

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
15 OCTOBER 1998

Present: Councillor Ward (Chairman)
Councillors Barnard, Beadsley, Mrs Doyle, Egan,
Good, Harrison, Mrs Hayes, Mrs Hirst, Mills, Ryan,
Mrs Shillcock, Mrs Sutcliffe, Taylor, Thompson,
Wheaton and Worrall

Church Representatives:
Mr G Anderson, Mr D McCann

Teacher Representatives:
Mr J Haig
Mrs L Wales

Apologies for absence were been received from:

Councillor Fawcett and Mrs M Desai

273. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute Member under Standing Order 38:

Councillor Ryan for Councillor Fawcett

274. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

275. Urgent Item of Business under Standing Order 7

The Chairman gave notice that he had agreed to the addition of an item of urgent business to the agenda for the meeting. The report concerned additional staffing requirements and the appointment of a consultant. An urgent decision was required in order to enable the Department to meet the Government's timetable for implementation of the Fair Funding proposals and the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.

276. Consultant Appointment and Additional Staffing (Urgent Item)

The Committee was advised that the Assistant Director responsible for managing the implementation of the Government's Fair Funding for Schools proposals would be on maternity leave from the end of October until the beginning of April 1999. Funding was required for a temporary appointment to cover the management of this project. Specialist advice would be required and an Education Consultant had been selected to undertake the project. A request for additional funding would be put to the

Strategy & Policy Committee on 28 October 1998. However, the timing of the Assistant Director's departure meant that an appointment needed to be made to the post prior to this date, hence the reason for urgency.

The Education Department also had an urgent need for additional staffing for the management of pupil matters, principally to cover the absence on extended sick leave of the Children & Families Officer, and to implement the requirements of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. The funding for this would be sought from the Strategy & Policy Committee on 28 October.

RESOLVED that

- (i) due to the specialist nature of the project, the requirement to obtain three written quotations be waived, in accordance with Standing Order 67;
- (ii) that the appointment of a Consultant to prepare for the implementation of Fair Funding be approved on the grounds of urgency;
- (iii) that the Strategy & Policy Committee be recommended to approve the allocation to the Education Department Budget in 1998/99 of £25,000 for the implementation of Fair Funding and that the following requests be referred to the Strategy and Policy Committee for consideration:
 - (a) allocation to the Education Department Budget in 1998/99 of; £15,000 for the management of people matters; and £25,000 for additional staffing to implement the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998; and
 - (b) allocation to the Education Continuation Budget of £22,000, being the full year effect of making the Data Analyst post permanent.

277. **Transport Panel**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Transport Panel held on 6 July and 7 September 1998, be received.

278. **Governor Selection Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Governor Selection Sub Committee held on 16 July and 29 July 1998, as set out in Appendices A and B hereto respectively, be received.

279. **Budget Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Budget Sub Committee held on 23 July and 16 September 1998, as set out in Appendices C and D hereto respectively, be received and the recommendation at minute no. 27 be adopted.

280. Student Awards Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Student Awards Panel held on 24 August and 14 September 1998, be received.

281. Joint Advisory Sub Committee on Children's Services

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Advisory Sub Committee on Children's Services held on 2 September 1998, be received as noted.

282. Education Consultation Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Education Consultation Panel held on 8 September, be received.

283. Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee held on 29 September 1998, be received.

284. Quality Assurance Sub Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Quality Assurance Sub Committee held on 30 September 1998, as set out in Appendix E hereto, be received.

285. Petition – St Mary's Primary School Designated Area (Item 1)

The Committee considered a report on a petition, which had been presented to the Council at its meeting on Wednesday 22 July. The Council had referred the petition to the Education Committee.

The petition opposed the decision of the former Berkshire County Council to change the catchment area of St Mary's C E Primary School, Winkfield by the exclusion of the Chavey Down area. The petitioners were also aggrieved about the procedure followed by the County Council in introducing the change.

The report detailed the history of the boundary change including the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman following a complaint. Proposals relating to the designated area for St Mary's Primary School could not be considered in isolation from a number of related issues that the Authority would need to resolve. It was considered appropriate for the new LEA to conduct a review of primary school places in Northern Bracknell. The review would have regard to the impact of housing development in the northern area of the Borough and the Government's proposals for reducing infant class sizes. Particular consideration would be given to the concerns of the Chavey Down residents in drawing up options for the review. The options would be reported to the Education Committee in January 1999 in order to commence a period of consultation.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the petition be noted; and
- (ii) the Director of Education be requested to:
 - (a) conduct an immediate area review of primary school provision in North Bracknell;
 - (b) specifically consider the option of returning the Chavey Down area to the Winkfield St Mary's designated area so that this can be consulted upon with other options; and
 - (c) report on these options to the Committee at its January meeting, prior to going to public consultation on them.

286. Quarterly Operations Report (Item 2)

The Director of Education presented the second quarterly operations report on the running of the Education Service. The report described the main areas of activity of the Department over the preceding three month period and presented a brief summary on the revenue budget and staffing statistics.

Particular attention was drawn to the large number of major new initiatives to which the Department was required to respond, including those arising from the passage of three new acts of Parliament:

- The School Standards and Framework Act
- The Teaching and Higher Education Act
- The Crime and Disorder Act

RESOLVED that the quarterly operations report be received.

287. Education Development Plan (Item 3)

The Director of Education introduced the draft Education Development Plan, which set out the proposed priorities and activities that would form the basis of Bracknell Forest Borough Council's strategy for raising standards in schools.

The report described the format and development of the Plan. The Committee had established a Focus Group at its meeting on 18 March to consider the preparation of the Plan. This Group had met on two occasions and had approved the provisional priorities and activities, which were set out in the draft Plan. These had been slightly adjusted in accordance with the final guidance issued by the DfEE at the end of September. However, wherever possible the framework had been adapted to local needs.

In summary, the six priorities for improvement were:

- 1 Raising attainment in literacy
- 2 Raising attainment in numeracy
- 3 Raising standards achieved by children with special or additional educational needs
- 4 Promoting quality schools
- 5 Promoting effective teaching and classroom practice
- 6 Promoting opportunities for learning in schools and beyond.

RESOLVED that the draft Education Development Plan be approved as a basis for formal consultation with those listed in it.

288. Commitment Budget and Service Plans 1999/2000 – 2001/02 (Item 4)

The Director of Education introduced the Committee's Commitment Budget and Service Plans for the period up to 2002.

At its meeting on 15 July 1998, the Strategy and Policy Committee had considered the Council's existing commitments and the likely resource base for future years. The Committee had concluded that, after taking account of the likely impact of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, a funding gap of £3m to £3.5m was likely next year. The Committee had consequently agreed an outline budget strategy whereby service committees would be asked to review their existing commitments in detail and to consider their medium term priorities in order to ensure that resources were directed towards priority areas.

The Commitment Budget set out in the report took account of approved existing commitments, together with the ongoing effects of service developments and efficiencies, which had been agreed in March 1998.

The report also outlined the medium term objectives for the Education Service for the same period.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the revised Commitment budget in table 2 and Annexe A of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the Education Service medium term objectives in Annexe B of the report be approved.

289. Fair Funding: Improving Delegation to Schools (Item 5)

The Committee considered a report on progress with implementing the Government's proposals for increasing financial delegation by LEAs to schools. The new funding requirements were to be implemented in April 1999.

On 23 September 1998 the DfEE had issued further guidance on the implementation of the Fair Funding framework but did not propose to issue the detail of this until the second week of October. The late arrival of the detailed guidance affected the timing of the original consultation process as planned. The report clarified the current proposals and timescale and sought agreement to further consultation with schools.

As part of the consultation process, an explanatory meeting was to be held for Headteachers and Chairmen of Governors on 9 November. An invitation was extended to the Teachers' Association representatives to attend this meeting.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the process and the revised timescale as set out in Annexe B of the report be noted; and

- (ii) in view of the late arrival of the detailed guidance, the Director of Education be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Education Committee, to finalise the document for schools.

290. DfEE Capital Allocations Submission 1999/2000 (Item 6)

The Director of Education informed the Committee of the process for submission of information to the Department for Education and Employment about the Council's plans for capital projects starting in 1999/2000.

The submission for Bracknell Forest consisted of schemes to remove surplus places at Brakenhale school and to remove life-expired temporary classrooms at Wildridings Primary School. The deadline for the submission to the DfEE was 19 October 1998.

RESOLVED that the details of the submission to the DfEE be noted.

291. Asset Management Plan (Item 7)

The Director of Education informed the Committee of the requirement to develop an Asset Management Plan (AMP) in line with guidance received from the DfEE in August 1998. AMPs were intended to ensure that resources for school premises were used as efficiently as possible to improve building and facilities and to raise educational standards. Local Education Authorities were required to produce and consult on their criteria for prioritising needs within their AMPs.

The report set out the proposed priorities for addressing planned maintenance requirements of schools and the proposed criteria for prioritising school improvement projects. These would be the subject of consultation with schools.

The report included information on a specific scheme proposed jointly by Edgbarrow School and Edgbarrow Youth and Community Centre. The scheme would use allocations for projects to be completed in the current financial year under the Building Better Schools initiative but required additional commitment from next year's programme. The estimated costs to the school's proposals were £83,000 of which a shortfall of £23,000 remained to be funded. It was feasible to phase the scheme in order to carry out some of the work during the current financial year but the school was seeking a forward commitment that the balance would be found from the 1999/2000 capital programme.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the priorities for addressing the planned maintenance requirements of schools as defined in paragraph 4.6 of the report be approved for consultation;
- (ii) the criteria for prioritising school improvement projects as defined in paragraph 4.9 of the report be approved for consultation; and
- (iii) the second phase of a costed scheme at Edgbarrow School in the 1999/2000 capital programme, as specified in paragraph 4.15 of the report be given high priority.

292. Reduction in Class Sizes Statement (Item 8)

The Director of Education reported on the Government's declared aim of reducing class sizes for 5, 6 and 7 year olds to a maximum of 30. In May 1998 Bracknell Forest had been allocated capital funds for two classrooms as part of this initiative.

Detailed guidance on preparing a statement on reducing class sizes had been issued by the DfEE on 8 September 1998. The report outlined the LEAs plan for implementing this initiative by September 2000 following a consultation with parents, headteachers and governing bodies. The DfEE had granted an extension on the deadline for submission of the plan, to the end of October. It was proposed to seek approval for the detailed statement through the urgency arrangements in order that greater consultation could take place before the deadline.

RESOLVED that the reduction in class sizes statement be approved under the urgency arrangements for submission to the Secretary of State by 31 October 1998.

293. Early Retirement Arrangements for Teachers (Item 10)

The Committee considered a report on a proposed substantive policy for early retirement arrangements for teachers. The Committee had adopted an interim policy at its meeting on 18 March 1998, which had subsequently been extended to October 1998. The policy options had been discussed with the teachers' Professional Associations and had also been considered by the Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee on 29 September 1998. The Committee was invited to agree the early retirement scheme and recommend this to the governing bodies of county, controlled and aided schools with delegated budgets.

The main provisions of the proposed policy were summarised as follows:

- (a) Early retirement on grounds of redundancy for those aged 58 years and over, with redundancy payments based on statutory minimum salary for these purposes of £220 a week. This was different from the interim policy, which allowed early retirement on the grounds of redundancy for those aged 50 and over. An enhanced severance payment without a pension would be an alternative available to the teacher. This would be based on actual salary and the maximum number of allowable weeks.
- (b) Early retirement in the interest of the efficiency of the service normally only for those 58 years old and over.
- (c) Early retirement on grounds of ill health as agreed by the national agency, Teachers Pensions.
- (d) Early retirement, as agreed by the Education Committee, from the age of 54, where such a retirement was in the interests of the education of a substantial number of children in the Borough and in the interest of improving the LEA's performance.
- (e) No enhancement (i.e. no added years).

The attention of the Committee was drawn to the comments of the staff-side in the Minutes of the meeting of the Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee held on 29 September 1998 (not reproduced).

In accordance with Standing Order 47, the following resolution was required to be submitted to the Council as a recommendation:

RECOMMENDED that the model early retirement policy, attached as Appendix 1 hereto, be agreed and recommended to governing bodies for adoption.

294. Handling Staff Reductions in Schools Policy (Item 9)

The Director of Education presented a report on a proposed policy for handling staff reductions in schools. The draft policy had been prepared as part of the Local Education Authority's review of all personnel procedures for schools. It had been the subject of consultation with the Teacher Associations, UNISON and the GMB.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the comments of the staff-side in the Minutes of the meeting of the Teachers' Joint Consultative Committee held on 29 September 1998 (not reproduced).

In accordance with Standing Order 47, the following resolution was required to be submitted to the Council as a recommendation:

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) the financial arrangements for staff under 50 years of age leaving the service on the grounds of redundancy be on the basis on enhanced severance payments (up to a maximum of 66 weeks) calculated on actual salary;
- (ii) the model policy and procedure for handling staff reductions, attached as Appendix 2 hereto, be adopted as a model for governing bodies.

295. Model Capability Procedure for Headteachers, Teachers and other Staff in School (Item 11)

The Committee considered a report on model capability procedures which were presented for recommendation to governing bodies as part of the Committee's review of all personnel procedures for schools. The proposed procedures were the result of consultation with the Teacher Associations, UNISON and the GMB.

The procedures were designed to help and encourage all employees within schools with delegated budgets to achieve and maintain an acceptable standard of performance. They provided a fair and consistent method of dealing with alleged failures to achieve the expected standard. There was a separate procedure for dealing with headteachers due to the difficult nature of the management task facing governing bodies in respect of this post.

RESOLVED that the model policies attached as Annexe 1 and Annexe 2 to the report submitted be recommended for adoption by governing bodies.

296. Model Absence Management Policy and Procedure for Schools (Item 12)

The Director of Education introduced a report on a model absence management policy and procedure for schools, which had been prepared as part of the Committee's review of all personnel procedures for schools. The proposed policy was a result of consultation with the Teacher Associations, UNISON and the GMB.

Under local management arrangements, schools were directly responsible for all personnel matters in connection with their staff. However, the Local Education Authority could recommend to the governing body a framework for good practice and provide support and guidance throughout the process.

The Committee was asked to adopt the policy for recommendation to governing bodies.

RESOLVED that the model absence management policy and procedure attached as Annex 1 to the report submitted be recommended for adoption by governing bodies.

297. Holly Spring Assessment Resource (Item 13)

The Director of Education reported that the governing body of Holly Spring Infant School had written to request that the Assessment Resource based at the school be closed or relocated to elsewhere in the Borough from the end of the financial year. There were good reasons for the governors' request and, given the review of provision for special education needs currently being undertaken in Bracknell Forest, the timing was opportune.

The purpose of the Resource was to provide a facility for an extended period of assessment for those children whose needs were not immediately identifiable. There were staffing issues that would need to be resolved if the decision was taken to close the Resource. Decisions would also be required about the provision made for individual children. For this reason an early decision was necessary.

The Borough Solicitor advised that the proposal would represent a significant change in the character of the school and would therefore require consultation prior to closure in accordance with statutory provisions.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the proposal to close the Assessment Resource at Holly Spring School from 31 March 1999 (or as soon as practicable thereafter) be approved as a basis for consultation;
- (ii) consideration be given, as part of the SEN review, to the type of provision now appropriate for Bracknell Forest; and
- (iii) that any capital costs arising from a possible relocation be given a high priority in the 1999/2000 capital programme.

298. National Childcare Strategy (Item 14)

The Director of Education reported to the Committee on the Green Paper, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge*, which had been published in the Summer. The Green Paper set out how the Government intended to develop its National Childcare Strategy. The document focused on three aspects: raising quality, making childcare more affordable and making childcare more accessible.

The intention of the Government was that the remit and membership of the Early Years Development Partnership should be expanded into a local Childcare Partnership responsible for assessing local childcare needs and how they should be met for children aged 0 to 14 years.

The Joint Advisory Sub Committee for Children's Services had considered the Strategy at its meeting on 2 September 1998 and its recommendations were incorporated into the report.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the progress to date be noted;
- (ii) the Bracknell Forest Early Years Development Partnership be renamed and reconstituted as the Bracknell Forest Early Years and Childcare Partnership with immediate effect; and
- (iii) the Director of Education, in consultation with the Chairman of the Education Committee, be authorised to determine membership and terms of reference in accordance with the final DfEE guidance when published.

299. Establishment of SACRE (Item 15)

The Director of Education reported on the Authority's duty to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). At its meeting on 18 June 1998, the Committee had adopted the constitution of the Bracknell Forest SACRE as the basis for discussion with the organisations listed therein. The report sought the formal appointment of the SACRE and the nomination of five Borough Councillors to serve on it.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Bracknell Forest Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) be appointed in accordance with the constitution attached as Annex A to the report; and
- (ii) the following Borough Councillors be nominated to serve on the Bracknell Forest SACRE (3 : 2):

Councillors Egan, Mrs Hayes, Ward, Fawcett and Good.

300. Items for Information

The Committee received the following item, which was submitted for information only:

Item 16 Term Dates 1999/2000

301. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of Item 17 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

(1) Information regarding employees of the Council (Item 17)

302. Home to School Transport: Staffing Reduction (Item 17)

In a report containing exempt information the Director of Education sought approval to the redundancy of one member of staff in the Home to School Transport Section of the Education Department.

RESOLVED that the redundancy of Mrs W (Post HPB Escort) be approved under the Council's existing policy on redundancy and severance payments.

The meeting commenced at 7.30 p.m.
and concluded at 11.00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN