

REPORT OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The People Scrutiny Committee met on 27 November 2018.

Present: Councillors Angharad Davies (Chair), Michael Ensor, Roy Galley, Tom Liddiard, Laurie Loe, Jim Sheppard, John Ungar (Vice Chair), Trevor Webb, Francis Whetstone and Mr Matthew Jones, Parent Governor Representative, Mrs Ruth Cumming, Assistant Director (Teaching and Learning), Diocese of Chichester.

Also present: Councillor Bob Standley (Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability and Councillor Sylvia Tidy (Lead Member for Children and Families)

1. Scrutiny Review of Schools Coping with Change – the Way Forward

1.1 The People Scrutiny Committee has completed its Scrutiny Review of Schools Coping with Change – The Way Forward. A copy of the Committee's full report is attached at Appendix 1.

1.2. The review was established in response to the scale and pace of change occurring within the education system. These changes have helped create new opportunities and new ways of thinking. However, they have also helped create a complex and fragmented educational landscape, with diffuse lines of accountability. Some stakeholders point to what they regard as a lack of a 'direction of travel' within the system. Furthermore, the full impact of some of these changes has not yet been felt.

1.3 As the factors driving change and the challenges and opportunities they present are diverse, the Board made an early decision to focus on organisational matters and partnerships (rather than matters relating to educational attainment). It was with this focus in mind that the Board developed its recommendations, which are aimed at helping schools and academies successfully adapt to change.

1.4 The People Scrutiny Committee **recommends** to the County Council –

1.4.1 The Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee to write on behalf of the committee to the Secretary of State for Education seeking further detail regarding his vision for schools and academies. In particular, the letter should seek clarity regarding the Department's stance on the academy programme and the promotion of formal partnership arrangements.

1.4.2 Work to be undertaken by the Local Authority to promote the leadership role of Governing Bodies and Head teachers. Such activity should seek to empower schools to consider actively their current organisational arrangements and the potential benefits of partnership arrangements. If already in some form of partnership, then relevant schools should review whether the benefits of their current arrangements are being fully exploited and actively consider how they strengthen these arrangements over the coming years.

1.4.3 The Local Authority to undertake a thorough review of how the ongoing budget for SLES is best utilised. This will help ensure the purpose of the service and its staffing arrangements are appropriately aligned to meet the needs of the evolving educational landscape in East Sussex.

1.4.4 The Local Authority to consider:

- a) promoting to Head teachers and Governing Boards the benefits of a formal partnership arrangement, as well as developing its critical friend role with regard to partnership proposals.
- b) clarifying to individual schools at risk what it sees as the potential dangers to them of not actively pursuing a formal partnership arrangement.

1.4.5 The Local Authority to consider developing the next iteration of its 'Excellence for All

Strategy' document and other related documents so that it:

- promotes the development of formal partnership arrangements;
- emphasises the leadership role of schools; and
- offers bespoke advice that is tailored to meet the needs of rural primary and small schools.

1.4.6 So as to present a consistent and clear message to schools, and to draw on the combined strengths and experiences of each party, the Local Authority should seek to strengthen its relationships with the main strategic educational bodies in East Sussex. For example, this might include exploring the development of a common approach to formal partnerships.

1.4.7 That the Local Authority develop further its 'brokerage' role and develop innovative ways of facilitating school partnership that might not otherwise come into being.

1.4.8 The experiences of successful formal partnership arrangements are recorded and shared by the Local Authority. The aim being to:

- help other existing partnerships more fully realise the benefits of their arrangements; and
- develop advice for 'single' schools who are considering entering into a formal partnership arrangement.

1.4.9 To help encourage the development of formal partnerships, the Local Authority should consider promoting to schools the creation of a federation as an initial step. This approach would:

- help address some of the perceptions which are discouraging change; and
- better enable schools to consider, in the context of their local circumstances, whether or not they then wish to convert to academy status.

1.4.10 The Local Authority to develop further guidance which has a focus on the specific role and responsibilities of the formal partnership arrangement governor and their training and development needs.

1.4.11 The Local Authority to further develop its toolkits and guidance for schools who are considering creating a federation or converting to academy status, or who are already in a formal partnership. Such guidance should include specific advice on the role of the Executive Head and Heads of School and their training and development. Consideration should also be given to developing such guidance in partnership with other regional strategic bodies.

1.4.12 Alongside the guidance set out in the Education Commissioning Plan for small and rural schools, that the Local Authority to take steps to explore innovative solutions to the specific problems small, (and in particular), small rural schools are facing. Such solutions could include, for example, technological responses and adapting training provided to primary school teachers. It could also include exploring the solutions which other authorities in similar situations have developed.

[See also Report of the Cabinet – 22 January 2019]

27 November 2018

ANGHARAD DAVIES
Chair