

**Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2013**

Present:

Members of the Committee

Cllr Ashford (replacing Cllr Perry)
Cllr Chattaway (replacing Cllr Tandy)
Cllr Balaam
Cllr Foster
Cllr Fowler
Cllr Jackson (Chair)
Cllr Rickhards
Cllr Shaw
Cllr Williams (replacing Cllr Fox)

Others

Cllr Robbins
Chris Smart (Schools Forum)
Cllr Timms (Portfolio Holder)
Diana Turner (Schools Forum)
Paula Mealing (Resident)
Lucy Ward (Resident)
John McRoberts (Resident)
Dan Clarkson (Resident)
Hayley Hindle (Resident)

Officers

Sarah Callaghan – Head of Service, Learning and Achievement
Wendy Fabbro – Strategic Director, People Group
Liz Holt – Service Manager, Strategy for Change
Janet Neale – Project Officer, Access and Organisation
Yvonne Rose – Service Manager, Secondary Phase
Richard Maybey – Democratic Services Officer

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Fox, Perry, Ross and Tandy, and Joseph Cannon

1.2 Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

1.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2013

- A correction was made to record the apologies given by Diana Turner
- The words “agreed to” were removed from paragraph 1.4(c)
- The minutes were then agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair

1.4 Chair’s Announcements

As the meeting was taking place within the pre-election (Purdah) period, Cllr Jackson read out advice around the restrictions in place for members. Specifically, that the meeting could not be used as a platform for any political statements that could be seen to support their election campaigns.

2 / 3 Public Questions and Call In of Cabinet Decision: To increase the published admission number of Coten End Primary School from 60 to 90 with effect from September 2013

A number of residents were in attendance to speak on this item, therefore it was agreed to move Public Questions (Item 3) forward so members could receive these before considering the call in.

2.1 The following questions asked by members of the public yielded a direct response (given in the subsequent bullet point):

- a) Why has the Overview & Scrutiny Committee called this decision in, when it was made in order to allow siblings to attend the same school?
- The decision was called-in as the decision-maker gave no explanation as to why the date of the increased admissions number was bought forward, despite the officer advice in the report and the outcome of the consultation (*Cllr Jackson*)
- b) Will a decision be made today, so parents know what is happening for the September entry?
- The Committee is not a decision-making body and only has three possible resolutions available to it. These are to:
 1. Set out its concerns in writing and ask the decision-maker to reconsider
 2. Refer the matter to Full Council
 3. Decide to take no action(*Cllr Jackson*)
- c) Why was the previous decision taken to expand the admission numbers at Emscote Infant School, rather than Coten End Primary?
- The decision to expand Emscote was taken approximately 18 months ago, at which time Coten End did not wish to expand to a half-form entry (*Sarah Callaghan*)
- d) Why does the Local Authority (LA) not give more admissions priority to siblings?
- The LA does not look to penalise siblings, and the admissions policy is in line with national standards. It prioritises those living within the catchment area first, followed by Looked After Children, followed by siblings living within catchment, followed by siblings living out of catchment (*Sarah Callaghan*)

2.2 The following questions were also asked by members of the public:

- a) The report to Cabinet states that only six extra places are needed at Coten End Primary for 2013, so why did Cabinet increase this by 30, knowing that it will have a detrimental effect on other local schools?
- b) Why is the LA's sibling policy not in line with other neighbouring LAs?
- c) Why was there no consultation on the decision to increase admissions from September 2013?
- d) How long has the LA's admissions policy been in place?
- e) Where is the evidence that the policy is fit for the needs of local people?
- f) What statistical evidence is there that proper consideration has been given to the challenges raised by parents and residents?
- g) What has the LA done to reduce the threat of fraud (i.e., parents making applications from a different address)?
- h) Given the small number of families with siblings affected by this policy, why can they be not given more priority?

2.3 Janet Neale, the author of the report to Cabinet, stated that while pupil numbers across Warwick are increasing, an expansion at Coten End Primary is only

necessary from September 2014. The consultation yielded responses both in favour and against expansion. Other schools and governing bodies have since indicated that they would have responded against the proposals had they known that expansion from 2013 was a possibility.

- 2.4 The Chair thanked members of the public for their attendance and questions, and opened the discussion to members of the Committee, reminding those in attendance of the options available to them (paragraph 2.1b).
- 2.5 The following concerns were raised by some members of the Committee:
- a) The decision to bring the admissions forward to 2013 has not been subject to statutory consultation
 - b) The unilateral decision-making process without consultation is unfair to other local schools
 - c) The cost of providing temporary expansion at Coten End Primary for 2013 is unnecessary given there is capacity available at other local schools
 - d) The decision will lead to a loss of income at other local schools
 - e) The anticipated pupil numbers for 2013 do not require such an immediate increase at Coten End Primary
 - f) The LA has the ability to admit more than the published admission number within year, should there be the need, so there is no compulsion to increase the published admission numbers now
- 2.6 In response to a question around the impact on other local schools and families, officers reported that:
- a) Four other schools would “lose” five or six pupils each if the Coten End Primary expansion was brought forward to 2013
 - b) These schools are Westgate Primary, Emscote Infant, Woodloes Primary and Newburgh Primary
 - c) If the expansion was to happen in 2014, there would be two pupils from the catchment area that could not be accommodated at Coten End Primary in 2013
 - d) The LA is required to write to applicants with offers of places in April
- 2.7 In response to a question around the legality of the decision to bring forward increased admissions to September 2013, officers reported that:
- “Advice from legal services is that we cannot simply introduce the increase in PAN from September 2013 and that we would need to consult on the revised proposal. The timescale associated with the consultation would be:
- Cabinet give approval to consult: 18 April 2013
 - Formal consultation: 22 April – 8 June 2013
 - Cabinet to consider findings of consultation: July 2013
 - Statutory consultation: August 2013
 - Cabinet to give final approval: September/October 2013
- This would suggest that there is insufficient time to formally introduce the change from September 2013.”
- 2.8 The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Timms, to comment and provide the rationale for Cabinet’s decision to bring forward the admissions to September 2013. Cllr Timms stated that:
- a) It is not always possible to please everyone in terms of providing places at their preferred school

- b) The LA's role is to ensure a sufficiency of places, but it is also the "champion of the learner"
 - c) As a school that Ofsted has rated as "outstanding", it is no surprise that Coten End Primary is over-subscribed
 - d) Bringing forward the expansion to September 2013 is a pragmatic solution to this over-subscription, allowing parents to choose outstanding school provision for their children
- 2.9 The Chair then invited members of the Committee to move towards a resolution:
- a) Cllr Foster, seconded by Cllr Shaw, moved that the Committee take no action
 - b) Cllr Balaam, seconded by Cllr Jackson, proposed an amendment that the Committee sets out its concerns in writing and asks the decision-maker to reconsider
 - c) A vote was taken on the amendment, which was carried by 4 votes to 3
 - d) A vote was then taken on the substantive motion, which was carried by 5 votes to 3

Resolved

That the Committee sets out its concerns in writing and asks the decision-maker to reconsider

4 Questions to the Portfolio Holder

None

5. New School Developments

Liz Holt introduced the report, which asked the Committee to endorse the Council's proposed approach to ensuring sufficient primary school places following recent increases in the birth rate, plus the timescales involved in secondary school expansion and the need for new provision arising from housing developments.

- 5.1 Liz highlighted the following points from within the report:
- a) The LA has a statutory duty to provide a sufficiency of places
 - b) The main drivers for changes in school organisation are changing demographics, school improvement, secure school leadership and financial viability
 - c) There are a number of structural solutions for school organisation, such as amalgamations, federations and new schools
 - d) The Access and Organisation team looks at forecast data to keep on top of trends
 - e) There is an annual capital allowance to help manage expansion of schools, but the priority is on solutions that don't require capital investment
 - f) Academies do not have to follow the same consultation process for changing their admission numbers, and the LA has no power to expand them
 - g) However, the LA's relationship with academies is working well with discussions already taking place about the changing demand for places
 - h) A further detailed report will be taken to Cabinet setting out a proposed investment strategy to meet future need
- 5.2 Members of the Committee offered the following comments and questions. Officer responses are included in the subsequent bullet points:
- a) The report highlights an essential question for the LA of how it funds the development of new schools. It is essential to incorporate education provision

- into the Community Infrastructure Levy when new developments are being planned
- b) Does the LA engage with the Diocesan Boards to understand their own plans for school expansion?
 - Yes, the LA has on-going discussions with them, and they have expressed that they do have expansion opportunities
 - c) Is there a hierarchy for changes to school organisation, as there is with the criteria for admissions?
 - No, the LA does not prioritise any of the organisation options when engaging with schools
 - d) The LA needs to engage more closely with the District and Borough Councils to ensure developers release sufficient money for provision of education
 - e) The LA needs to decide on its policy for new primary schools in terms of whether they have an attached nursery and what the minimum form entry should be
 - f) When the increased primary numbers reach secondary school age, it is likely that all secondary schools will be academies – the LA needs to ensure it has good relations with academy governors, and officers will need to adapt how they engage with them

Resolved

1. The Committee endorsed the approach taken to meet Basic Need.
2. The Committee noted the timescales involved when considering the expansion of secondary school provision
3. The Committee noted the need for new provision

6. NEETs Performance Update

Yvonne Rose introduced the report, providing an update on the progress made in relation to reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Yvonne explained that there has been a subtle change in the NEET measure which extends the age to which they are tracked from a person's 19th birthday to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19. She also highlighted the following points from within the report:

- a) The LA's Going for Growth initiative is encouraging the availability and take-up of apprenticeships for young people, with the LA itself creating 11 new posts
- b) As part of its Priority Families initiative, the LA has identified around 120 families with a young person aged 16-19 who is NEET
- c) Young people continuing in education after Year 11 has risen by 10% over the past five years to 90.7% (5,779)
- d) The proportion becoming NEET at the end of Year 11 has fallen to its lowest ever level of 2% (128); however, this doesn't include young people that the LA can no longer track
- e) The LA has secured more places for those at the end of Year 11 under the September Guarantee
- f) The number of places fell slightly for those at the end of Year 12, which has prompted a new mechanism to be put in place for colleges to inform us as soon as they detect a young person may be dropping out of education
- g) The overall 16-19 NEET rate of 3.6% is very promising, with an improvement of 0.9% on the previous year, although this figure is subject to confirmation by the Department for Education
- h) In term of NEETs from priority groups, those from BME (black, minority, ethnic communities) do better than the overall county average; while those with SEN

(special educational needs) and teenagers mothers and expectant mothers are particularly high

- i) Intervention schemes are in place to target those vulnerable groups, using money from the European Social Fund (ESF)
- j) The September Guarantee has been brought forward from the Summer to March for vulnerable groups
- k) The Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) is being rolled out to all schools following its successful trial, and this will help identify those young people who require intervention

6.1 Members of the Committee offered the following comments and questions. Officer responses are included in the subsequent bullet points:

- a) The LA needs to focus on what makes someone NEET along their education pathway, and what interventions work in turning them around
- b) Do we know how we compare with our geographic and statistical neighbours?
 - Yes, benchmarking data can be provided in the next report. Based on last year's data, we were ranked second compared to our statistical neighbours
- c) There should be more focus on the "employment" aspect of NEETs, and education and training should focus on skills needed for employment
- d) Are there NEET figures for young people who would have previously gone to the PRU (Pupil Reintegration Unit) and are now managed via the ABPs (Area Behaviour Partnerships)? This would be useful to understand if the ABPs are effective
 - Yes, the LA is measuring data for those young people and it will be included in the next report
- e) It is regretful that work experience has been removed as a statutory provision of schools. How can the LA engage with employers to offer more work experience opportunities?
 - As part of Raising the Participation Age (RPA), young people will have a programme of study that includes work experience. Employers will be paid, for the first time, to offer opportunities, which will widen the availability

Resolved

1. The Committee noted the report and the positive progress made in relation to reducing the numbers of NEET in Warwickshire
2. The Committee requested an update report on NEET data in 6 months
3. The Committee requested a further report in Spring 2014, focusing on strategies for employment and how the LA is engaging with the business sector and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

7. Work Programme 2012-13

The Committee agreed the following changes to its work programme:

- **Strategy for School Improvement**
The Committee to receive this on 18 June in advance of it going to Cabinet on 27 June
- **In-county BSED provision**
The Committee will receive the 18 May report to the Schools Forum with recommendations around future provision for those with Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulties (BSED)
- **Welcombe Hills Special School**
The Committee requested a further briefing paper on the options available to the LA to address the health and safety risks at the school, when that information is available

- **Children's Health**

The Committee to invite Dr John Linnane to its September meeting to provide a briefing on the key issues affecting children's health

8. Any Other Items

8.1 Regarding the site visit report at Welcombe Hills Special School, which indicated a school bus driver had acted inappropriately, Chris Smart asked if that driver was still delivering services for the Council. A subsequent response was provided from officers in Transport Operations, as follows:

"The incident referred to in the report was from November 2011. Routes and contracts have changed several times since then, and whilst I am sure the issues were properly communicated to A&M who were the vehicle operator and there have been no other reports of issues in relation to this matter, unfortunately I have not got any documents relating to the incident."

8.2 Cllr Rickhards paid tribute to the dedicated service and professionalism of his colleague, Cllr Balaam, who was attending his last County Council meeting prior to standing down at the elections on 2 May.

8.3 The Chair thanked Richard Maybey for the assistance he has given to the Committee, and wished him well in his new role.

The meeting closed at 12.55pm

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Chair