

SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2018

2.00 - 3.20 pm in the Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate,
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)

Councillors Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley,
Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen and Leslie Winwood

73 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gwilym Butler and Councillor Ed Potter attended as substitute.

74 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

75 Public Question Time

None were received from members of the public.

76 Member Question Time

None were received from members of the Council.

77 Report from the Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus Task and Finish Group

Members received the final report of the Section 106, Community Infrastructure and New Homes Bonus Task and Finish Group report.

A Member queried Recommendation B.2 which set out a 90/10 percentage split between Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL] 'Local' and CIL 'Strategic' funds. The Chair of the Task and Finish Group agreed that the group had discussed changing the split ratio but Officers had advised that this could not be recommended until further work had been undertaken and evidence to support the change had been received.

Referring to the Place Plan Map in appendix 1, a Member observed that the Place Plan area for Shrewsbury covered a substantial rural area. He expressed concern that there was a potential unfairness with funds raised in rural parts of the county contributing to development in urban Shrewsbury at the detriment of those rural localities. The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager observed that it was important

that funds generated were utilised effectively for the whole county and existing structures were in place to protect smaller communities that agreed to development and generated the funds.

The Chair suggested that these issues would continue to be discussed following the establishment of Member Panel to consider planning policies.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations made by the Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus be endorsed, and the report presented for consideration by Cabinet.

78 Call In: Proposals for the Future of Education Improvement for Schools

Councillor Hannah Fraser presented the Liberal Democrat Group call in the Cabinet's decision of 21st March 2018 on the Proposals for the Future of Education Improvement Support for Schools. She read from a prepared statement [Copy attached to the signed minutes].

Councillor Fraser suggested that the £272,000 funding required to maintain the service should be found by reprioritising spending. She continued that the funds could be taken from the Digital Transformation Budget, the Shirehall refurbishment expenditure or the shopping centre development programme. She stated that parents had a right to expect a good education for their children and removing the Education Improvement Support for schools endangered the quality of education available for the County's children.

In response to a Members question regarding school performance, the Commissioner for Education Improvement and Efficiency explained that it was difficult to compare results in 2015 and before with outcomes from 2016 because the assessment frameworks and key performance indicators were revised for 2016. He confirmed that outcomes in Shropshire had improved from 2016 to 2017 and that over time they were in line with or above national averages. The Commissioner for Education Improvement and Efficiency also confirmed that the period 2013 – 2017 the proportion of good and outstanding schools in Shropshire had risen from 70 percent to 91 percent.

Members discussed the role the Schools' Forum. The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People observed that it helpful and positive and benefited from a well established membership.

Replying to a Member's question regarding falling standards in schools, the Director of Children's Services replied that there had been improvement in Shropshire's schools with 106 schools receiving a good or excellent Ofsted rating. She continued that the Council had had to respond to changes in the funding regime to Local Authorities for schools and these proposals were about operating within the funding envelope allocated by Government.

Mr Les Ball, Headteacher of Norbury Primary School and acting Executive Headteacher of Chirbury and Stiperstones Schools was invited to address Members.

Mr Ball read out a prepared statement [copy attached to the signed minutes]. He described the decision to remove financial support for Education Improvement in schools as hasty and incorrect and urged Members to take a long-term view and prepare for a different version of education to that which existed currently. He explained that cuts already made to school funding had led to a situation where schools were barely able to meet the costs of essential services and training, and further cuts would result in the complete demise of effective school development. This would lead to further resignations of head teachers.

The Chairman noted the signs being held by protestors at the rear of the room, which stated that 110 schools faced cuts.

The Director of Children's Services stated that she believed this referred to the National Funding Formula for schools and commented that whilst changes to the National Funding formula for schools were welcomed in reality any increases in funding would not close the funding gap and the uplift of 0.5% would be eradicated by other increasing costs.

A Member congratulated the Commissioner for Education Improvement and Efficiency on providing a good level of education despite poor funding. He continued that schools subscribed to the Education Improvement Service because they valued it, he argued that removing Education Improvement Support for schools would jeopardise results, conversely improving teacher development lead to improved education in schools.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People recognised the work done by Mr Ball and other head teachers who were making the best of a difficult situation. Councillor Fraser again asked that the Council reprioritise spending to maintain this funding which she saw as fundamental in maintaining schools and ensuring that communities were sustainable. She continued that Shropshire Council should engage with Central Government to ensure adequate funding was allocated for the needs of the County's schools.

It was proposed that the Cabinet Committee be asked to reconsider its decision reduce the Education Improvement Service because of the removal of the Education Services Grant. This vote was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee recommend:

- a. the Education Improvement Service be sustained solely through grant funding from central government and de-delegated funds from Shropshire maintained schools.**
- b. to maintain a traded Education Improvement Service, and professional training development programme through to April 2019, at which point the Council will cease to deliver this traded service to Shropshire schools.**
- c. that Cabinet be advised to request that Members of Parliament for Shropshire advocate grant uplifts to schools in the County.**

79 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee would next meet at 2.00pm on Wednesday 11th July 2018.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: