



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
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14
Public

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEARNING & SKILLS - CECILIA MOTLEY

1. Summary

Education and skills is at the heart of the Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire. Ensuring that children, young people and adults have the best educational outcomes, qualifications and skills is crucial to meet the needs of the local economy for a flourishing Shropshire.

It is vital that we continue to increase educational attainment and work based skills in Shropshire. Improved skill levels reduce the risk of unemployment and the perpetuation of a low wage economy which affects all age groups. Education and training helps to reduce inequalities and provides a gateway to a better quality of life including health and wellbeing for individuals and communities.

2. Recommendations

That Council note the key achievements of the Learning and Skills Portfolio and approve the contents of this report.

REPORT

- 3.** This report details the key achievements of the Learning and Skills Portfolio over the past 12 months and the key priorities for the next year.

4. Key achievements

Following Cabinets decisions in May 2011, regarding the organisation of schools in Shropshire, a considerable amount of time and attention has been focussed on the implementation of the decisions in respect of school organisation. The proposals consisted of two key strategies, the first being the closure of non-viable schools and the second to encourage schools to work collaboratively together through federation.

Funding allocations for the schools that are closing will be redistributed within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) thus increasing the resources available for teaching and learning to all Shropshire pupils.

Whilst it is never easy to implement such decisions, the closure of those schools identified has been undertaken effectively and sensitively including aspects related to asset disposal, staff, HR issues and pupil transfer. It was a high priority to engage closely with parents in order to secure as far as possible parents preferred alternative school. With the exception of one pupil, all have secured their first choice of an alternative placement.

Cabinet agreed that in two locations, Shawbury and St Martins, existing schools would expand and combine onto a single site. Capital projects planning at St Martins and Shawbury are progressing positively, with project teams established in both cases. Design plans are being developed collaboratively and with community and stakeholder consultation. Further support has been provided for the appointment of new headteachers.

Significant development work in respect to federations has taken place with two primary federations established and two more in progress. One secondary school federation has been established.

A key area for development within this year has been Shropshire Council's contribution to the discussion about the future provision of education in Shropshire, taking into account the increasing number of Academies in the county and considering how the future education support services should be provided. This has taken place through consultation with primary and secondary headteacher groups and Shropshire Schools Governor Council. We are very pleased that the Cross Party Task and Finish Group has continued, and that the focus has moved to support the development and planning of the future shape of education in Shropshire

There are currently three Academies operating in Shropshire: The Marches School, The Priory School, and The Corbet School Technology and Language College. The first Free School (primary) in Shropshire has been established at Barrow. Shropshire Council has maintained an on-going relationship with all of these schools.

The Secretary of State has approved a further four schools to convert to Academy status during 2012/13. A further school has an application pending. All but one of these applications are secondary schools. Other schools are consulting with their governing bodies and local communities but have not yet made a formal application to the Secretary of State.

Shropshire Music Service has bid successfully to become the lead partner in Shropshire's continuing funding of music education. On behalf of the Department for Education, Arts Council England is investing more than

£171 million of funding between August 2012 and March 2015 in a network of music education hubs across England.

In excess of £800,000 has been secured to continue to support music education, particularly instrumental and vocal learning and music in the primary curriculum, for the next three years. Music education hubs will build on existing music services. A music education hub will be a collection of organisations working in a local area, to create joined up music education provision for children and young people, both in and out of school. The music service operating costs are on average £1.7m per year of which approximately £1.4m is income that is generated. The pricing structure to schools has remained constant over the last four years.

With the increased delegation of funding allocation to schools, it has been necessary for schools to purchase an increasing range of support services. Shropshire Council has continued to develop the range of services that it trades to schools, and this year has seen good buy back from schools in all aspects of the work of the Learning and Skills Group. All schools in Shropshire buy back a range of services from Shropshire Council, including those schools that converted to Academy or Free School status.

Significant work in tackling under-performance in a small number of schools has been undertaken. In line with central Governments aspirations, Shropshire Council is keen to ensure that children and young people receive high quality education, and achieve well. School Improvement Advisers linked to schools have focussed on those schools which were vulnerable. We have seen a significant improvement in some high priority schools – especially in primary, with fewer falling below the national floor standard for attainment. Provisional data for 2012 suggests that only 4 primary and 2 secondary schools fall under this category.

The criteria for Ofsted inspection judgments have increased sharply over the last few years, and it has been harder for schools to gain a higher Ofsted grade, even if they have evidence of significant improvement. In particular since January 2012, when a new framework raised the bar even further, many more schools have been judged to be satisfactory, both in Shropshire and nationally. We currently have 54 primary schools that are judged satisfactory, with 5 which have either a notice to improve or are in special measures. Of these, 42 were inspected prior to January 2012, with 12 inspected under the new framework. One secondary school is in special measures. In these cases the Local Authority is required to provide a statement of action to be approved by Ofsted. All have been developed, approved and are being monitored closely. HMI monitoring visits have judged there to be good quality support from the Local Authority.

Attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) has increased over time. In the period 2007-2008 there was a significant

increase. The percentage of children achieving the expectation in both key measures of Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) and Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) increased from 42% to 56%.

There has been further improvement on this high level of attainment between 2010 and 2012, with the % of children achieving a good level of development in PSED and CLL increasing from 62% to a provisional 68%.

These increases are mirrored across all aspects of the EYFSP and will continue to place the LA above national averages on all indicators.

The new Phonics Screening Check for pupils at the end of Year 1 has been successfully implemented during this year. This is the first year of this new assessment which seeks to assess children's ability to decode single words. There are therefore no year-on-year comparisons and no national comparison is available. Shropshire's provisional outcome of 61% of children working at the expectation is likely to be higher than the national average, since it is above 58%, which is the average for the 149 LAs which report initial outcomes through the National Consortium for Examination Results (NCR).

Outcomes for Key Stage 1 in 2012 were broadly in line with those of 2011 and are therefore likely to continue the trend of above average attainment for reading, writing and mathematics at Level 2+, Level 2B+ and Level 3+.

Provisional outcomes Key Stage 2 for 2012 show significant improvement in all core subjects. In comparison with 2011 results for reading at Level 4+ (89%) showed a 4% improvement and Level 5 (52%) showed an 8% improvement, putting the Local Authority 5% and 9% above the respective national figures for 2011.

Writing was up by even more with Level 4+ (85%) being 7% higher and Level 5+ 9% higher than 2011. This puts Shropshire 10% above the 2011 national figure on both indicators.

English overall was also up markedly, at both Level 4+ (88% - up 4% and 6% above national in 2011) and Level 5+ (40% - up 9% and 11% above national in 2011).

Mathematics at Level 4+ (86%) was up by 4% on 2011, putting it 6% ahead of the 2011 national figure and Level 5+ (40%) was up by 5%, having previously been in-line with the national figure.

In the Government's key indicator, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4+ in English and mathematics combined, Shropshire's outcomes (82%) are 22% ahead of the National Floor Standard and 8% ahead of the 2011 national average, an increase for Shropshire of 6% on its own 2011 figure.

It should be noted that the method of assessing writing at Key Stage 2 changed in 2012 and this may be mirrored in national changes in the outcomes. Comparative national data for all subjects for 2012 is expected to be available by the end of September.

Whilst provisional, the Key Stage 4 key measure of the percentage of pupils gaining 5+A*-C at GCSE, including English and mathematics outcomes for Shropshire, indicate a drop of 1.3% on 2011 results (from 59.9% to 58.6%). The 2011 results had placed Shropshire above the national and statistical neighbour averages and it is likely that this position will be maintained; outcomes nationally for 2012 are predicted to drop, perhaps significantly. This is because of the well-publicised downgrading of English marks, which is reported by Shropshire schools to have had an impact on outcomes.

Shropshire Council has been successful in partnering with Edge Hill University to secure the contract to provide the National College Leadership Programmes across Shropshire. These are development programmes for senior leaders in schools, and are instrumental in securing high standards of teaching and learning in the county.

The attendance of pupils at Shropshire schools has continued to be monitored closely and schools offered support and challenge. As a result attendance has improved by 1% in the 2011-12 academic year, compared with the previous academic year, i.e. 94.5% in 2010/11 to 95.5% in 2011/12 (combined primary and secondary).

In the academic year 2011/12 the County Training team helped 1,442 people into sustained work who were long term unemployed (1 year plus).

The County Training Apprenticeship programme was highly successful for 2011/12 and apprentices' achievement rates were substantially above the national average. The completion rate for the 2011/12 contract year was 81.4% compared with the latest published rates for all providers nationally of 77%.

During the financial year 2011/12 the Learning, Employment and Training Service (LETS) Joint Training Team delivered 416 courses providing learning and development opportunities across 112 different course titles with total attendance of 6,074. People accessing this service work within partner agencies Health, local authority, independent care sector, volunteers, service users and family carers.

The proportion of young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) in Shropshire continues to be low in comparison with the national average. Whilst there is some in year variance the internal target of 5.2% of 16-18 year olds has been met. As at the end of July 2012 the percentage NEET stood at 4.4% compared with 5.4% as the mean indicator for statistical neighbours. The figure rose slightly in August.

Of the 13 Children's Centre areas six Children Centre Areas have now been inspected in the first Ofsted inspection cycle for early childhood service and in 2012, two Children's Centre areas have been inspected by Ofsted, Bishops Castle and Albrighton.

Under the latest schedule of inspections these centres both achieved a good grade with outstanding features including; capacity to improve, partnership working and care guidance and support.

The latest schedule requires the children's centre to be reaching, (that is providing services to) more than 80% of the known population of young children to receive a 'good' judgement.

The transformation programme for children's centres is progressing well and achieving outcomes particularly in relation to increasing the number of community providers working with the Council to deliver standardised Children's Centre services. This new way of working has identified cost efficiencies with further potential whilst maintaining the delivery of a high quality service. The outcome for community providers include a more skilled workforce and improved business sustainability.

5. Key priorities for the next year

The next twelve months will be an important time as we work together with stakeholders and partners to develop our response to the changing education landscape. We will continue to focus on the future of education provision, which will see a very different role for schools, and for Shropshire Council.

Current circumstances such as the continued decline in pupil numbers, together with policy changes such as the implementation of the new school funding formula and the new admission policy, will require the school community to adapt.

The Schools Forum will play a key role in agreeing and implementing the recently announced new funding formula for schools. The introduction of a national funding formula is seeking to ensure fairer funding across the country, where funding is based predominantly on the number of pupils. There will be a transitional period from April 2013 up to April 2015. Funding reforms will be felt in all schools, and more significantly on smaller schools, although a Minimum Funding Guarantee will reduce this impact in the short term. Schools Forum through its task and finish groups will continue to model the formula, and support schools in considering the effect. Schools Forum has agreed that its priority is to retain as much stability in the funding regime as possible, and minimise turbulence. Briefing meetings are being facilitated for headteachers and chairs of governors.

We anticipate that there will be an increasing number of Academies which become autonomous of the Local Authority. Governing bodies will inevitably make decisions at different points in time, so it will be important that we carefully manage the transition for all schools, including those remaining as maintained schools.

We will continue to work closely with schools as they consider their future status, and develop a framework so that schools can continue to work collaboratively with each other and Shropshire Council. We are keen to respond to our schools expressed wish to retain a 'Shropshire family of schools', which includes Shropshire Council. We will therefore develop models for consultation on collaborative partnership, which will allow schools to work collectively with the Local Authority regardless of the status of the school. The Cross Party Task and Finish Group will play an important part in shaping our thinking, as will headteacher and governing body forums.

Schools will have increasing funds delegated to them empowering them to make decisions and purchase services as they see appropriate for their school, and can therefore purchase their support services from any number of providers, of which the Local Authority is one. Whilst there is a high level of buy back of Local Authority services by Shropshire schools, this nonetheless presents some uncertainty for the future which we need to consider carefully. We will review a range of options for securing sustainable school improvement and support services, including working with other Councils, particularly through the Tri Council initiative (Shropshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire Council's working together on specific areas that have been agreed to be of mutual interest), and consider other platforms which could enable Shropshire schools to retain some 'ownership' of the services they commission.

The range of responsibilities that the Local Authorities holds will reduce over time. Much about the future role of Local Authorities in education remains unclear at this point, and so will require significant emphasis in 2012-13.

Work will continue on securing high levels of attainment and progress across Shropshire schools and settings, including through work on narrowing the gaps in performance between those most disadvantaged children and their peers (eg of pupils on Free School Meals and with Special Educational Needs).

A Task and Finish Group is established to look at areas for development to increase the attainment of specific groups of children and young people, especially those on Free School Meals and Looked After Children i.e. reducing the inequality gap. We will be keen to consider the outcomes of this group, including the use of the Pupil Premium and implement appropriately areas for improvement.

Challenge and support of underperforming schools, including those identified through Shropshire's School performance monitoring or in an Ofsted category remains a priority

A high level of expenditure (in excess of £5m per year) is spent on high cost out-of-county placements for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). A review of the provision base for young people with SEN within Shropshire is being undertaken with the aim of providing provision more locally to meet the needs of identified children more cost effectively. We will also focus working with our local colleges to increase the opportunities for Post 16 students with additional learning needs to study in their local area.

We intend to continue to review the work and activities of the component parts of the Learning, Employment & Training Service and identify the most appropriate structures and delivery vehicles for the future delivery of these services.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
N/A
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
Cecilia Motley
Local Member
All
Appendices
None