

Primary School Sector Alternative Education Provision for Pupils excluded from School across Milton Keynes Task and Finish Group

Meeting held on 21 November 2018

Notes

1. Present:

Councillors M Bradburn, D Hopkins, Miles and Wales
E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

2. Apologies:

Councillor Carr

3. Appointment of Chair

Councillor Miles nominated Councillor D Hopkins as Chair, which was seconded by Councillor M Bradburn. As there were no objections, Councillor Hopkins was duly appointed Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Bradburn declared a standing interest as Centre Manager at SIEVEMK GATEWAY, which was a provider of alternative education.

Councillor Miles declared a standing interest as governor of the Milton Keynes primary sector Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

Councillor D Hopkins declared an interest as a governor of St Mary's School, Wavendon and of the New Chapter School, Coffee Hall.

5. Scope of Review, What it hopes to Achieve, Work Programme, Timetable of Meetings

Councillor Hopkins explained that the Task and Finish Group (TFG) was concentrating on alternative provision for primary aged pupils as there had been evidence 6-7 years ago that the primary sector was the ideal time to try and change lives for the better at an early stage.

Reviewing secondary level alternative provision at the same time would make it too big a task for the current timeframe and level of available resources. Once this particular review was complete, then a look at the secondary sector provision could be considered.

He went on to explain that in 2011 the primary sector heads in Milton Keynes identified a need for 75 alternative primary education places in Milton Keynes, against a current provision by the primary sector PRU of 18 places. The Department for Education (DfE) had agreed the construction of an additional PRU and offered

some funding, but the plans never materialised. It was his understanding that some primary heads were still of the view that this extra provision was required.

He made it clear that this was not a review of how the PRU operated, but an assessment as to whether the current provision of 18 places was sufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding area such as Milton Keynes.

The Group then reviewed the Scoping Document and made a few minor changes. The updated document is included as an annex to these notes.

6. Draft Letter to Primary Schools

A draft letter to Primary School Headteachers seeking their views on the current provision of alternative education had been prepared. The Group reviewed the letter and did not make any changes. It agreed that as it would be dispatched towards the end of the current term, responses would be requested by the end of the third week in January. The letters would be signed by Councillor D Hopkins as Chair of the TFG.

Once all the replies had been received a number of head teachers, together with their Chair of Governors, would be approached to come and give evidence in person to the TFG. It was agreed, that, if possible a geographical mix of witnesses be identified so that the different demography across Milton Keynes could be accounted for. Once the relevant Headteachers had been identified, it was agreed that the Chair of Governors for their schools also be invited to attend.

7. Identification of Witnesses

The TFG discussed a range of other witnesses to be invited to give evidence during the course of the review. These included the Acting Director of Children's Services, the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors at the PRU, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Headteacher from the Council's Virtual School and possible experts from the Department for Education. It was also suggested that other local authorities of a similar size and nature to Milton Keynes be approached for written evidence of best practice in their areas.

8. Time and Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold another meeting of the TFG before Christmas. This would take place at 6.30 pm on 13 December in Room 1.04, Civic Offices.