

Time began - 6.00pm
Time finished - 7.15pm

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE 25 MARCH 2004

Present: **Group A (Local Education Authority)**
Councillors L Allen, Gerrard, Skelton and Wynn

Group B (Church of England Diocesan Board)
Maxine Bull

Group C (Catholic Diocesan Board)
Mr John Honey

Group E (Schools Group)
David Cunningham, Paul Hassle, Jean Moss

Group F (The Local Community)
Dave Wilkinson, Nirmal Pheasant, George Mighty

16/03 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ahern, Winter (substituted by Councillor Skelton), J Hickson (Group A), Hannah Simmons, David Edwards (Group B), Graham Doust (Group C), Eunice Robinson, Carmel McKenna (Group E).

17/03 Late Items to be Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

18/03 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19/03 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20/03 Borrow Wood Junior School

The Committee considered a proposal from the Governors of Borrow Wood Junior School to change the school category from Foundation to Community. The Governing Body had concluded that there were no discernable educational benefits as a Foundation school. Foundation status involved considerable extra responsibilities carried out by the Headteacher and school Governors. The school had been a Foundation school for over seven years. The Governing Body and

Headteacher had held consultations with all members of staff and had sent letters out to all parents of children in the school and future parents, inviting them to a public meeting. No objections were raised or received. The statutory notice was published on the 29 January 2004 to which no objections had been received. Helen Hough - Head Teacher, Borrow Wood Junior School, advised that there was original concern that a trust deed was in existence. Upon further investigation, it was found that there was no evidence of a trust deed. It was clarified that there were therefore no outstanding trust deed issues and so the proposal did not require conditional approval if the Committee were minded to agree it.

Resolved to approve the change of school category from Foundation to Community at Borrow Wood Junior School.

21/03 High View School – Collaborative Restart

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Education, which sought approval of the collaborative restart of High View School and Technology Centre which would close on 31 August 2004 and reopen on 1 September 2004. The Committee were advised that Council Cabinet approved the collaborative restart of High View School and Technology Centre on 16 March 2004. This was part of a wider package of measures to bring about urgent and substantial improvement in the performance of this school.

The Council received one objection to the proposals during the statutory consultation period following the publication of notices on 16 January 2004. The one objection, from NASUWT, to the proposal focussed on the situation for staff at the school.

Since publication of statutory notices there had been a monitoring visit by Ofsted. This had shown good progress on three of the five key issues since the last monitoring visit, which represented a distinct improvement and success in the initial faith of the partnership. In light of this, NASUWT had followed up its objection to the proposal stating that it should not be necessary to go through the collaborative restart to bring about improvement, as changed leadership was having the required impact. This was indeed a vital element but it was also part of a range of management and teaching support through the partnership with Lees Brook School, alongside other measures.

Andrew Flack, Director of Education, stated that the school had consistently shown very poor performance and the changes in leadership had not previously had the desired results, the school was also in special measures. There was a clear need for the authority to take action to ensure there was an appropriate standard of education for the community. The Committee were advised that Ministers supported the action being taken by the Authority and the Secretary of State could use his powers of intervention if the authority did not take action. It was impossible that school reorganisations would not impact on the staff and it was not reasonable to send the proposal to the schools' adjudicator on this ground only. The authority wanted to ensure that there were better opportunities for pupils served by High View.

Dave Wilkinson, NASUWT, stated that there was no denying the poor performance history at the school but there had been a regime change in November last year,

with the collaborative option and the appointment of an interim Headteacher. Dave Wilkinson referred to the Ofsted reports received by the Committee, which indicated that the school were under performing. However, the most recent report, of February 2004, stated that the school had made good progress since the last inspection. Dave commented that the school had seen real improvement with the same pupils and the same teachers. This was a good team making good progress.

Councillor Allen stated that the Council Cabinet believed that this was the best chance for securing the best opportunities and life chances for children. The Ofsted inspectors had not lifted the special measures. The school needed the additional resources that the collaborative restart would bring.

Andrew Flack stated that this was all about improving the school for the children and the Authority would have proposed other routes, if at all possible. The Authority wanted to retain good staff at the school and within the city. The Authority was currently looking at the slotting in process, which had been discussed with the interim Headteacher. Section 188 notices were being issued to all staff. If members of staff were offered jobs elsewhere, then this would mean there was less of a chance of being made redundant. The authority firmly believed that in the end this was the right solution for the school.

(At this point the meeting was adjourned in order for the Committee to break into groups, to discuss how the group would vote on the proposal).

The Committee reconvened in order for a spokesperson from each group to cast their vote on the proposal. The votes were cast as follows:

Group A (Local Education Authority) – to approve the proposal

Group B (Church of England Diocesan Board) – to approve the proposal

Group C (Catholic Diocesan Board) – to approve the proposal

Group E (Schools Group) – to approve the proposal

Group F (Local Community) – to not approve the proposal

Resolved to refer this matter to the School's adjudicator, as the Committee were unable to reach a unanimous decision as required for proposals of this sort.

MINUTES END