this up.

2. Mr Leeson gave his verbal update and advised Members on the following:-

- Mr Leeson advised that since January 2012 there had been 40 Ofsted inspections; 23 schools were “good” with a number of stars in that group and the rate of improvement was good; 2 schools were “outstanding” and would lead the way to other schools under the new Framework; 15 schools had

improved, although, 10 remained satisfactory. Letters of congratulations would be sent by Mr Leeson to those schools that had improved.

- Mr Leeson considered that there was significant improvement but there were still 10 schools that remain satisfactory. He agreed to report back regularly to the Committee to monitor progress.
- Members were advised that after the initial flurry of applications to convert to academy status which stands at 85 this had now subsided. There were currently 25 schools applying for academy status many were sponsored schools. [There was an interest in stronger schools sponsoring academy arrangement with weaker Primary schools]
- He was encouraged with schools pursuing other ways to be coterminous, creating partnerships and long term commitments. Schools were sharing best practise and supporting one another.
- The Catholic Arch Diocese Southwark had converted all 33 Catholic schools to academy status.

3. Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. Points raised included:

- a) In reply to a question Mr Leeson advised that every school in Kent below “floor level” was receiving support from KCC. This support was targeted to improve the teaching and the learning. This was done by in service training and teachers sharing best practise. This was well organised and was carried out in partnership with the schools by the Kent Lead Advisory. Mr Leeson agreed to produce a summary of the work being undertaken.
- b) In reply to a request Mr Leeson agreed to produce a monitoring report to be submitted at each meeting under Section C of the agenda.
- c) In response to a comment, Mr Leeson advised that the Chief Inspector was carrying out a consultation on “satisfactory” to redesignate this to “school requires improvement”. Schools that were “satisfactory” would be regularly inspected, once a term, and if after 3 inspections they had not improved the school would be put into “special measures” which he considered a more robust approach. He considered that it would be possible for a school to improve in one term. Data on the Ofsted inspections would be circulated to Members.
- d) In reply to a question, Mr Leeson advised that a school was not inspected on the level of academic achievement alone, that there were other key ingredients including, making “outstanding” or “good” progress, consistent quality of teaching, and evidence of the good progress of the children. A school with low academic achievement can receive “good” or “outstanding”.
- e) In response to a request Mr Leeson agreed to provide the data on; how many academies were Primary/Secondary and an update on the recruitment of Headteachers/teachers to a future meeting.

4. RESOLVED that the information presented by Mr Whiting and Mr Leeson and the requests and comments made by Members be noted with thanks.

7. Bold Steps for Education

(Item D2)

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. The Chairman invited Mr Whiting and Mr Leeson to introduce the report. They highlighted that the report was visionary with many milestones and targets. It success relied heavily on the determination and partnerships of schools.

2. Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions which included the following:-

- a) A Member raised a number of issues: (1) He agreed that the aspirations of the document but read the report as electioneering as there was no outline of how the targets within the report were to be achieved or monitored. (2) The issue of "Selection" was not mentioned in the report. He highlighted that less than 2% of those that attend grammar schools were on free school meals was an issue. (3) Kent had the highest number of schools under special measures and the highest number of grammar schools. The report did not mention the 25% cohort chosen at 10 years, (4) The report referred to 5 good GCSEs he enquired what these were, (5) Referring to the final paragraph on page 17 he enquired why there was no part time employment for post 16 year olds and asked what KCC was doing about this, (6) He enquired what the number of apprentices on levels 2, 3 and 4 were; and (7) He requested data on the number of young unemployed in Kent to allow Member a base line to monitor in the future. The outcomes/targets needed to be more specific on outcomes and the question asked whether these resulted in people getting jobs.

In response to (1), Mr Whiting considered that the remark on the report being electioneering to be disingenuous and that it was about better education. He agreed to data being made available for monitoring as this would define success. The Chairman suggested and asked the Democratic Services Officer to set up a meeting with the opposition spokesmen, Vice-Chairman, Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Member, the Corporate Director of ELS to discuss the monitoring of ELS portfolio.

In response to Mr Leeson advised that there would be a Performance Monitoring report to each ECC meeting in future.

In response Mr Cubitt advised that this was a strategic report and sets out the broad objectives and the detail to meet the target would be produced in the ELS Directorates Business Plan, which the Committee had a duty to monitor.

- b) The Chairman considered that there should be target for grammar schools on the education they provide. Mr Leeson advised that work was currently being undertaken with Christ Church University on this.
- c) In reply to a request Mr Leeson agreed to produce a detailed report on the recruitment of Headteachers/teachers to a future meeting.
- d) Mr Christie said that he could not support the recommendations in the report.

3. The Chairman asked Members to vote on the recommendations in the report.
Carried 8 votes for 1 against
4. RESOLVED that:-
 - a) the information given in response to comments and questions by Members be noted; and
 - b) the Education, Learning and Skills' Vision and Priorities for Improvement, in order to create the conditions in which pupils experience the best teaching and learning, so that:
 - excellence is promoted across the system;
 - every child in Kent meets their full potential; and
 - every young person benefits from a broad range of pathways in further learning employment, both for their own sense of achievement and for the success of the economy be endorsed.

8. Education, Learning and Skills Directorate Restructure - Presentation *(Item D3)*

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. Mr Leeson gave an update to Members on the ELS Directorate restructure and tabled the Management structure chart. He highlighted the following:
 - During the restructuring process 300 staff interviewed to ensure that the right staff were appointed in the new structure. There had been changes made to the original proposal following the receipt of views from staff during the 90 day consultation. The reduction in staffing gave the way to do things in a cost effective way.
 - Mrs Sue Rogers had been appointed to the new post of Director of Quality and Standards.
 - There was still a vacancy for the position of Head of Standards and School Improvement.
2. The Chairman and Committee Members asked to note their best wishes to Keith Abbott for a speedy recovery.
3. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

9. Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-17 *(Item D4)*

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions. Points raised included:-

- a) A Member requested that the percentages within the report on the needed to be translated into numbers of children. He then asked how many schools KCC was considering expanding. In response, Mr Leeson advised that KCC would be doing all it could to maximise parental preference. This may mean expanding good schools. He considered that this may be the only way to deliver more parental preference by ensuring that there were more good schools. He stated that the Local Authority was the commissioner of schools places but not the direct provider. There had been very problematic data based on birth data and the development of children in Early Years provision in local areas. The consultation will be inviting a host of consultees to give their views to inform the final version of the Commissioning Plan with an aim for this to be updated annually.
 - b) Mr Cubitt advised that each Member of the County Council and District Councils would be invited to a briefing within their districts to discuss their view point on what provision was needed for their district.
 - c) A Member referred to page 31, paragraph 1.6 the sentence beginning “We support greater diversity in the range.....” saying that he did not believe that this was an advantage to children and young people.
 - d) In reply to questions, Mr Whiting explained that if we can improve schools that would ensure that a school will not close. He explained that Priority Funding was the capital for school repairs. KCC was currently waiting the results of the bid it had made for this funding.
2. Mr Leeson advised that the Commissioning Plan aimed to set out a more systematic approach for future education provision in Kent.
 3. RESOLVED that:-
 - a) the responses to comments and questions by Members be noted; and
 - b) the results of the planned consultation be submitted to the July meeting of this Committee.

10. Scoping a Review and the Development of a Strategy for Special Education Needs and Disabilities

(Item D5)

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. Members considered the report and made comments and asked questions that included the following:-
 - a) It was suggested that there should be targets set for SEN using benchmarking.
 - b) It was considered that SEN transport costs should be reduced.

- c) A Member questioned why the wide gap for Kent pupils receiving Free School Meals was so wide from the national average.
- d) In response to a question, Mr Leeson advised that incomplete work on the SEN Review would be incorporated into the Review and then form part of the Draft SEND Strategy would be available in Spring 2013.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the information given in response to comments and questions by Members be noted;
- b) the issues identified in the Scoping Paper attached to the Report be noted;
- c) the framework for the review and the development of a Special Education Needs and Disabilities Strategy for the children and young people of Kent be endorsed; and
- d) the outcomes of the review and a draft SEND Strategy be submitted to the Committee in Spring 2013.

11. Review of AC/PRU Provision

(Item D6)

(Report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills)

1. The Chairman invited Mr Leeson to introduce the report. Mr Leeson highlighted the following:

- This is a scoping report that had been shared with Headteachers and PRU/AC Curriculum Managers. The feedback from which had informed the 5 options set out within the report.
- The quality of the PRU/AC provision varies across the County considerably and the review seeks to address these inequalities.
- There was a need to build on best practise. Mr Leeson considered that the exclusion rate was too high. Those excluded included Looked After Children (LAC), children with behavioural problems and children with SEN. Those children should not be excluded there need to be better provision.
- Mr Whiting concluded that this issue linked back to Bold Steps and those young people that find it difficult to engage in school. The issue would be looked at on a district by district basis.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the information given in response to comments and questions by Members be noted;
- b) the principles underpinning the review and the five options for change set out in the report be approved; and

c) a report be submitted to the committee in September.