

Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2016

Present: Simon Tagg (Chairman)

Attendance

Len Bloomer	Sheree Peale
Tim Corbett	Paul Woodhead
Ian Hollinshead	Mike Worthington
David Loades (Vice-Chairman)	Candice Yeomans
Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf	

Also in attendance: Ben Adams

Apologies: Maureen Compton, Carol Dean and Geoff Martin

PART ONE

54. Declarations of Interest

Mr Paul Woodhead declared an interest in connection with minutes no. 57 in his capacity to work for Entrust on school improvement issues around governors. He had no current contract with them.

55. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 17 December 2015

RESOLVED- That, with the addition of clarification requested regarding future funding of the Great Swim at minute 48, the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 17 December 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

56. School Improvement and Attainment in Staffordshire

The Select Committee considered the progress of educational achievement in Staffordshire for the period September 2014 to August 2015. Staffordshire showed a positive direction of travel in terms of the percentage of schools judged as Good or Outstanding with the target of 80% of schools receiving these judgements by September 2015 being exceeded (81% of Staffordshire schools received Good or Outstanding judgments). The number of Staffordshire pupils therefore receiving a good or outstanding education had also improved, with an increase of 13% since 2012. Attainment levels and progress in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage (KS) 1 were excellent and continued to outperform national levels of performance.

The focus for 2015/16 was around KS2 and KS4 where although progress had been made, Staffordshire Schools needed to accelerate improvements to gain ground in the rates of progress achieved by Staffordshire's statistical neighbours and nationally. Work

was also needed to help tackle variations in attainment between districts and for different pupil groups, such as those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) or Pupil Premium (PP). The approach to school improvement had evolved with a range of agencies now pulled in to support change. There were many dimensions to school improvement, with the leadership and management of schools being critical to success.

Further focus was also required in Post 16 where results at A level and equivalent needed to improve in order to close a widening gap between Staffordshire and national figures. A review of Further Education (FE) was currently being undertaken. Indications showed that there were too many providers with the same or very similar offer and there was a need to get rid of much of this duplication. There also appeared to be too many small school sixth forms only able to offer a limited number of courses. The Select Committee may wish to consider this area in more detail, specifically considering the review findings.

Members asked for clarification on the current status of the Stafford Collegiate Sixth Form. Walton High School had indicated they were leaving the Collegiate to operate their sixth form independently. Charities and Trust funding supported the use of the Chetwynd Centre by the Collegiate but there had been some concern that this funding, which was intended for general maintenance of the Centre, had not been used for this purpose. Changes to school status, with academies and federations, may impact on the future of the Collegiate. Discussions were also taking place with Wolverhampton University on the possibility of sponsoring a 14-19 school. A review was being undertaken to agree a sustainable way forward for Further Education and it was hoped that details of this would be available within the next six months.

Members asked for assurances that Walton High School would no longer receive Charities and Trust funding intended for the Collegiate. Whilst it was anticipated this would be the case, the decision for allocating this funding lay with the Charities and Trust Committee.

Members asked for future reports to include comparison figures for statistical neighbours and the national average, to help Members understand the context of attainment in Staffordshire. They noted a draft outcomes plan, "Excellent Schools Outcome Plan", was being produced and suggested an action plan rather than outcomes was required. There were a large number of participants in school improvement, with all of these needing to have ownership of the outcomes. For this reason the outcomes needed to be agreed early on as not every outcome would be delivered by an action of the County Council. A detailed action plan would then be developed to establish how the outcomes were achieved.

Members asked how the local authority influenced school improvement in academies where they had no direct power to insist on change. The Authority worked in a range of different ways and whilst they had no intervention role with academies, academies remained part of the local partnership of Staffordshire schools. Best practice within schools was promoted and shared irrespective of the school's status. Work was undertaken to maintain a dialogue with academy sponsors and where concerns were not addressed the Regional Schools Commissioner would be informed. The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner had grown and their office expanded. Work was currently underway to produce a national protocol on ways of working together, in

particular around school improvement, safeguarding, place planning, school organisation and growth. This relationship was key, with all parties having a shared interest in achieving the best education for Staffordshire learners.

The Cabinet Member, Learning and Skills, informed Members that the local authority had a role to play in the process of selecting academy sponsors. It was essential that the right sponsor was in place and this would then help future relationships.

The importance of good leadership and governance was reiterated and Members asked whether the school improvement team had the capacity to ensure there was effective governance in schools. Governing bodies needed a range of different skills to develop their changing role. There was a focus on supporting and equipping governing bodies to fulfil the new roles and responsibilities. Part of the recent dialogue with governing bodies was around the requirement for them to be reconstituted. Peer to peer support networks allowed sharing of good practice. Being a school governor was a huge commitment and it was important to remember that governors were volunteers. It was essential to ensure the right level of governor support and training was available and that schools invested in this.

The Select Committee asked how pupil premium monies were used to support improvements in English. The Committee had previously received a paper on pupil premium funding. Payments were made directly to schools, with the funding following the pupil. Schools were required to publish how their pupil premium funding was used. Evidence showed that this funding was making a difference. Good governors should be aware of how pupil premium funding was used in their schools and challenge its use if improvements weren't shown. Entrust had been commissioned to undertake a review of pupil premium funding and examples of best practice case studies would be shared across the County.

The definition of a "coasting" school was being changed, and Members asked how many Staffordshire schools were likely to be caught in this new definition. The Cabinet Member stated this was a key strategy for the Government and a significant driver for organisation and structural change. A different level of scrutiny came into play for those schools now considered to be coasting. The definition was still under consultation so at present it was difficult to establish how many Staffordshire schools it would affect. Staffordshire undertook an internal audit of school performance which enabled a clearer picture of performance between Ofsted inspections and helped schools analyse themselves effectively. The timely and thorough data available to schools enabled any areas for development to be identified early.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) Progress of Educational Achievement in Staffordshire during September 2014 – August 2015 be noted;
- b) the results of the Post 16 Review be included on the Work Programme; and,
- c) Members scrutinise the action plan associated with the Excellent Schools Outcome Plan at a later date.

57. Education Support Services - Commissioning and Contract Performance

[Ian Turner, Head of Commercial, Andy Burns, Director of Finance and Resources, Sharon Kelly, Entrust Director of Education and Ian Wilkie, Entrust Commercial Lead, also in attendance for this item]

At the 4 September Select Committee meeting Members had requested a further report on the performance of the education support services commissioning arrangements and contract. The primary provider of Staffordshire County Council (SCC) commissioned education support services is Entrust. Entrust was established on 1 April 2013 as a joint venture between the County Council and Capita Plc.

The shared focus for Entrust and the County Council in 2015/16 was at KS2 and KS4 where Staffordshire schools needed to accelerate improvements, and to do more to tackle the variation in attainment between districts, pupils in receipt of FSM and Pupil Premium funding.

Meetings were held on at least a monthly basis to discuss the Service Level Agreement (SLA). There was recognition that some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) needed changing as the information they gave wasn't helpful in monitoring the contract. These were being developed alongside discussions on how reporting was undertaken in the future. The KPIs were set three years ago and some were now less relevant and therefore required updating.

Members were aware only some of the KPIs delivered by Entrust were within the remit of this Select Committee, however they were unaware of Corporate Review scrutinising those KPIs that fell within their remit.

The percentage of children achieving 5+A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths or equivalent had risen in Staffordshire whilst the figures had fallen according to the England average. Members asked what Staffordshire had done to gain this positive direction of travel. There were a range of different reasons for this including the way in which Staffordshire schools tended to manage their curriculum meaning that they had less of an adjustment to achieve good results in this measure than some authorities.

The Select Committee asked that future reports give an explanation of the percentages included as well as statistical neighbour data to enable comparisons. Members also asked why only 95% of sports equipment testing in maintained schools had been achieved, and whether there would be health and safety implications as a result of this. The 5% schools outstanding would be where the equipment testing company had been unable to access the sports equipment in a specific school on a specific occasion, and these would be addressed.

Members asked why there was a 25% governor vacancy rate. The 25% vacancies were over all maintained schools governing bodies across the County. This had increased from the previous year, however as governing bodies were aware of the requirement for them to reconstitute by September 2015 many had chosen not to fill vacancies until after their reconstitution, particularly as governing bodies were expected to become smaller as a result of this process.

The value for money aspect of the contract was raised in respect of training. Should a school wish to purchase a training course they could purchase from a wide range of

providers. The County Council however had to purchase training courses from Entrust as part of their agreement. Value for Money measures were applied at a contractual level rather than for each individual day course.

There was some concern expressed on behalf of governors over the cost and fixed offering for governor training. Training per governor from Entrust was £99.00, with equivalent external training offered at £75.00 per governor. If arranging governor training in school Entrust charged £500.00 per day for ten people, with an extra charge of £50 per person above this without there being an applicable additional cost to Entrust. These governor training sessions were not part of the commissioned service but part of the traded offer. Members were informed that the Entrust governor buy back service had one of the highest satisfaction ratings.

In respect of learning technologies Members noted that only 50% of incidents were fixed at the time the customer first reported them. The Cabinet Member explained there was some concern with learning technologies, and in particular over the provision of broadband to schools and how to generate new technologies. Improvements needed to be made with that part of the contract.

Many of the KPIs were designed to ensure the safe set up of Entrust and were traditional operational measures. Performance management needed to show value for money and a joint exercise was being undertaken to re-shape the KPIs to give more meaningful information. A change protocol was in place to enable both parties (ie Entrust and the County Council) to bring suggested KPI changes forward for discussion. A change log was kept giving an audit trail on what was changed and why. A documented change procedure was also in place giving clear guidance on what level of sign off different types of change required.

The Corporate Review Committee had a role in helping develop the County Council's business plan. The Business Plan would be taken to Cabinet and County Council in February and would include priorities to drive the work of the County Council. The Entrust SLA was a key development area. Members were informed that Cabinet had a "positive dissatisfaction" approach to ensure there was be no complacency within the authority and to help drive these improvements.

One of the areas of the SLA was support for Staffordshire families who chose to Electively Home Educate (EHE) their children. Members asked if they could see the outcome of this support work. Members asked for clarification over for the actual number of the 100% EHE families who chose to participate in this support work. They were informed that this part of the SDA was currently under discussion. It would be advisable to bring detail of EHE back to the Select Committee in a few months after these discussions had concluded rather than potentially pre-judge their outcome.

There were a number of ways to further improve and develop, including sharing school visit reports. A survey of work undertaken in schools was produced to assess how successful this work had been. Consideration would be given to whether this information should be shared more widely as part of contract performance measures. Members were informed that school visit reports were already shared with headteachers, with the expectation that they would share them more widely within their schools. Analysis was undertaken of school improvement and evidence showed that schools receiving school

improvement support services from Entrust improved faster than those who had not receive these services.

The Parent Governor Representative, Mr Paul Woodhead, offered to share governors' views on Entrust value for money with the Corporate Review Committee.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) progress in further developing the approach to commissioning and contract managing education support services be noted;
- b) the update on performance of the contract be received;
- c) the Chairman write to the Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee asking that they include scrutiny of the Entrust KPIs under their remit on their work programme;
- d) a working group be set up to consider the type of information the Select Committee would like to see reported for future scrutiny, taking account of the current review of KPIs;
- e) school visit reports be shared more widely with chairs og governing bodies;
- f) consideration be given to governor support and access to training to ensure we attract and retain excellent governors;
- g) a report be brought to the Select Committee illustrating the process of support to EHE; and,
- h) governors' views on Entrust value for money be shared with the Corporate Review Committee.

58. Work Programme

The Select Committee received a copy of their work programme. Members noted the following amendments:

- Countryside Estate Review be brought to the May Select Committee;
- a briefing note on the Great War Strategy be circulated to Members;
- details of EHE service be added to the work programme;
- Post 16 Review; and
- a working group be established to consider the Entrust SDA KPIs within the remit of this Select Committee and what information Members wished to receive to inform their future scrutiny. Membership of this working group was agreed as: Sheree Peaple; Paul Woodhead; Simon Tagg; and Ian Hollinshead.

RESOLVED – That the changes to the work programme be noted.

Chairman