

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

**Children, Young People and Family Support Scrutiny and Policy Development
Committee**

Meeting held 18 July 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Ian Saunders (Chair), Steve Ayris (Deputy Chair),
Andy Bainbridge, Olivia Blake, John Booker, Terry Fox,
Craig Gamble Pugh, Kieran Harpham, Mohammad Maroof,
Abtisam Mohamed, Josie Paszek, Colin Ross, Alison Teal and
Cliff Woodcraft

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Jules Jones, (Parent Governor Representative - Non-Council Voting
Member)
Alison Warner, (School Governor Representative - Non-Council Non-
Voting Member)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Chair, Councillor Ian Saunders, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and on behalf of the Committee, expressed his thanks to Councillors Chris Rosling-Josephs and Cliff Woodcraft, for their valuable service to the Committee as the previous Chair and Deputy Chair, respectively.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Karen McGowan, Gillian Foster (Diocese Representative - Non-Council Voting Member) and Alice Riddell (Observer – Healthwatch Sheffield).

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

5.1 The minutes of the special meeting of the Committee held on 9th March 2016, and the meetings held on 14th March and 18th May 2016, were each approved as a correct record.

5.2 Arising from consideration of the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2016, it was noted that:-

- (a) a further report with regards to the action taken, and responses to, the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum's State of Sheffield 2014 report had been added to the Committee's Work Programme 2016/17;
- (b) the Policy and Improvement Officer had received no information regarding the proposed meeting between Council officers and the Marketing Manager in the Fostering Team at Leeds City Council on foster parent retention rates, but would chase this up and circulate any resulting information to Committee Members; and
- (c) an update on Youth Services in Sheffield had been included in the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/17.

5.3 The Committee also noted the responses to public questions raised at the special meeting on 9th March 2016.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

7. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE "EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE EVERYWHERE" GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Children, Young People and Families, which identified the implications of the Government White Paper 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' which had been published in March 2016. The report specifically focused on the continuing role and responsibilities of the Local Authority in terms of education, the future role of governors, including in the context of academies, and the future role of Learn Sheffield.

7.2 In attendance for this item were Antony Hughes (Director, Inclusion and Learning Services and Children's Commissioner), Pam Smith (Head of Primary and Targeted Intervention) and Stephen Betts (Interim Chief Executive, Learn Sheffield).

7.3 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- The Committee could be kept informed of developments by means of written briefings and officer attendance at meetings, as required.
- Academy status brings changes in terms of a school's governing body. Local authority schools have governors who sit on a governing board. Academies generally have two layers of governance, the members of the overarching academy trust

(which usually will run more than one school), and the governing body of the individual school itself.

- At a national level, there have been some concerns about a consistent high quality of governance, and there have also been some suggestions around mandatory training requirements.
- In Sheffield, there was now a new and improved training offer for governors, which was available through Learn Sheffield.
- Any move towards grammar schools would require primary legislation and officers were adopting a wait and see approach in this regard.
- The White Paper gave trusts flexibility regarding governance so, depending on the needs of the individual school, there could be either a trustees board or local governing body. Any concerns could be raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner. Academy schools were no longer required to have parent governors or local authority governors, but may wish to put in place alternative methods of ensuring parent engagement with the school leadership.
- It was early days to predict whether the change of Government Minister would have any effect on the White Paper's timetable, but officers would look at this and could circulate a note to Committee Members in the future, if required.
- Sheffield City Council commissioned governor training was open to all governing bodies, including academies, and now covered a broader range of topics in more depth than that provided before.
- Learn Sheffield was working with the City Council in relation to governor support.
- Learn Sheffield did not differentiate between school type, with sign up and engagement being similar for all. At present, 75% of schools in the City had signed up and, when those with an intention to sign up were taken into account, this rose to 90%. There were no indications of any school intending not to join.
- It was too early to say how local authorities would work alongside Elected Mayors, but work was being done to look at school standards across the region. However, the position was not clear at the moment and the Sheffield educational sector needed to influence this discussion.
- The White Paper placed a strong expectation on governors to

undertake training. At present, governor induction consisted of four separate sessions, but it was up to the individual governor as to whether these were taken up or not. However, work was being undertaken with the Governor Service as to the tracking of governor engagement in this process.

- Learn Sheffield was a schools company, with a primary focus on supporting school improvement. It was currently staffed by five people and drew on the experience of associated partners in the various education sectors. In relation to the delivery of statutory functions, a strategy had been developed, which identified priorities in Sheffield, including the challenges to school improvement such as culture, inclusion, readiness and enrichment. Emphasis was placed on looking at what made a great school, with aspects such as the readiness of students to take up opportunities being considered, as opposed to simply considering achievement and attainment in its narrowest sense.
- A high quality education for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability was a key priority and officers were working with schools, and the NHS to provide a choice of school for such pupils. In addition, the Sheffield Support Group considered issues such as the inclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Antony Hughes, Pam Smith and Stephen Betts for their contribution to the meeting; and
- (b) notes the contents of the report and the responses to the questions raised, which had provided an awareness of the implications of the 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' Government White Paper for schools, the Local Authority, children and parents, and an understanding of how it aligned with the Education and Adoption Act 2016.

8. A-LEVEL PROVISION IN THE SOUTH EAST OF THE CITY

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which presented a letter sent to the Committee by the Sheffield College regarding the closure of A-levels at the College's Peaks Campus.

8.2 In attendance for this item were Paul Corcoran (Chief Executive Officer) and Heather Smith (College Principal and Executive Director) of the Sheffield College.

8.3 Paul Corcoran addressed the Committee and, referring to his letter, explained that the decision to withdraw the A-level courses at the Peaks Campus from

September 2016 was due to a shift in demand in student applications, adding that over the past two years, the A-level intake at the Peaks Campus had significantly reduced. He went on to refer to the importance of the quality of the offer, the need for a critical mass to make the courses viable and the financial viability of provision. He further explained that the decision had been taken in May 2016, but had then been kept confidential so as not to negatively affect exam success of the students who would be affected, thus meaning that there was a wait to communicate with stakeholders. It was acknowledged that stakeholder engagement could have been handled more effectively, with a more phased approach being taken and certain stakeholders, including the Council and local MPs, being engaged earlier on.

8.4 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- The College was looking to maintain and strengthen the vocational offer at the Peaks Campus, and there was no plan to withdraw from the Campus. Furthermore, the College was committed to promoting social cohesion and inclusiveness.
- There had been a shift to more vocational and technical subjects in that part of the City, which offered an alternative route into university. The number of pupils studying A-levels at the Peaks Campus had been reducing so the offer was becoming restricted. The Hillsborough Campus offered in excess of 20 A-level subjects, but the Peaks Campus would move to a more vocational focus, with some adult provision. Students due to start A-levels at the Peaks Campus from September 2016 would be offered a free travel pass to enable them to get to the Hillsborough Campus if they wished to take up the A-level offer there.
- Antony Hughes (Director, Inclusion and Learning Services and Children's Commissioner) confirmed that discussions were taking place between the Council and local school headteachers, along with the Sheffield College, to ascertain if a local A-level offer could be developed.
- Other schools near and accessible to pupils in the south east of Sheffield, but across the border, in neighbouring local authorities, with 6th Forms were the Thomas Rotherham College and Henry Fanshawe, which was based in Dronfield.
- It would be difficult to provide the richness of experience needed for a good A-level course at the Peaks Campus given the number of applications being received, with some subjects standing to have only two or three students in the classroom. The College was always looking to increase student numbers and marketing activity had been undertaken regarding general activity and including A-levels. The College was marketed as a whole, but the balance of the offer had changed.
- The market for education was a competitive one and it was important to

have the right provision for positive outcomes for young people. The College did its best to promote itself, but market forces would ultimately dictate the situation. Furthermore, the low number of applications affected financial viability.

- There had been 55 applications for A-level places at the Peaks Campus this year, and experience suggested that this would have resulted in between 25 and 35 students enrolling in September, across the 10 A-level courses on offer. Given previous data on retention and progression rates, this might have been expected to be reduced to perhaps 30 students in Year 2. There had been 49 applications in 2013 and 73 in 2014.
- Staffing levels would not be reduced as a result of the decision to withdraw A-level courses at the Peaks Campus.
- There were over 200 students studying A-levels at the Hillsborough Campus, but this had dropped in the face of increased numbers of A-level providers in the City, together with the shift to an increase in A-level provision in schools. Discussions were presently being undertaken with the A-level students at the Peaks Campus as to where they wanted to go and, at present, 19 had indicated they would go to the Hillsborough Campus.
- It had been hoped that the investment in marketing would have reversed the trend in A-level numbers at the Peaks Campus, but there was now a need to ensure continuity for the existing A-level students.
- A-levels were part of the general offer from the Peaks Campus, and were advertised in its prospectus.
- The journey time from the south east of the City to the Hillsborough Campus was recognised, and it had been agreed that a closer eye would be kept on commuting pupils, with any appropriate support being provided.
- It was accepted that the communications regarding this decision could have been better, with only the local MP being informed, and lessons had been learned from this. The College, however, stood by the decision which had been taken.
- The issue of teachers operating at different sites would be managed, and it was hoped to consolidate teaching activities on one campus in so far as this was possible.
- The proposal to withdraw the A-level courses would not be something that OFSTED Inspectors would ask about. They would be able to see the investment in vocational courses and look at the quality of these, and whether students were being prepared for the next stage.
- There was only a requirement to inform the governing body about the

decision to withdraw the A-level courses.

- 6th form provision at both Westfield and Handsworth Grange had been explored in the past by the College, but had not proved to be productive. It was important to consider how to move this issue forward, as the headteachers wanted A-level provision to be available, and the Council wanted to engage in this process. The Sheffield College was keen to work with other providers and consideration was being given to a Post-16 Skills Plan.
- The College accepted that there were lessons to be learned with regard to the communication of this decision, but it stood by the decision which had been taken.
- The focus now would be on those students who were part-way through their A-level courses, and who would be changing the location at which they would be completing their courses.

8.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks Paul Corcoran and Heather Smith for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the letter received from the Sheffield College on the closure of A-levels at the College's Peaks Campus, and the responses to questions;
- (c) wishes to register its disappointment at the decision taken by the Sheffield College with regards to the closure of A-levels at the Peaks Campus, and requests that the Chair, Councillor Ian Saunders, writes to the College to express this disappointment, with particular regard to the communication of the decision and consultation with interested parties;
- (d) welcomes the work currently being undertaken in partnership with the Secondary Heads in the south east of the City to explore possible options to ensure a continued A-level offer in that part of the City, and asks the Chair, Councillor Ian Saunders, to continue to liaise with the appropriate lead officers from Sheffield City Council to monitor the progress of this work;
- (e) requests that a briefing paper be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee regarding the organisation and take up of A-level provision across the City, and a City-wide overview of the destinations of pupils (post-16) including employment, vocational courses and A-levels; and
- (f) requests that any future such decisions affecting educational provision undertake an Equality Impact Assessment, including due consideration of issues relating to financial inclusion.

(NOTE: This item was considered by the Committee as an urgent item of business under Council Procedure Rule 26 of the Council's Constitution and the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, on the recommendation of the Chair, due to the timescales for implementing the planned changes to A-level provision at the Peaks Campus of Sheffield College.)

9. ANNUAL MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE 2016

9.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which outlined some of the key points raised during the Committee's Annual Meeting with Young People 2016, and made a number of recommendations.

9.2 In response to a question, the Policy and Improvement Officer indicated that she would speak with representatives of Sheffield Futures with regard to widening the group of young people who could engage with the Committee's work on certain topics.

9.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks the Policy and Improvement Officer for the report, and approves its contents;
- (b) requests that:-
 - (i) the report be shared with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families, the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families and the Interim Chief Executive, Learn Sheffield, and that they be asked to consider the points raised in terms of future planning and developments;
 - (ii) the report and the full notes from the Annual Meeting with Young People 2016 be shared with the Disability Hub, which is part of Sheffield City Council's Equality Hub Network; and
 - (iii) the topic of 'Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Schools' be added to the Committee's Work Programme for 2016/17; and
- (c) continues to engage with young people as part of its ongoing work throughout the year.

10. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

10.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer which set out the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2016/17.

10.2 The Policy and Improvement Officer took the Committee through the draft Work Programme 2016/17, and comments were made as follows:-

- There were a number of unknowns about attainment data, and there was a

need to find out where schools were struggling with the new curriculum. The key issue was school improvement and identifying schools requiring support.

- It was suggested that an officer note on attainment data be drafted on first release of the data, and an accompanying briefing be held in time for the Committee's meeting in November 2016.
- In relation to the briefing paper on the Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, it was suggested that the Committee reserve an option to take this further.
- The Chair (Councillor Ian Saunders), the Deputy Chair (Councillor Steve Ayriss) and Councillors Abtisam Mohamed, Josie Paszek, Mohammad Maroof, Kieran Harpham and Olivia Blake put themselves forward to form the sub-group of the Committee to meet with a small group of parents to discuss their experience of Special Educational Needs services and support.
- Sam Martin (Assistant Director, Lifelong Learning and Skills) offered to run a Member session on the development of Youth Services as a preliminary to the item on Youth Services in Sheffield scheduled for the Committee's meeting in April 2017.

10.3 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the draft Work Programme 2016/17 as detailed in the report, subject to the inclusion of:-

- (a) feedback on the destination of pupils in the South East of the City, prior to the Committee's discussion at its November meeting; and
- (b) a forecast of pupil places across the City.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

11.1 The Chair, Councillor Ian Saunders, thanked Jules Jones for her excellent contribution to the Committee over a period of seven years, as this was possibly her last meeting.

11.2 The Chair also wished to place on record the Committee's appreciation of the work of Antony Hughes (Director, Inclusion and Learning Services and Children's Commissioner), who was leaving the Council to take up the post of Chief Executive of the Manchester Multi-Academy.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Monday, 19th September 2016, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.