

Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 26 July 2016

Present: Simon Tagg (Chairman)

Attendance

Ann Beech	Kevin Jackson
Len Bloomer	Mike Lawrence
David Brookes (Vice-Chairman)	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Ian Hollinshead	Paul Woodhead

Also in attendance: Ben Adams, Gill Heath and Mark Winnington

Apologies: Geoff Martin, Sheree People, Mike Worthington and Candice Yeomans

PART ONE

8. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

9. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 24 May 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 24 May 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

10. The Future Model for the Shugborough Estate - Sub-Leases for the Walled Garden and the County Museum

On 20 January 2016 Cabinet approved the transfer of the legal estate of the entire Shugborough Estate to the National Trust by 1 November 2016. As part of that process it was recognised that the County Council would need additional time to relocate its museum collection and reinstate the walled garden. The National Trust have therefore granted two leases to the County Council for this purpose and the Select Committee received details of the lease terms and the planned work necessary to complete these projects.

Members asked for clarification on potential redundancies and subsequent cost implications. The transfer of staff from the County Council to the National Trust was due to take place on 1 November. A pre-transfer TUPE consultation was currently taking place around the National Trust Operating Model and it was anticipated that the consultation would close at the end of August and at that point all existing employees would know whether they had a job role in the new National Trust structure on 1 November 2016 or would be redundant. All staff would be transferred on 1 November,

with staff changes and/or redundancies made on 2 November, in line with the TUPE regulations.

The interviews for the new structure and the outcomes would be completed by 29 July 2016. As the new staff structure belonged to the National Trust the redundancies would be made by them rather than the County Council, with the subsequent costs also covered by them.

The cost to surrender the lease to the National Trust was £20.5m and Members noted that total savings of £39.4m were anticipated, assuming the known maintenance issues were addressed during the lease period. The Select Committee was informed that the £39.4m savings were after the £20.5m had been paid. The £2.4m backlog of maintenance and ongoing maintenance over the next 50 years had also been built into the business case figures. An allowance had been made for work necessary on the walled garden as part of the County Council business case, however detailed costings for this work had not yet been agreed. Specification for the work was being produced and would need to be agreed with the National Trust before costs could be identified. Members asked that this information be brought back to the Select Committee once it was available.

Members were aware that for many years the County Council had been unable to ensure that Shugborough was cost neutral and therefore this arrangement would enable the current financial concerns and liabilities were taken from Staffordshire taxpayers. The many artefacts from the museum collection would need alternative accommodation and Members asked whether a new, improved and accredited museum would be developed within Staffordshire. Work was currently underway to identify a new store for the artefacts and much of the collection would be loaned to the National Trust and would remain on display within the Shugborough Estate. There had been a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund of £4.3m funding which would fund an extension to the Records Office, including a display area, some of which could be used by the Museum collection. It was also hoped that accreditation would be achieved by the Archive Service in the future.

Members asked whether other local museums had been approached to take some of the artefacts in the short term. This had been discussed through the Museums Network with local museums considering which items they may wish to take on loan and those that they may wish to use for specific short term exhibitions.

The County Council had recently made a substantial investment into the Outdoor Education Centre (OEC) at Shugborough and Members were concerned that this investment may be lost as part of the transfer process. The investment had been highlighted with the National Trust and a lease agreement had been created between Entrust and the National Trust for the OEC for a 10 year period, backdated from 2013.

Members noted that as a Grade 1 listed building any repairs and maintenance work undertaken at Shugborough had to be to a prescribed level.

Mr Len Bloomer asked for clarification over the area of the OEC lease and whether this ran up to the Cricket Club. As the Local Member it was suggested that Mr Bloomer meet with officers after the meeting to clarify these issues.

RESOLVED – That the lease arrangements for the Walled Garden, County Museum and OEC be supported, and that:

- a) agreed costings for the restoration of the Walled Garden and County Museum be brought back to the Select Committee once the specification had been agreed; and
- b) Mr Len Bloomer, as Local Member, meet with officers to clarify details around the OEC lease area.

11. Impact of SEND reforms

Staffordshire's approach to the reform programme resulting from the Children's and Families Act 2014 was set out in "Achieving Excellence in Learning and Skills: Implementing the 0-25 Special Educational Needs System – Strategic Development Plan 2014-2016". Across the County a number of pathfinders piloted the SEND Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms. In July 2015 the Department of Health produced a Final Impact Research Report that evaluated the SEND pathfinders programme and Members received details of key findings, which included a positive improvement in relation to choice and the sufficiency of provision, whilst stating further work needed to be undertaken.

Staffordshire had developed and implemented a new person centred pathway. 509 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had been completed with a further 176 assessments pending. The percentage of statements/EHCPs maintained by Staffordshire County Council continued to be relatively stable at around 3%, in keeping with national averages. However requests for Education Health Care (EHC) needs assessments were increasing. Again this was in line with national figures.

Issues remained around transfers where the LA was required to transfer appropriate statements of Special Educational Need (SEN) to an EHCP. Staffordshire had approximately 3,500 statements to transfer, with 432 statements converted to date and 524 currently in the process. Staffordshire was behind schedule in making these transfers and extra capacity was required to ensure transfers were completed by the 2018 deadline. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills informed Members that they now had a full complement of staff to tackle the transfer issues and he was confident that the backlog would be addressed.

Members had concerns at the increase in the number of tribunals in Staffordshire, particularly in relation to the reduction within the West Midlands and England. The Select Committee was informed that a relatively large number of families went to tribunal to enable their child to attend Maple Hayes Independent School specialising in dyslexia. This had a disproportionate impact on tribunal figures. It was also too soon to tell what difference changes resulting from the transformation programme had made, with closer work with families trying to address issues. Members asked for figures of the number of tribunals rather than the percentage to clarify the extent of the issue.

The Select Committee were informed that data for last year was not yet available and it was hoped this would give an indication of the impact of the work undertaken on tribunal numbers. Members asked to receive this data once it became available.

Feedback from service users was being collected to help identify and address concerns. A parental steering group met monthly as part of this work and in September discussions would take place with children, young people and their wider families to consider the type of support they received and requested. A further report would be brought once this information was available.

Work was underway with Special Schools to ensure that out of county placements were reduced, with those pupils who had moderate SEN moved into mainstream schooling.

The Select Committee were informed that all local areas would be inspected over a five year period from May 2016, with inspection teams usually consisting of one Ofsted HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) , a Children's Services Inspector from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and a local authority inspector. Inspections evaluate how effectively the local area meets its responsibilities for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs. Following the inspection Ofsted determine whether a written statement of proposed action should be made. The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills informed the Select Committee that preparation work in readiness for an inspection was already being undertaken.

Members questioned how the local offer for pupils with SEN was managed, having concerns that in some instances schools avoided SEN pupils because of potential impact on Ofsted judgements. There was a need to work with Ofsted to accommodate this and support the local offer. Peer and cluster support helped in managing the local offer.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) the update on progress with embedding new legislation and ways of working be supported;
- b) progress on the transfer process be noted ,
- c) work in preparation for the forthcoming Local Area Review for SEND be supported; and
- d) a further report be brought to the Select Committee with data on tribunal figures from last year (giving actual numbers as well as percentages) and feedback from the discussions with service users.

12. Elective Home Education

Parents had the right to choose to educate their child at home if they wished. The Elective Home Education (EHE) community had raised a number of concerns, including around the vocabulary used in some sections of contracts between the County Council and Entrust. Changes had been made to address this. Work had also been undertaken to improve communication and trust between the local authority and the EHE community. This included regular meetings between the EHE community and the county council, the production of "Choosing to Educate your child at Home" an information booklet for carers and parents and a planned revised draft Staffordshire EHE policy.

In 2014 the Select Committee had established a working group on EHE, with one of the outstanding issues for this group being the potential for the local authority to be unaware of children within the county who are being home educated. The work most recently undertaken to improve relations with the EHE community helped to ensure that the

county council were kept informed, however there remained no legal requirement for those choosing to home educate to inform the county council. This could be a particular issue where families moved across county borders.

Members were informed that the good relations now fostered would help in ensuring continued good communication. The EHE community themselves self regulated the education and safeguarding of children within the community. The Cabinet Member reiterated the importance of engaging with those who chose to EHE and to maintain openness and a supportive relationship.

RESOLVED – That the positive relationships built with the EHEs to improve outcomes for children and young people be supported.

13. Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) - Annual Report and new Agreed Syllabus

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills thanked Rev Preb Michael Metcalf for his work with SACRE and in particular the review of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus and production of a new Syllabus, which Members now received. The new Syllabus was highly reflective and aimed to promote religious literacy, which the Cabinet Member emphasised was more important than ever in the current climate.

Rev Metcalf introduced the SACRE Annual Report which outlined the work undertaken by SACRE for the period September 2014 – September 2015, including monitoring RE provision and determinations. It also considered the use of non specialist teachers in the teaching and planning of RE and implications for sustaining the quality of delivery. Members noted the number of different religions considered as part of the RE provision and were informed that each faith was approached with respect, comparisons highlighted between faiths. Understanding the different faiths helped prepare pupils for the context within which they lived, with more understanding and respect of religions providing a greater degree of tolerance.

The new Agreed Syllabus was considered by the Select Committee as a draft, with the syllabus not adopted until the Cabinet Member gave his approval on behalf of the County Council. Members applauded this document and the considerable work undertaken to produce it. The Syllabus aimed to achieve religious literacy by establishing and growing knowledge and understanding of beliefs, practices, spiritual insights and secular world views. It focused on three elements, exploring, engaging and reflecting which underpinned each area taught within the Agreed Syllabus. It also addressed assessment by identifying age related expectations within each Key Stage.

Subject to the Cabinet Member's approval it was hoped that the Agreed Syllabus would be in schools from September 2016. It was also hoped that a launch event could be organised and that support could be found from within the county council towards the document graphics prior to the launch.

The Cabinet Member informed the Select Committee that he was entirely happy with the new Agreed Syllabus and would be happy to endorse it. He reassured Members that most academies used the Agreed Syllabus as well as maintained schools. He was comfortable with looking at the presentation of the document and in helping with the

launch. The Cabinet Member also felt that working across schools such as through Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) would enable specialist teachers to support the planning, provision and delivery of RE.

Members received details of the current SACRE membership and specifically the representation within Committee A which included the Christian denominations and other religions and their denominations which reflected the principal religious traditions of the area. The latest data on the religious make-up of Staffordshire's population was shared with the Select Committee (taken from the 2011 Census). Members were comfortable that the SACRE membership was representative of Staffordshire and felt the diversity of the SACRE was extremely positive. They also noted other recent membership changes including the inclusion of a Spiritualist representative as a co-opted SACRE member.

RESOLVED - That:

- a) SACRE's Annual Report be welcomed and the work of the SACRE be applauded;
- b) membership of Committee A is representative of the religious make up of Staffordshire residents;
- c) the Select Committee support the Agreed Syllabus for RE.

14. Work Programme

The Select Committee received a copy of their 2016-17 Work Programme. Members noted that the following items be added:

- the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan; and
- details on the European Growth Deal following Brexit and how to ensure Staffordshire wasn't adversely affected.

RESOLVED – That the additions to the Work Programme be noted.

Chairman