

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2010**

Councillors Allen (P), Beavis (P), Champion, Dickson (P), Mrs Forder (P), Forder (Chairman) (P), Foster-Reed (P), Hylands (P), Mrs Searle, and Miss West (P).

Also in attendance:

- County Councillor Kirk, Hampshire County Council Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
- County Councillor Edgar, Hampshire County Council Assistant to Executive Lead Member for Children's Services (Education)
- Bob Eardley, Hampshire County Council: Building Schools for the Future Manager

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Councillor Carter had been nominated to replace Councillor Champion for this meeting.

48. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Searle and Champion.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. POST 16 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN GOSPORT

County Councillor Kirk, having received the Committee's preliminary findings, attended the meeting, together with County Councillor Edgar, to explain how, from 1 April 2010, Post 16 Vocational Education would be governed in the Borough, how decisions would be made and standards monitored and to comment on the Committee's provisional findings.

Councillor Kirk advised that he would be speaking generally about Post 16 Education in Gosport and explained how, from the 1 April 2010, this would be governed in all the districts of Hampshire. The transition from the Learning and Skills Council to Hampshire County Council was very complicated. Responsibility for commissioning courses would rest with the County Council but revenue funding would be the responsibility not only of the County Council but of the Young Peoples Learning Agency. Capital Funding would be provided from another source.

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Councillor Kirk endorsed the view that the needs and views of the students themselves should be the determining factor when deciding what courses should be provided. From 1 April 2010 courses would be based on the needs of students no matter whether they were of an academic or vocational nature. Vocational courses, in Councillor Kirk's view, encompassed a vast range of subjects including such areas medicine and law. He also stated that he did not want students to be obliged to travel long distances to colleges.

Councillor Kirk advised that students' needs could be ascertained by engaging with schools providing pre - 16 education and there would have to be reliance on effective learning partnerships with secondary schools.

Councillor Edgar advised that the 14 – 19 years agenda was currently being looked at. Some students were undertaking A level courses simply to find career path opportunities.

Councillor Kirk advised that the 14 – 19 agenda spanned schools and colleges. Seventeen new diplomas were to be in operation by the year 2013. Students would begin work on the course at age 14 and the three levels of the diploma would take them up to 19. This entailed a total of 51 new courses and there would be issues surrounding running so many. It would be important for all colleges and schools to work together and Hampshire County Council would have the opportunity to ensure this happened, particularly as no single college would be able to supply all the courses. Courses in the new diploma would not be exclusively new subjects and conventional subjects such as literacy and numeracy would be included as part of the diplomas.

There was an ongoing role for the Borough Council with regard to detailed knowledge of local industry, information which was not held at the County Council. This was happening in Havant and could be seen as good practice.

Councillor Edgar advised that, from his experience, both students and businesses felt the same way in that they wanted students to be trained for jobs that would exist in the future.

Councillor Kirk advised that the Learning and Skills Council had already invited, and were funding, 150 additional learner places for vocational education in Gosport. The County Council would maintain this situation. £4 million of capital investment had been earmarked for the 11 – 19 Education Inclusion Service in Gosport. The first step would be to replace the Quayside Education Centre. The intention would be to base the Inclusion Service on good practice currently in operation in Hampshire e.g. in the New Forest and at Andover.

Councillor Kirk expressed the County Council's wish to work with Gosport Borough Council to improve opportunities for education and training. Statistics showed that secondary and tertiary education in Gosport was not working well.

He wished to see support for economic development in Gosport and made the comparison that 80% of working people who lived in Andover actually worked in the town. The intention was to assist Gosport to achieve a better employment situation. Opportunities had been lost in the past e.g. shared college at HMS Daedalus, Bridgemary Skills Centre and the Enterprise Centre at Bay House.

Councillor Kirk advised that there was under achievement in Gosport and this was evidenced by the Contextual Value Added score achieved by schools in the area. This method took account of a student's ability and background and was considered to be a useful way to measure a student's educational progress. Brune Park and Bridgemary Schools were achieving considerably under the baseline level (1,000 points) with Bay House reaching slightly over this level. Bridgemary and Brune Park School's Ofsted reports indicated that they were satisfactory which, in Councillor Kirk's view, meant only adequate. A better assessment result was being looked for.

Councillor Kirk drew attention to tertiary education and understood that Gosport Borough Council had lodged an inquiry under the Freedom of Information Act regarding skills assessments. He understood that St Vincent College had had a number of notices to improve issued in various areas.

Councillor Kirk was doubtful regarding travel difficulties encountered by students. A number of colleges which were a considerable distance from Gosport still taught a high number of students from that area. The colleges provided a mixture of courses and some students may be receiving travel assistance. Councillor Edgar advised that he had not observed travel difficulties for students wishing to access courses in the 14 – 19 range where the student actually wanted to do the course. Some students had been found to enjoy the travel element of attending college.

Councillor Kirk expressed concern at mention in the Chairman's report of failure by the Learning and Skills Council. The Learning and Skills Council had been frustrated in many ways by outside influences.

Councillor Kirk expressed concerns regarding views on the per capita spend on education in Gosport. Currently the only area in Hampshire which received a higher per capita spend was Havant. He advised that the per capita spend was the same in all schools but there were varying supplements paid and also transition funding to smaller schools which would affect the total funding.

Councillor Kirk advised that economic and social deprivation were important factors but experiences in Leigh Park had shown that it was possible to overcome these difficulties. If students were approached and encouraged in the right way, those from deprived backgrounds would have higher aspirations than their parents. The role of inspirational teachers was important.

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Councillor Kirk emphasised the importance of the role of good leadership and management and that there would be opportunities to solve the problems associated with friction between heads of schools in Gosport once responsibility for commissioning Post 16 education was handed over to Hampshire County Council.

Councillor Kirk advised that allocations under the Building Schools for the Future were not based on the numbers of pupils. They were based on plans submitted by Hampshire County Council detailing what needed to be done.

With regard to capital funding for Post 16 Education it was not yet clear how this would work. Building Schools for the Future may give opportunities to invest but those establishments with a lower priority would be unlikely to receive funding due to the national economic situation. Mr Eardley advised that Gosport schools would be included in the second phase of this scheme.

Councillor Edgar advised that, nationally, politicians were committed to the modernisation agenda. This would take place over a long period of time commencing in areas with multiple index of deprivation problems.

Councillor Kirk advised that capital funding would not dry up but it was not currently clear what would be allocated on an ongoing basis. There would be a devolved capital element in schools' annual budgets but it was not clear about Post 16 capital funding. This could present problems when deciding how to run courses. With regard to Building Schools for the Future, funding priority in Hampshire had been given to Havant first and then Gosport due to the high deprivation figures.

Councillor Kirk endorsed the view that motivation must come from schools and teachers. Social and economic problems did not necessarily affect motivation but there was a need to help children to follow the right path.

Councillor Kirk advised that the commissioning service would not be carried out in Gosport. It would be carried out by Hampshire County Council but Gosport and the other districts would naturally be taken into account. There would be local childrens partnerships but these would cover a wider area than just education.

Councillor Kirk was concerned that the Chairman's report mentioned an undermining of St Vincent College and expressed the view that he did not feel that this would be the intention of the Learning and Skills Council. It would, however, be useful to have alternative suppliers of any functions.

Councillor Kirk advised that he did not agree that the Skills Centre at Bridgemary School had been an inferior solution but accepted that this was a matter of personal opinion.

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With regard to solutions for Post 16 and 14 – 19 education in Gosport Councillor Kirk felt that the district was no different to any other. All establishments needed to work together to achieve solutions for all in Gosport and everyone had a responsibility to ensure that it worked. Those currently in competition would need to work together.

Hampshire had 11 sixth form colleges in the top 20% of the country, yet only educated 2% of the pupils. This was part of the reason why there were so few sixth forms. Hampshire County Council was pleased that they would be coming back under the jurisdiction of the County.

Councillor Kirk advised of the difficulties encountered with each school and college being self governing. He would be trying to get them to work together consensually by way of partnerships. The establishment of an Executive Headteacher role had been considered in the past but this arrangement depended largely on local circumstances and Councillor Kirk stated that he was not suggesting this situation would lend itself to Gosport.

Councillor Kirk advised that any Executive Headteacher would have to adopt a co-ordinating role. Basingstoke had more schools and colleges than Gosport but they had now started working together and taking joint decisions through good co-operation. There would be difficulties with this arrangement where the district covered a large area e.g. New Forest.

The Chairman advised that the difficulties in Gosport called out for good leadership. Relations in Gosport were currently not good and there was a need to move forward. For this to happen, good leadership was essential.

Councillor Edgar advised that the Consortium of Gosport and Fareham Schools was effective with no duplication of work. Students were prepared to travel to college. There was positive thinking and good timetabling.

Councillor Edgar advised that he had always felt that problems started at pre-school age. Pre-school establishments had been successful and were crucial to the future.

The view was expressed that good teachers made a considerable difference and the question was raised regarding how to ensure that teachers were kept up to date. Councillor Kirk advised that the right leadership would ensure that leaders and teachers were helped to develop. The appointment of the right leader was crucial.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Kirk on behalf of the Committee for his useful input.

50. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

CHAIRMAN