

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 28 September 2005 at 6.00 pm

in a Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor M. A. Bird (Chairman)
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chambers
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Walker
Mr. D. Tonks
Mr. B. Lycett
Mr. M. Quinn
Mr. J. Minister (Vice-Chairman)
Dr. H. Seaton

Appointment of Chairman

Resolved

That Councillor M. A. Bird be appointed Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2005/06.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman.

Resolved

That Mr. J. Minister be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the municipal year 2005/06.

The Chairman thanked Mr. M. Quinn for his chairmanship of the Committee for the past two years.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Munir, Mr. K. Myatt, Mr. C. Payton and Mr. M. Edge.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Chambers declared an interest in the item on the agenda relating to Shire Oak – A Science College, as he was a governor of Pool Hayes School which was mentioned in the report.

Minutes – 12 July 2004

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2004, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Late items for introduction by the Chairman

There were no late items for introduction by the Chairman.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

The Committee noted that there were no items for consideration in the private session although it had been past practice that representations in respect of any statutory proposals would be received in the public session and that the Committee would adjourn into their groups to consider the proposals with the remainder of the meeting taking place in private session.

The parties would be advised of the decision at the close of the meeting.

The Committee agreed to adopt the procedure outlined above.

Statutory Proposal to Provide Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs to Cooper and Jordan Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School from 1 October 2005

The report of the Secretary to the School Organisation Committee was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Ms. Beth McPherson-Jones and Ms. S. Lupton, Education Walsall, presented the report.

The Committee was informed that the Head Teacher of Cooper and Jordan Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School had agreed that Ms. McPherson-Jones submit representations on their behalf.

In response to points raised, the Committee were informed that the 10 SEN places were in addition to the number of places allocated at the school and would be across all age ranges. Although there may already be children in the school with a statement, at the next review it may be considered appropriate that they be allocated a resourced place.

It was confirmed that the school governors would have the final decision on admissions to Cooper and Jordan and in respect of statemented children, the papers would be forwarded to the school for consideration by governors.

The Committee was advised that there were already children at the school with statements of special educational needs and some of those might have statements of specialist learning needs. The provision of a resourced place would depend upon the degree of difficulty experienced by the child. It was felt that there were probably two children at the school at this point who fulfilled that criteria.

Ms. Nahal (Solicitor) confirmed that the special needs tribunal would hear appeals in respect of this.

Ms. McPherson-Jones informed the Committee that the provision was being made available to avoid the necessity for children to apply for places at establishments outside of the borough and capacity would be built in to main stream schools to meet the level of need.

A Partnership document setting out the criteria for admission to the resource would be drawn up and would consider the process for demand.

The Committee agreed to hear the proposals in respect of St. Francis of Assisi and Shire Oak prior to making their decision.

In the event of the proposal being approved, the Committee requested that the situation be monitored and the Committee be kept informed of the level of demand for places at the school.

Statutory Proposal to add provision reserved for pupils with special educational needs to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College from 1 September 2005

The report of the Secretary to the School Organisation Committee was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Ms. McPherson-Jones confirmed that the Head Teacher of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College agreed that Education Walsall could represent the school at this meeting.

The Committee was advised that the existing provision at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College had operated successfully for a number of years and the proposal would formalise that arrangement. It is an inclusive resource and additional funding had been provided for staff training and resources.

Mr. Quinn confirmed that the Archdiocese was happy with the proposal and would work in partnership with the Local Education Authority.

In the event of the proposal being approved, the Committee requested that the situation be monitored and the Committee be kept informed of the level of demand for places at the school.

Statutory Proposal to add provision reserved for pupils with special educational needs to Shire Oak – A Science College from 1 September 2005

The report of the Secretary to the School Organisation Committee was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Ms. McPherson-Jones introduced the report and confirmed that the Head Teacher of the school had agreed to Education Walsall representing the school at this meeting.

The proposal was part of the review of specialist provision for children and young people in Walsall with special educational needs.

Ms. McPherson-Jones outlined the details relating to the statutory proposal and confirmed that the proposal would have a positive impact on the education community of Shire Oak as an inclusive resource. In response to points raised by Members, Ms. Lupton confirmed that a number of statutory proposals had been published relating to community schools and where there were no objections, the final decision had been made by Cabinet. Other resourced provision had been established, including provision at Pool Hayes for children with communication needs. The provision was allocated on the basis of SEN by post code and schools were invited to indicate whether they wished to become part of the resourced provision development.

Ms. McPherson-Jones confirmed that Education Walsall was looking at the analysis of children in the Borough now and where they are when they enter the resourced provision. As part of this, Education Walsall was applying for “kite mark” recognition as a dyslexia friendly LEA.

The Chairman requested that within the monitoring process, information be included showing the demographic profile of pupils using the facility in order that an assessment can be made of the distance pupils would travel.

In the event of the proposal being approved, the Committee requested that the situation be monitored and the Committee be kept informed of the level of demand for places at the school.

At this juncture, the Committee adjourned into its Groups to discuss the proposals further and the LEA officers, Education Walsall staff and members of the public left the room.

The meeting re-convened and the voting was recorded as follows:-

LEA Group	-	indicated its approval of the three SEN statutory proposals, all to be implemented from 1 October 2005, including monitoring
Church of England Group	-	indicated its approval of the three SEN statutory proposals, all to be implemented from 1 October 2005, including monitoring
Roman Catholic Group	-	indicated its approval of the three SEN statutory proposals, all to be implemented from 1 October 2005, including monitoring
Learning and Skills Council	-	indicated its approval of the three SEN statutory proposals, all to be implemented from 1 October 2005, including monitoring

It was, therefore,

Resolved (Unanimously)

- (1) That the statutory proposal to add provision reserved for pupils with special educational needs to Cooper & Jordan Church of England Voluntary Aided School from 1st October, 2005 be approved;
- (2) That the statutory proposal to add provision reserved for pupils with special educational needs to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College be approved with effect from 1st October, 2005;
- (3) That the statutory proposal to add provision reserved for pupils with special educational needs to Shire Oak - A Science College be approved with effect from 1st October, 2005.

Resolved further (unanimously)

That the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel be kept informed of progress in respect of the demand for resourced places at Cooper and Jordan C of E VA Primary School, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Technology College and Shire Oak – A Science College and be requested to assess whether there was a need for further provision geographically throughout the Borough, monitoring to take place in six months time and then on a quarterly basis.

Statutory proposal to discontinue Redhouse Primary School with effect from 31st August, 2006

The report of the Secretary to the School Organisation Committee was submitted:-

(see annexed)

For the benefit of the members of the public, the Chairman went through the procedure adopted for the meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had received correspondence from individuals but had not responded in order that his position on this matter would not be compromised.

Mr. Edinborough presented the report to the Committee and identified some of the key issues in respect of the school, including falling roles, surplus places, curriculum provision, performance and the school budget.

Mr. Edinborough confirmed that there were currently 44 pupils at the school giving a surplus of 166 places. Numbers at the school had been declining since 2001 and a number of children had left the school in year. The largest year groups were in Years 5 and 6. The number of pupils at the school determined the size of the school budget and, therefore, impacted directly on staffing levels as well as the educational provision for children in the school. With regard to pupil performance, Key Stage 1 results were above Walsall average and Key Stage 2 were in line with Walsall average and above average support was given to the school.

Mr. Edinborough outlined the options open for the school as follows:-

- Federation - other schools had been approached with regard to pursuing a federation but no school had come forward
- Closure

Members raised a number of questions relating to the statutory proposal, including:-

- The distance from Redhouse Primary School to other Primary Schools and whether they were within walking distance;
- Whether the children who had left Redhouse mid-year were residents of the Redhouse Estate and if not, whether they lived reasonably close to other schools;
- Parents could have difficulty getting their children into a local school as other schools in the Aldridge area were full or over-subscribed.

Ms. Lupton confirmed that some children had transferred to Castlefort and Walsall Wood Primary Schools and an option for consideration could be providing additional places at another school. Discussions would take place with parents in order that schools could be identified.

Members were of the view that additional information was required indicating the travelling distance between the home addresses and appropriate schools in order to assess whether the statutory proposal was feasible without too much inconvenience to parents.

Members asked whether the possibility of federation had been discussed with school governing bodies. Mr. Sheward, Chair of Governors of Redhouse School, circulated a paper setting out the objections of the Governing Body of the school to the statutory proposal to discontinue Redhouse Primary School from 31st August, 2006:-

(see annexed)

The Governors were not convinced that there was provision in Aldridge for the pupils who would require places should the school close. Mr. Sheward confirmed that the majority of pupils in the school were residents of Redhouse Estate. Some single mothers with children had no transport and therefore, would require a school in the local community.

Ms. Wellings, Acting Head Teacher, addressed the Committee and circulated a copy of her presentation:-

(see annexed)

Ms. Wellings thanked the Committee for receiving her presentation.

Mr. J. Messenger, local resident of Walsall with connections with the school, addressed the Committee in support of retaining the school.

Mr. Edinborough confirmed that the school could run at a licensed deficit but the Authority was duty bound to be secure in the capacity of the school to enable any deficit to be repaid within a three year period and an achievable plan for recovery would be required.

Members expressed concern that there was insufficient evidence to show that a proper alternative accessible provision for pupils from Redhouse School was available. Federation with other schools in the area should be considered further and the interest shown by the Comprehensive School should be explored. A different strategy from housing could lead to an increase in the number of families moving into the Redhouse area.

At this juncture, the Committee adjourned into its Groups to discuss the proposal further and the LEA officers, Education Walsall staff and members of the public left the room.

The meeting re-convened and the voting was recorded as follows:-

LEA Group	-	insufficient information presented to the Committee to enable a decision to be reached
Church of England Group	-	insufficient information presented to the Committee to enable a decision to be reached
Roman Catholic Group	-	insufficient information presented to the Committee to enable a decision to be reached

It was, therefore,

Resolved (Unanimously)

That additional information, as indicated below, be submitted to an adjourned meeting of the Committee to enable a decision to be reached on the future of Redhouse School:-

- (1) The number of children currently residing on Redhouse Estate that could, in the next two years, seek places at the school;
- (2) The home address of the pupils that are currently on roll at the school;
- (3) Information showing the spread across all Aldridge primary schools of places available in each year group;
- (4) Information setting out Education Walsall's position in the event of this Committee agreeing that the school continue and licensed with a negative deficit in the budget;
- (5) Transport arrangements for those seeking alternative schools in Aldridge;

- (6) That the Governors hold emergency talks with schools in Aldridge, including the Comprehensive School, on the possibility of Federation.

The information be presented to an adjourned meeting of the Committee on 12th October, 2005, at 6.00 p.m. at the Council House, Walsall.

The parties were advised of the decision and the meeting terminated at 8.50 p.m.

Chairman:.....

Date:.....