

**EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES CABINET
COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 17 February 2016.

PRESENT: Mr L B Ridings, MBE (Chairman), Mrs P T Cole (Vice-Chairman), Mr L Burgess, Mrs M E Crabtree, Ms A Harrison (Substitute), Mr S C Manion, Mr M J Northey, Mr J M Ozog, Mr C R Pearman, Mr R Truelove, Mr T L Shonk and Mr M J Vye

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Leeson (Corporate Director Education and Young People's Services), Mr A Foster (Consultant Advisor) and Mr A Saul (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

146. Introduction/Webcast announcement

(Item A1)

147. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item A2)

1) Apologies were received from Mr Roper and Mr Cowan. Ms Harrison attended the meeting as Mr Cowan's Substitute.

148. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item A3)

1) There were no declarations of interest from Members.

149. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2015

(Item A4)

1) Mr Manion highlighted that on page 8 the 'Triangular Awards' mention are in fact called the 'Tryangle Awards'.

2) The Chairman suggested a number of spelling mistakes and typos that he would share with the Clerk to amend. Members agreed to this.

3) The Chairman asked the minute of page 13 explain that the decision to expand the Wyvern School was an expansion of up to 80 places.

4) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2015 be agreed subject to the corrections and amendments suggested.

150. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016

(Item A5)

1) The Chairman explained he had a couple of minor amendments to pass on to the clerk. Members agreed these be passed on to the clerk.

2) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held of 21 January 2016 be agreed subject to the suggested corrections.

151. Verbal updates

(Item A6)

1) Mr Gough gave the following verbal updates to the Committee:

- a) Kent can expect a fair funding review that will look into how funding is allocated amongst schools. This has been happening nationally. If it follows the recommendations of the F40 group, of which Kent is a part, then Kent schools may see some material benefit from this.
- b) A consultation will go alongside this in regards to the changes and removal of some statutory responsibilities for Local Authorities in Education.
- c) He drew Members attention to a new report from the Education Select Committee on regional schools commissioners. Well worth looking into as an interesting piece of work.

2) In response to questions made by Members of the Committee the following was confirmed by Mr Gough:

- a) In regards to whether this would mean increased responsibilities for Kent schools Members were assured it was just a reallocation of funding.
- b) He also confirmed that it was too early to ascertain which Local Authority responsibilities, if any, would be removed.

152. Proposal to Close Pent Valley Technology College

(Item B1)

1) The Chairman explained he would not be allowing a member of the public to speak at the meeting. This was because their opportunity to respond has already been explored through the consultation. However, the Chairman agreed to the distribution of a written statement from a member of the public against the closure of Pent Valley.

2) Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director of Education and Young People's Services, introduced the report on the closure of Pent Valley School. He explained that it was always a difficult decision to move to close a school. Mr Leeson also gave the following information;

- a) The Local Authority's priority is to improve and increase the opportunities and quality of education of Kent's children and young people. Pent Valley School was judged to be good by Ofsted in 2012. In 2013-14 the Local Authority monitoring was giving cause for concern and following the poor 2014 GCSE results it was not believed that Pent Valley School management was taking sufficient action.
- b) Further to this Mr Leeson confirmed School results had plummeted in recent years in 2014 and 2015. A major review of the School was carried out in response to this and an improvement plan was agreed. As the conditions of this improvement plan had not been met the school had been issued with a

formal warning notice, requiring the governors to bring in new executive leadership.

- c) Mr Leeson informed Members the number of students going to Pent Valley School had been falling each year since 2010. The school is designed for an intake of 180 students each academic year. Contrary to this in 2010 there were 145 students joining year 7 and by 2015 this had reduced further to only 43 students. The numbers that might start in 2016 are now as low as 34. He further confirmed that as 90% of the schools budget is determined by pupil number this is a serious issue for the funding available to the school.
- d) He confirmed that following the current trend Pent Valley School would be £2 million in deficit by the end of this year. The School has been unable to bring its finances into order.
- e) Mr Leeson stated that it is with great reluctance that in spite of new management the School cannot be turned around in time.
- f) In regards to the future of the site he informed Members he anticipated in 2 or 3 years' time a free school could be opened there.
- g) Mr Leeson stated that their consultation process had been very open.

3) Mr Vye expressed a view that Kent County Council should assist with the cost of travel for those who were within a short distance of Pent Valley School and are having to move their children further afield. Members of the Committee and the Chairman expressed support for this. Mr Leeson also stated that he was supportive of the points raised in regards to travel arrangements.

4) In response to concerns raised by Members of the Committee Mr Leeson gave the following further information;

a) Confirmation was given that there is now no flexibility given to Local Authorities for grant funding being given to schools.

b) He also explained the closest two other schools were both good and had achieved well compared to the average for High Schools. Both schools have growing 6th forms.

c) In response to a concern raised into what assurance can be given that a free school opening in Pent Valley's site in future will specialise in technical and vocational and skills Mr Leeson stated the Kent County Council would seek to be involved in running the competition process and specifying what provision is required.

5) A view was expressed by Mr Northey that Folkestone schools should be given further encouragement to welcome students leaving Pent Valley School. Mr Northey stated that with the closure of Chaucer School in Canterbury in 2015 other Canterbury schools had been exceptionally welcoming to the students moving on. He particularly gave praise to the efforts of Spires Academy in making this transition easier. Mr Northey advised the Committee that it would be ideal for Folkestone schools to show the same support to students of Pent Valley School.

6) A view was expressed by Ms Harrison that the decision to close the school was a fait accompli prior to coming before the Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee. Ms Harrison elaborated on this further by explaining that the time given to the consultation starting was too short and that the low amount of students that would join in 2016 was caused by public concern that the school would shut.

7) Mr Leeson responded to the view expressed by Ms Harrison by explaining that before any proposal had been made or the consultation started the number of

students joining the school had already decreased rapidly and it was becoming unviable to keep the school open. As an example Mr Leeson explained that the previous year only 43 students joined the school and the year prior to that only 58. This was too far from the schools capacity of 180 students each academic year, and was happening far before any proposal to close the School was brought forward.

8) Point **a** of the recommendation was put to vote;

Carried, 9 votes to 2.

9) The Chairman advised Members that he would suggest point **b** be amended to read “*b) exceptions should be made to the County Transport Policy where individual circumstances should be considered.*” The amended point **b** was put to vote;

Carried, 9 votes in favour. 2 abstained.

10) Point **c** of the recommendation was put to vote;

Carried, 9 votes in favour. 2 abstained.

11) RESOLVED that the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee agree to endorse the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on:

- a) the decision to close Pent Valley Technology College to all year groups except Years 10 and 12 in August 2016, and to all year groups on 31 August 2017;
- b) exceptions should be made to the County Transport Policy where individual circumstances should be considered;
- c) retaining the Pent Valley Technology College site, on its return to KCC, for future educational need.

153. Work Programme 2015

(Item C1)

1) The Chairman confirmed that contracts of commissioned services within the Committee’s remit would be coming for monitoring at every meeting and that he was clarifying the details with Mr Hotson.

2) Mr Vye asked a date be set for the Development of new Early Help and Preventative Services commissioning framework (EYP) item on the Work Programme. Members agreed to this being set to the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee meeting that comes after the March meeting.

3) RESOLVED that Members agree the Work Programme.

154. SACRE Annual Report

(Item D1)

1) Mr Manion, as Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), introduced the report on the SACRE Annual Report to the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee. He introduced SACRE itself and

explained it has membership from a diverse number of professions and faiths. He also gave thanks to the Local Authority for supporting SACRE and Allan Foster for his excellent work.

2) Allan Foster, Consultant Advisor on SACRE, explained the SACRE Annual Report has since been finalised and would be distributed to all Members of the Committee. He gave the following information;

- a) He explained the Annual Report reflects the activities and works of SACRE.
- b) It was confirmed that Religious Education remains a statutory requirement in UK schools.
- c) It was explained that many secondary schools have dropped the Religious Education short course and that this is a concern nationally.
- d) Members were informed there were two youth SACRE events held in 2015, one of which was held in Sessions House itself. Mr Foster stated that these were exceptionally well received.

3) Mr Northey expressed a view that the value of Religious Education, its good results and the events mentioned by Mr Foster deserve greater publicity. Further to this he expressed a view that the availability of Religious Education was important for Teenagers as they too show an interest in moral issues which are explored and debated in this subject. He explained that it is useful in allowing students an awareness of philosophical beliefs and approaches outside of their own and enable discussion on these subjects.

4) In response to questions raised by Members the following information was given by Mr Foster:

- a) Confirmation was given that the Kent agreed syllabus requires Christianity is taught predominantly.
- b) Students have been able to take Religious Education from Year 10. Since then there has been a dramatic jump in AS entries.
- c) He explained that Religious Education is a worthwhile subject in regards to a number of professions as well as arts and humanities in higher education. An example given was in public relations and human resources professions.

5) Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director of Education and Young People's Services, said he was encouraged by the news SACRE is supported well.

6) RESOLVED that the Education and Young People's Services considered and endorsed the SACRE annual report.