

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment
At 5.00 pm on Wednesday 26th January, 2022 held remotely via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury
Councillor Leanne Buckingham
Councillor Philip Irwin

Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor Lee Wilkes

Officers

AnnMarie Dodds – Director of Children’s
Services (Interim)
Jenny Daniels – Democratic Services
Neil Goddard – Assistant Director for
Education (Interim)
Ben Smith – Democratic Services

Also in attendance –

Councillors David Jenney, Gill Mercer, Andy Mercer, Michael Tye (for minute 56)

53 Apologies for absence

There were none.

54 Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 December 2021

Resolved that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

55 Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

56 Proposed amalgamation of Tennyson Road Infant and Alfred Street Junior Schools

The Chair welcomed to the meeting local members for Rushden Pemberton West and Rushden South and invited them to participate in the discussion for this item.

the At the Chairman's invitation the Assistant Director for Children introduced the report (a copy of which had been previously circulated) which stated details of the proposed amalgamation of the 2 schools, the reasons for them and the need to understand the feelings of all those affected by the proposal. This was listed as item 4 on the agenda.

In answer to queries on the report the following was confirmed:

- i. Officers working in education were working with the governing bodies of both schools and the Assistant Director of Education had met with Chairmen of both governing bodies.
- ii. Amalgamation would provide the best possible solution for both schools to meet the needs of all pupils.
- iii. When any school operated a deficit position the Council did not just stop funding. The Council worked with the school and the Department for Education (DfE) to ensure there was a financial recovery plan to re-balance the budget.
- iv. The first consultation would be just on the decision on whether to merge or not. The second consultation (26 May to 23 June) depending on the result of the first consultation would then identify a site for expansion.
- v. There was no suggestion that both schools would close with no replacement. The options were to do nothing, close one school and expand the other or close both and build a new school.
- vi. No pressure would be placed on other schools as they were receiving fewer admission requests than the published admission numbers (PAN) of local schools.
- vii. Paragraph 7.5.2 of the report gave the timeline for the DfE process that had to be followed.
- viii. The Council was duty bound to consider the financial recovery model with the School, governors and the DfE. They would not rule anything out at this stage and if it was a suggestion that was in the best interests of the schools it would be considered.
- ix. The cost of the consultation was something that the Council would lead on and which would come from the school organisation budget.
- x. If both schools were closed and a new one opened, regulations would dictate that it would be an academy and the Council would have to discuss this with the DfE. If the schools merged, the merged school would continue in the same format as currently existed.
- xi. The steering group referred to in paragraph 4.14 of the report was a group driven by the Chairmen of both sets of school governors and staff at both schools. It was being supported by officers at the local authority, but was not a decision-making body.

- xii. The Council would work with both schools to ensure a full and extensive curriculum was continued to be offered to pupils.
- xiii. It was noted by councillors that a merger had been discussed for many years. There had at one time been a keenness by local people to keep Alfred Street School because of the number of pupils who had died when a war time bomb had hit the school. Also this area of Rushden had become less populated and the catchment area for the 2 schools had changed. Many pupils now had to cross 2 major and dangerous roads and there were inadequate facilities for parents to drop pupils off, particularly pupils with special educational needs. It was felt the site of Tennyson Road School could be expanded whereas the site of Alfred Street could not. It was also suggested that some additional land could be bought from the Council to expand Tennyson Road.
- xiv. It was further noted that all of the Tennyson Road site was owned by North Northants Council. The parking in the Pemberton Centre was managed as a North Northants facility too. The Alfred Street Site had been owned by East Northants Council and had transferred to North Northants Council.
- xv. Councillors also noted that the right decision for North Northants Council had to be made as well to ensure its future stability.

Resolved that: The Executive Advisory Panel:

- a) Supports the progress of the statutory process relating to the amalgamation of the Tennyson Road and Alfred Street schools;
- b) Supports the consultation on the potential location of the proposed 'new' school; and
- c) Notes that a follow-up EAP report will be provided for further consideration during the second period of consultation, subject to Executive's approval of the overall process.

57 Determination of admission arrangements for local authority maintained schools for the 2023 intakes

At the Chair's invitation the Interim Assistant Director of Children presented the report (a copy of which had been previously circulated) which gave details of the Community and Voluntary Controlled North Northamptonshire schools for 2023 intakes and the Primary and Secondary Co-ordinated Schemes for the 2023 intakes. This was listed as agenda item 5 on the agenda.

In answer to queries on the report the following was confirmed:

- i. Some schools did opt out of and the Interim Assistant Director of Children could find out the exact number following the meeting.
- ii. There was a home to school transport policy as the Council did support children that qualified for assistance in paying for travel arrangements. However, subject to minimum distance requirements, this was only for children where a place could not be offered at their nearest school. For those who chose a

school that wasn't their nearest this would be deemed parental choice and they would not qualify for assistance

- iii. Some schools might reduce their published number to admit if the local authority was confident they were unlikely to require a higher number as this assisted them to budget for the future if they were not required, for example, to open a second class. The Local Authority's responsibility was to ensure there were adequate places in an area. Not individual schools. Keeping an eye on changes in demography allowed schools to plan for the future.

Resolved that:

The Executive Advisory Panel notes proposals to be submitted to the Executive on:-

- a) admission arrangements as detailed in Appendix A to the report.
- b) two co-ordinated schemes for the 2023 intake as detailed in Appendices B and C to the report; and
- (c) the "Relevant Area" for all North Northamptonshire schools

58 Forward Plan of Executive Items

Resolved that:

The Forward Plan of Executive Items is noted.

59 Forward List of Items for Education, Skills and Employment EAP

Resolved that:-

The following be added to the forward list of items for presentation at future meetings by officers:

- a) SEND update at meeting, to be held on 23 March 2022.
- b) Youth Justice Plan Update and details of a forthcoming inspection following the forthcoming inspection.
- c) Home Schooled Children Briefing, on 23 March 2022
- d) The Assistant Director for Education to speak to The Children's Trust and ascertain when they would expect to bring forward a presentation on Young Adults NEET;
- e) An update on Free School Meals, on either 2 or 23 March 2022
- f) Details for future arrangements for Special Schools; and
- g) A briefing on maintained nursery schools at the meeting to be held on 23 March 2022.

60 Close of Meeting

There being no further items of business, the Chair thanked everybody for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 6.27pm