



ACADEMIES WORKING PARTY SCRUTINY REVIEW



**FINAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL**

November 2011

Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Chairs' Forewords	3
Introduction	5
Terms of reference	6
Research/Findings	7
Summary	11
Recommendations	12
Updates	13
Acknowledgements (Appendices1-3)	14

FOREWORDS

Councillor Megan Swift

This report presents the findings of a Working Party of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel which undertook a detailed scrutiny review on the implications of the Academies Bill (subsequently Act) in Calderdale.

The primary role of the Working Party, was to support the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel by ensuring Councillors and co-opted members were fully informed of the implications of the Academies Bill (subsequently Act), with a remit which sought to ensure the highest quality of education possible for students in Calderdale Schools; to make sure that good two way dialogue took place between the Children and Young People Directorate and all schools on the issue of Academies; to make sure that up-to-date and accurate information was made available to all schools and others who were involved in decisions about academy status; to examine any issues concerning the quality of support services provided to schools by the Council and information received by the working party from key stakeholders.

The membership of the Working Party in the 2010/11 Municipal Year was Councillors Megan Swift (Chair), Ashley Evans, John Hardy, along with Mrs Patricia Astwood, MBE and Mrs Shelagh Hirst.

Members also agreed to the Co-option onto the Working Party of a primary head teacher, a secondary head teacher and a representative from the Schools Forum. Mr Michael Gosling from the Association of Secondary Heads, Mr Graeme Genty from the Primary Head Teachers Association and Helen Gaunt from the Schools Forum served in these roles.

I wish to thank all the members of the Working Party for their time and contributions in undertaking this scrutiny review, and all those who attended and provided documentary evidence to assist us with our work.

Councillor Megan Swift



Calderdale Councillor and Chair, Post 16 Education Working Party and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel (2010/11 Municipal Year)

**Patricia Astwood, Co-Opted Member, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Panel**

The Scrutiny Panel, at its first meeting of the new Municipal Year (14th June, 2011) received a report on the work undertaken to date by the Working Party since its first meeting on 11th August, 2010 and subsequent matters arising. In considering this report, the Panel felt it prudent to hold a “One-Off” meeting of the Academies Working Party, membership comprising all Members of the Scrutiny Panel (held 19th July, 2011) to consider the way forward in this matter. Former Members of the Working Party from the previous municipal year (Councillors MK Swift and A Evans) were also invited to and attended this “One-Off” meeting.

At the “One-Off” meeting, we thoroughly examined progress against the Working Party’s terms of reference and considered all matters arising. Having heard from both the Head of Learning Services and the Principal Officer, Business Support, on actions/progress against the Terms of Reference, Members were satisfied that the Working Party had completed what it had set out to undertake (against its terms of reference) and made a recommendation back to Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel to formally disestablish this Working Party.

In doing so, the Working Party did agree a number of recommendations relating to actions arising, which were submitted for the Scrutiny Panel’s attention/consideration at its meeting held on 26th July, 2011, namely:-

- That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Members should continue to receive regular Briefing Note updates on matters relating to Academies (next update to be circulated w/c 29th August, 2011 and every six weeks thereafter) until further notice;
- That, in the interim periods, should any matters relating to Academies be deemed in need of more detailed consideration as an agenda item by the Panel, such matters be brought to the attention of the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Panel by Officers’ in the first instance and included on the Work Plan at the earliest opportunity; and
- Consideration be given to including a topic on “Academies – Update” on the Panel’s Work Plan (for consideration at a future date at a meeting in early 2012, either at a scheduled or “one-off” meeting), with representatives from the Primary and Secondary sectors and Governor Representation invited to attend such a meeting.

The Scrutiny Panel at its meeting held on 26 July, 2011 accepted the above recommendations and agreed to the disestablishment of the Academies Working Party.

Mrs Patricia Astwood, MBE,
Chair, Academies Working Party “One-Off” meeting (2011/12 Municipal Year)
Co-Opted Member, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Introduction

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel undertook some extensive work from June, 2011 looking at the implications of the then Academies Bill (now Act). An Extra-ordinary Scrutiny Panel meeting was held on 15th June, 2010 to which Chairs and Heads of schools were invited, to ascertain their views on Academy Schools which were state funded, but operated outside the control of Local Authorities. They could also set their own pay and conditions for staff; change the curriculum; and vary the lengths of their terms and school days and was available first to those schools with outstanding OFSTED reports.

Arising from this initial work, the Panel subsequently determined to set up this Academies Scrutiny Review Working Party, a task and finish group comprising Elected Members, Co-optees and representatives from the Primary and Secondary Heads Groups and from the Schools Forum.

This Scrutiny Review Working Party undertook an immense amount of work, considering the legislation contained in the Bill/Act, maintaining an overview of schools seeking Academy Status and reviewing the services, including quality thereof, currently provided and/or offered to schools by the Local Authority.

Following the initial Scrutiny Panel meetings, the Working Party met seven times during the course of the 2010/11 Municipal Year. Detailed in the Research and Findings section of this report are further details of the matters we considered at each meeting.

An eighth and final meeting of the Working Party was subsequently held on the 19th July, 2011. At this meeting, we made a number of recommendations to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel (see page 12 of this report). The responses of the Panel to these recommendations can be found on page 13 of this report.

We also reviewed the Terms of Reference of this Working Party and having heard from the Head of Learning Services and the Principal Officer, Business Support, we were satisfied that the Working Party had considered what it had set out to do within its Terms of Reference and we recommended the disestablishment of the Working Party to the Scrutiny Panel.

The Working Party was subsequently disestablished by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel at its meeting held on 26th July, 2011.

The Working Party's terms of reference were:-

Objectives

To examine the implications of the Academies Bill and make recommendations to Scrutiny Panel concerning:

- *Seeking to ensure the highest quality of education possible for students in Calderdale schools*

- *Making sure that good two way dialogue takes place between the CYP Directorate and all schools on the issue of Academies*

- *Making sure that up-to-date and accurate information is made available to all schools and others who are involved in decisions about academy status.*

- *Any issues concerning the quality of support services provided to schools by the Council.*

- *Information received by the Working Party from key stakeholders.*

Research and Findings

At our first Meeting held on 11th August, 2010:-

We appointed a Chair for this Working Party (Councillor Megan Swift) and also reviewed our terms of reference and agreed our methodology on how we would undertake this scrutiny review.

The Interim Head of Learning Services also provided a comprehensive update to the Working Party on the Academies Act and its implications for the Council, and in particular services it currently provided / offered to schools.

At our second Meeting held on 14th September, 2010:-

We heard from Helen Gaunt, Chair of the Schools Forum at this meeting and discussed our respective views on the Academies Act. Mark Woolley, the Principal Officer, Business Support, Children and Young People Services Directorate gave a financial update on Academies and potential impact on services currently delivered by the Council.

At our third Meeting held on 16th November, 2010:-

An update report was considered on the position of those schools seeking Academy Status and we received a policy briefing note (provided by the Local Government Information Unit) on a National Audit Office report on the Academies Programme.

Patricia Astwood, MBE also provided us with an informative presentation on the subject of "Academies and Governance" which had first been presented to the National Governor's Association regional meeting held in October, 2010.

We also agreed at this meeting to recommend to the Scrutiny Panel (which was accepted), the Co-option as Members of this Working Party of Graeme Genty (representing Primary Heads); Michael Gosling (representing Secondary Heads) and Helen Gaunt (Schools Forum).

At our fourth Meeting held on 7th December, 2010:-

We received an update from the Head of Learning Services on where any school was up to in the process for those schools which were seeking Academy Status.

In addition, we gave consideration to a letter from the Secretary of State which provided detailed comments in relation to improving underperforming schools and the Academies Programme.

We were also provided with an extract of a Department for Education Newsletter in relation to the Education Secretary's announcement of the expansion of the Academies Programme.

A report of the Head of Learning Services was also considered on Schools responses following School Improvement Partner Visits in the Autumn term 2010. Following feedback received, the Scrutiny Panel had specifically requested that the Working Party undertake discussions with Human Resources and Building Services to investigate further the reasoning behind some negative comments received from schools on the quality of services provided. The Head of Learning Services was also requested to contact those schools that did not respond with a view to obtaining more accurate information.

At our fifth Meeting held on 1st February, 2011:-

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel had received a progress report from us in January, 2011 and had agreed to the continuation of the Working Party until the end of the Municipal Year (May, 2011) when the matter would be further reviewed.

At our meeting, we again received an update from the Head of Learning Services on where any school was up to in the process for those schools which were seeking Academy Status.

We also considered a number of extracts from articles on funding and financial practice in Academies from the "Public Finance" publication; Children and Young People Daily bulletin; Local Government Association; and a report by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the House of Commons on the Academies Programme.

Following on from our previous meeting, we received a report back from the Head of Learning Services which provided an update on schools responses following School Improvement Partner visits of the Autumn 2010 term. Responses had been made anonymously by schools and collated by the School Improvement team. Some of the main findings at that time were that some services were valued more highly than others by schools; Primary Schools used a greater number of Council Services more often regularly than secondary schools; Primary headteachers had clearly stated in various forums that they valued the work of the primary school Improvement partners employed by the Council; the two existing Academies (at that time) – Greetland and Holy Trinity were willing to buy back Council Services.

At our sixth Meeting held on 8th March, 2011:-

We received an update from the Head of Learning Services on schools responses following the School Improvement Partner (SIP) visits which had been raised at our last meeting and also in relation the position of those schools in the process of seeking Academy status.

As a result, the Head of Learning Services reported on a “directorate of services” that had been put together on all the services that the Council currently offered to schools. It was explained that the next stage in the process was to offer this directory of services to Head Teachers / Governors and to ascertain from the schools whether those services that could still be provided by the Local Authority were still wanted or whether the Council was to move towards becoming a commissioner of services.

In relation to the queries raised about specific services at the last meeting, it was reported that the negative comments attributed to Human Resources had for the most part related to specific individuals involved. Human Resources management had commented that as the feedback had been anonymous from the schools, it was hard to follow up individual cases of complaint.

In the case of Building Services, on further investigation with schools the findings were that the main issues related to quality of services and costs. Building Services had welcomed the feedback and were positive about addressing the findings.

An update was received from the Primary Heads representative, Graeme Genty, who re-emphasised points made earlier in this meeting, namely that the main reason most schools were undertaking / looking at the possibility of seeking Academy Status were because of financial reasons. It was suggested by Mr Genty and accepted by the Working Party to invite the Head Teacher of Greetland School to the next meeting to gain a better understanding of that school’s journey to converting to Academy Status.

At our seventh Meeting held on 5th April, 2011:-

We received further updates from the Head of Learning Services on where any school was up to in the process for those schools which were seeking Academy Status.

In the event, the head Teacher of Greetland Academy was unable to attend this meeting, fortunately however Mr Genty had been able to meet with the head Teacher earlier in the day and was able to convey the information she had prepared to share with the Working Party on her schools journey to converting to Academy Status.

The Head of Learning Services also reported on a proposed Information session on local authority services, to be facilitated by the Council, for Head Teachers, Members and Chairs of Governing bodies for all schools going

through / having become / or considering the process of moving to Academy Status. (This session was subsequently held at the Shay Stadium in the summer of 2011).

The Principal Officer, Business Support, Children and Young People Directorate also reported on a meeting of a Council lead Officer Group of all the Council's Core Services. Arising from this meeting, the Group had emerged extremely positive about addressing the challenges that lay ahead.

At our eighth (and final) Meeting held on 19th July, 2011:-

We were reminded that at the fifth meeting of this Working Party, that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel had agreed to the continuation of the Working Party until the end of the Municipal Year (May, 2011) when the matter would be further reviewed.

The Scrutiny Panel at its first meeting of the new Municipal Year (14th June, 2011), subsequently considered whether to continue or disestablish this Working Party. Arising from that meeting, a decision was taken that *"A meeting of the Working Party, consisting of all Members of the Scrutiny Panel be arranged to consider the way forward on this issue. Councillors Evans, Raistrick and MK Swift be invited to this meeting"*.

Our eighth meeting was held on 19th July, 2011 at which the Head of Learning Services updated us on the position regarding Academies in the Borough. In addition we were provided with a list from the Department for Education website, detailing the current conversion status of schools becoming academies as at 1st July, 2011 in Calderdale.

At this meeting we heard from the Head of Learning and Principal Officer, Business Support who provided us with updates all on actions undertaken as part of this review (as measured against the agreed terms of reference of the Working Party). We concurred that the Working Party had fulfilled what it had set out to do within its terms of reference.

We made a number of recommendations to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel (detailed in the recommendations section of this report). In addition, in agreeing to the disestablishment of this Working Party, we stressed the need for the Panel to continue to receive regular updates, by Briefing Note, on those schools seeking Academy status.

Summary

Some of the main issues considered by this Working Party in producing this final report are summarised below:-

- (i) Academies Bill (subsequently Act) and its implications for the Council, in particular the services currently provided/offered to schools.
- (ii) Schools Forum / Primary and Secondary School Heads –the Working Party sought to be inclusive in its work and all its meetings were open to the press and public to attend. The Scrutiny Panel also agreed to the co-option onto the Working Party of Helen Gaunt, representing Schools Forum; Michael Gosling, representing Secondary School Heads and Graeme Genty, representing Primary School Heads during the course of this scrutiny review.
- (iii) Research/Information – The Working Party considered research / information from a variety of sources, including Central Government Departments; the National Governors Association; Children and Young People Directorate; the views of the Schools Forum and Primary / Secondary Heads and the views from a school that had converted to academy status.
- (iv) Stakeholders – We heard about the Council’s Core services offered to schools; the work of the Council’s lead Officer Group of all the Council’s Core services; an information session facilitated by the Council for Head Teachers / Chairs/School Governors held in the summer of 2011 and plans for a future “Trade Fair” type event to be held in early 2012 highlighting the directory of services still offered by the Council.
- (v) Recently opened Academies – The Working Party considered information received from the Head Teacher of the Greetland Academy on that school’s journey to converting to Academy Status.
- (vi) School Improvement Partner (SIP Visits) – Autumn 2010 – We received useful information arising from the feedback from the SIP visits to schools in particular in relation to the services we currently deliver and identifying areas for improvement in our services.
- (vii) Funding and Financial Practice – Academies – we heard from the Council’s Principal Officer, Business Support and received written documentation from the National Governors Association and Central Government on funding and financial practice for Academies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The under-mentioned recommendations were made to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel and considered at the Panel meeting held on 26th July, 2011.

Recommendation 1

Having reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Academies Working Party and following discussions with the Head of Learning and the Principal Officer, Business Support, the Academies Working Party, at its meeting held on 19th July, 2011 was satisfied that the Working Party had considered what it set out to do within its terms of Reference and it be recommended that this Working Party be now disestablished.

Recommendation 2

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Members should continue to receive regular Briefing Note updates on matters relating to Academies (next update to be circulated w/c 29th August, 2011 and every six weeks thereafter) until further notice.

Recommendation 3

That, in the interim periods, should any matters relating to Academies be deemed in need of more detailed consideration as an agenda item by the Panel, such matters be brought to the attention of the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Panel by Officers' in the first instance and included on the Work Plan at the earliest opportunity

Recommendation 4

Consideration be given to including a topic on "Academies – Update" on the Panel's Work Plan (for consideration at a future date at a meeting in early 2012, either at a scheduled or "one-off" meeting), with representatives from the Primary and Secondary sectors and Governor representation invited to attend such a meeting.

UPDATES RECEIVED FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 26th JULY, 2011

Update received following the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting held 26th July, 2011 which agreed the following:- :

“(a) the Post 16 Education Working Party be disestablished;

(b) it be noted that the scope of matters relating to Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and Apprenticeships sits within the remit of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel;

(c) it be noted that the scope of matters relating to Community Cohesion sits within the remit of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Panel; and

(d) the Director, Children and Young People be requested to submit:

- i. on-going updates periodically to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel, with a first update by briefing note to be provided with a breakdown of characteristics of 16-19 NEET Young People, including in relation to vulnerable learners (i.e. Looked After Children, Ethnic Minority Groups and those who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) whilst at school);***
- ii. the draft Cabinet report on “Secondary Education Funding recommendations” to Scrutiny Panel Members for consideration prior to it being submitted to Cabinet;***
- iii. ¹a report on Post 16 Transition “Information, Advice and Guidance” particularly for age 11-16 students to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel”.***

¹ In respect of action point (d)(iii) above - ***report on Post 16 Transition “Information, Advice and Guidance” particularly for age 11-16 students,*** it was also agreed that when this report is considered at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, that such a report would be produced by the Head of Learning, in liaison with the Scrutiny Support Officer, and following consultation with the Park Ward Councillors re: the viewpoint of Halifax High at Wellesley Park

Appendix One

Membership of the Working Party (2010/11 Municipal Year)

Councillor Megan Swift (Chair)
Councillor Ashley Evans
Councillor John Hardy
Mrs Patricia Astwood, MBE
Mrs Shelagh Hirst

Co-Opted Members (appointed with the approval of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel for the 2010/11 Municipal Year)

Mr Michael Gosling - Association of Secondary Heads,
Mr Graeme Genty - Primary Head Teachers Association
Helen Gaunt - Schools Forum

Membership of the “One-Off” Meeting of the Working Party held on 19th July, 2011 (2011/12 Municipal Year) – comprised all Councillors/Co-Opted Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel only.

Councillor Colin Raistrick
Councillor Mrs Christine Bampton-Smith
Councillor Howard Blagbrough
Councillor John Ford
Councillor John Hardy
Councillor Mohammad Ilyas
Councillor Faisal Shoukat

Vacant, Church of England (Co-Opted Voting Member)
Mr David Gott, Roman Catholic Church (Co-Opted Voting Member)
Vacant – Parent Governor Representative (Co-Opted Voting Member)
Ms Alison Grant - Parent Governor Representative (Co-Opted Voting Member)
Vacant – Muslim Faith (Non Voting Co-Opted Member)
Mrs Sheila Hirst – Teacher’s Federation (Non Voting Co-Opted Member)
Ms Sue McMahon - Teacher’s Federation (Non Voting Co-Opted Member)
Mrs Tricia Astwood, MBE – Free Churches (Non Voting Co-Opted Member)

(Support to this Scrutiny Working Party was provided by Paul Preston, Scrutiny Support Officer, Democratic and Partnership Services and other colleagues within the Scrutiny Support team)

Appendix Two

Summary of Witnesses Giving Evidence

David M Anderson, Interim Head of Learning Services, Children and Young People's Services Directorate (for all meetings of the Working Party up until September, 2010)

David Whalley, Head of Learning Services, Children and Young People Services Directorate (for all meetings of the Working Party from September, 2010)

Mark Woolley, Principal Officer, Business Support, Children and Young People Services Directorate

Helen Gaunt, Chair – Schools Forum

Michael Gosling – Association of Secondary Heads

Graeme Genty – Primary Head Teachers Association

Patricia Astwood, MBE – re National Governors Association – Academies and Governance presentation

²Amanda Bennett, Head Teacher, Greetland Academy

² In the event, Amanda Bennett was unable to attend the meeting of the Working Party held on 5th April, 2011, but her information about the schools journey to converting to Academy Status was conveyed to the Working Party by Graeme Genty, co-opted member of the Working Party, who had met with her earlier that day.

Appendix Three

References and Bibliography

Academies Bill

Academies Act

Report and minutes on the Academies Bill of the Extra-ordinary meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 15th June, 2010

Report and minutes on the Academies Bill of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel held on 29th June, 2010

Minutes of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel – 2010/11 and 2011/12 Municipal Years – Academies Act and progress/update reports from the Academies Scrutiny Review Working Party

Greetland School Newsletter (undated) – Questions re: Academies

Letter from the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove, MP, Secretary of State, Department for Education dated 15th July, 2010 to the Director of Children and Young People's Services informing that the Secretary of State was agreeable to the conversion of Greetland Primary School into an Academy

Letter from the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove, MP, Secretary of State, Department for Education dated 4th November, 2010 – Improving Underperforming Schools and the Academies Programme

Department for Education (website) Media Release dated 17th November, 2010 – Education Secretary (Michael) “Gove announces expansion of Academies Programme”

Letter from Sue McMahon, Calderdale National Union of Teachers (NUT) Divisional Secretary dated 14th September, 2010 – Why the NUT are not in favour of Academies

National Audit Office (NAO) report on the Academies Programme – publication date 28th September, 2010

National Governors' Association (NGA) – Academies and Governance presentation (Regional Meetings, October 2010)

Extract of article from Children and Young People Daily Bulletin – 13th January, 2011 - “Sector leaders dismayed over plans to cut £400m from Councils to fund academies”

Extract of article from Public Finance publication – 24th January, 2011 – “The Government’s decision to support Academy Schools will cost Councils £400m over two years the Local Government Association has warned today

Children and Young People’s Services report to Academies Working Party – 1st February, 2011 – Written Update on Schools responses following School Improvement Partner Visits – Autumn Term 2010

Funding and Financial Practice in Academies – Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Academies Programme (weblink)

Department for Education (DfE) Website information – publication of details of conversion status of schools becoming Academies in Calderdale as at 1st July, 2011

Any enquiries or requests for background information,
please contact Paul Preston, Democratic and Partnership
Services, Calderdale Council, Westgate House, Westgate,
Halifax, HX1 1PS
Tel: (01422) 393250

Email: scrutiny@calderdale.gov.uk
<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk>