

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

23 MARCH 2009 (RECONVENED 20TH APRIL 2009)

PRESENT: Councillors J Evans (Chairman), Miss Barton, Fido, Lenton, Mrs Pitteway (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Stock and D Wilson.

Mrs Mintern, Mr Moss, Mrs Sendorek and Mrs Twleftree

Non Members: Councillors Mrs Herdson, Mrs Quick and Saunders.

Officers: Mr Bradley, Mrs Crispin, Mr Herlinger, Mr Jones, Mr Kiely, Mr Turner and Mr Wright.

PART I

79/08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

80/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interests were received:

Councillors J Evans, Miss Barton, Fido, Mrs Herdson, Lenton, Mrs Pitteway, Mrs Quick, Saunders, Mrs Stock and D Wilson, and Mr Herlinger all declared personal interests in Item 12, Appointment of LEA Representatives to Governing Bodies of Schools in the Royal Borough, as they knew Councillors Fido and Baskerville, applicants for school governor vacancies.

Councillor Fido declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 12, Appointment of LEA Representatives to Governing Bodies of Schools in the Royal Borough, as he was named in the report as an applicant for a school governor vacancy. (The item was deferred for discussion at a later date)

Councillor Evans declared a personal interest in all education related items on the agenda as he had a strong interest in literacy, being a member of staff at Waterstones. He also declared a personal interest in Item 12, Appointment of LEA Representatives to Governing Bodies of Schools in the Royal Borough, as he was also a Governor at the school.

Councillor Lenton declared a personal interest in all education related items as his wife was Principal at Slough Grammar School.

Councillor Mrs Pitteway declared a personal interest in all education related items on the agenda as a School Governor of Knowl Hill Primary School.

Councillor Mrs Stock declared a personal interest as her husband was a non-executive director of the Primary Care Trust and her daughter was a teacher at Charters School.

Councillor D Wilson declared a personal interest as he was a LEA appointed governor at Desborough School (and Chairman of their property portfolio).

Councillor Mrs Herdson declared a personal interest as her daughter was a teacher at Braywood School and her grandchildren attended Charters School.

Mrs Twelftree declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 9, Admissions to School (Charters School) and a Part II item, Charters School - Tender Acceptance, because she was Headteacher at Charters School.

81/08 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Part I minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 January 2009 be approved, subject to noting that Mr Herlinger declared a personal interest in Item 9, Appointment of LEA Representatives to Governing Bodies of Schools in the Royal Borough, as he knew Councillor Baskerville, applicant for a governor vacancy.

82/08 ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED: That the order of business be amended.

83/08 SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

Members received the latest Service Monitoring Report.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

84/08 HOLYPORT MANOR SCHOOL RE-PROVISION

Members received a verbal update on the re-provision of Holyport Manor School. Several members attended a recent site visit to observe the site layout and the construction progress to date. The Cannon Lane access road had been completed (with the exception of some surfacing), and the foundations for the school buildings had been put in. The third generation astroturf pitch and floodlights had been installed and were in use. Members were pleased to note that community benefits were already coming to fruition. Two minor amendments to the plans would be considered at future meetings of the Maidenhead Development Control Panel Meeting.

The Panel welcomed the Chairman of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel. He explained that his Panel would be scrutinising the project management of the scheme. It was important for the project to be delivered to the correct design, on time and on budget.

85/08 COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION REVIEW

Members received the report on the Communication and Interaction Review which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009.

The Panel was addressed by Mr Ramsey, whose child was diagnosed with speech and language difficulties and educated accordingly. He thanked Borough staff and schools for their early intervention and the excellent education she received at the resourced unit within Ellington Primary School. His daughter was now a confident communicator, and was about to take a place at a mainstream secondary school. He commented that the existing facilities should be retained and that whilst his daughter no longer had a need for such services, he wished to see many more children treated in the way his daughter had been. He commented that joining up services might be financially beneficial but may not be in the best interest of the children.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- A member commented that the consultation was completed in autumn 2008 and that members of the public were only informed of the results on publication of the Scrutiny Panel agenda.
- Officers were thanked for separating out the reports, enabling significant parts of the data to be made available to the public.
- Care had to be taken in the treatment of those with speech and language difficulties along with those exhibiting more challenging behaviour. Children with speech and language difficulties might give the impression of coping.
- Members requested a progress update to a future meeting of the Panel.
- The Lead Member for Education reassured members that there would be no disruption to services for those already in attendance at the units. Their education would continue until the planned conclusion of their education within their units. This was not a cost saving measure and no cost savings were expected.
- Most service users were likely to be the subjects of statements of educational need. This placed a statutory duty on the authority to provide appropriate services.
- Whilst there might not have been a growth in autism nationally, there were more diagnoses due to better awareness of the symptoms.
- Members were informed that the proposed changes would result in a single, more cohesive service which would benefit a wider range of children.

The Panel noted the results of the public consultation on the Communication and Interaction Review, as set out in the report appendices.

86/08 DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS (CHANGES TO MAIDENHEAD SECONDARY SCHOOLS DESIGNATED AREAS)

Members received the report on the Determination of School Admission Arrangements (Changes to Maidenhead Secondary School Designated Areas) which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009.

The Panel was addressed by Mr Hylan, Headteacher of Cox Green School. He explained that Maidenhead secondary schools were popular and successful, with growing academic results. He commented that it would be reckless to make changes to the designated areas whilst there was a prospect of gaining funding through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) bid. He also noted that parents made house purchase choices to be close to a preferred school. He suggested that of the proposed changes Option 3 should be the preferred option as it treated all schools equally and would have greater compatibility with BSF funding.

The Panel was addressed by Mrs White, Headteacher of Furze Platt Secondary School. She explained that the school served a local community with many pupils living within walking or cycling distance. Changes to the designated areas could adversely impact the character of the school. Mrs White warned against making changes without proper modelling. She considered that important questions were hidden within the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) consultation. The prospect of gaining funding through the BSF bid was noted. Furze Platt Secondary School suggested that Options 1 and 2 be firmly rejected.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- The Panel noted that Designated Area Option 2 was actually the preferred option (not Option 3, as stated in the report).
- The Panel expressed concern that no modelling had taken place and that the selection of Option 2 at this stage would not allow any potential progress on building Schools for the future to be taken into account.
- There were also concerns that the consultation responses were not strongly conclusive.
- One Councillor stated his strong preference for Option 2 and informed members that the governing body of Desborough School supported this view.
- The Panel recommended to Cabinet that the decision on designated areas in Maidenhead be deferred for one year to enable greater consultation and proper modelling, as well as being able to take into account any progress in the Building Schools for the Future capital bid.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be advised that the Panel did not endorse the recommendations contained within the report, and that the above comments be verbally reported to Cabinet.

87/08 BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

Members received the report on Building Schools for the Future, which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009. The report outlined the development of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme within the Royal Borough and outlined the outcome of the consultation with pupils, parents, governors, staff and other stakeholders on the future of secondary (including middle and upper) school provision in the Borough. The report also identified some of the funding issues which would arise from making the funding bid.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- Windsor schools would not benefit from any of the funding. In response it was noted that Maidenhead schools were most in need of investment.
- There was no guarantee that full funding would follow a successful bid.
- The 'best estimate' of the investment required in the next year was around £200,000. This would establish a readiness to deliver and contact would be made with partners to agree deliver options.

The Panel endorsed the report. They supported the proposal to commit to the necessary preparatory work. Whilst conceding that there should be some degree of caution the Panel were agreed that this was a potential opportunity which should not be missed. It was suggested that priority areas should be identified, in case any funding offered turned out to be less than originally proposed by the Government.

RESOLVED: That the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to the Panel's comments being verbally reported to Cabinet, as detailed in the above paragraph.

88/08 DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS (CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES)

Members received the report on the Determination of School Admission Arrangements (Criteria and Procedures) which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- It was noted that in some schools there would have to be slightly higher admission numbers to temporarily take account of pupils born between 1st May and 31st August 2005 during implementation of the Rising 5 policy.
- It was suggested that use of the phrase "as the crow flies" should be avoided.
- The Panel suggested that in the interest of clarity, the wording of the tie-breaker should be the same in the primary and secondary procedures.

RESOLVED: That the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to the above comments being verbally reported to Cabinet.

89/08 ADMISSIONS TO SCHOOL (CHARTERS SCHOOL)

Members received the report on Admissions to School (Charters School) which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009.

Mrs Twleftree, having declared a Personal and Prejudicial interest, addressed the Panel, prior to leaving the room. She explained that whilst trust status was not legally held, the school did operate in a similar way. She explained that trust status was likely to be achieved in the very near future and the school would then be in charge of its own admissions arrangements. She therefore asked members to recommend to Cabinet that aptitude for sports be reinstated to Category C.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- The Panel considered the report and heard the argument from Charters School that sports status should be Category C in the admissions criteria.
- The Panel did not accept the recommendation that sports should be retained as Category F, in accordance with current Council policy.
- The Panel recognised that Charters School was due to obtain Trust status and would then be able to set its own admissions criteria.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be advised that the Panel does not endorse the recommendation contained within the report, and that the above comments be verbally reported to Cabinet.

90/08 DETERMINATION OF SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS (ADMISSION OF RISING 5'S)

Members received the report on the Determination of School Admission Arrangements (Admission of Rising 5's), which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009. The report arose from a consultation which considered the principle of admitting children aged 5 to full-time mainstream schools twice a year. The report invited Cabinet to determine the criteria and procedures for admission.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- The Panel endorsed the report.
- It was noted that the proposal was not necessarily in line with the rest of the country, as stated in the report, because most schools avoided two points of entry.
- A 'bulge' was expected, but a single point of entry would have resulted in a 'double bulge'.
- Concern was expressed that the delegated schools budget could be impacted, and this could affect the rest of the schools budgets.
- Most members acknowledged the need for a standardised Rising 5 policy, and recognised the positive impact it could have on the development of communication and social skills.
- One Councillor expressed concern at sending children to school at such an early age.

RESOLVED: That the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to the above comments be verbally reported to Cabinet.

91/08 CONTINUATION OF MEETING

At this point in the meeting, and in accordance with Rule of Procedure Part 4A 23.1 of the Council's Constitution, the Chairman called for a vote in relation to whether or not the meeting should continue, as the time had exceeded 10.00pm.

Upon being put to the vote, a majority of those present voted in favour of the meeting continuing.

RESOLVED: That the meeting continue past 10.00pm.

92/08 BEST KEPT SCHOOL COMPETITION

Members received the report on the Best Kept School Competition which was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 26 March 2009.

The Panel endorsed the report but suggested that it should be called Best Kept *Secondary* School Competition.

RESOLVED: That the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval, subject to the above comment being verbally reported to Cabinet.

93/08 WORK PROGRAMME

Members commented that the agenda for the meeting was too large and that there were not enough meetings programmed into the corporate diary for the Panel to properly conduct its business. Democratic services was instructed to take immediate steps to increase the frequency of meetings to nine a year, with the aim of keeping one date free of Cabinet items to enable the Panel to consider overview items. The two additional dates to consider Cabinet items would be programmed in Autumn and around January/February, when the number of education related items tended to peak.

94/08 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 18-20 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 - 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.