ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30th September 2014 at Civic Offices

Andrew opened the meeting with a few words about Alison Myerscough who sadly passed away recently. She had been Chair both of Barrow Hedges Primary and Wallington High School for Girls. She had also been the Treasurer of the former ASG and one of the 6 representatives of the FSG on the Sutton Primary School Improvement Board. Andrew then asked the meeting to stand for a few moments silence.

PART A

There were 24 schools represented.

1. Apologies

John Hickey (Federation of St Elpheges [CoG attended]), Donna Foster (Robin Hood Juniors), Barry Russell (Manor Park), Carole Cook (Hackbridge PS [substitute attended]), Tony Thorpe (Stanley Park HS), Sarah Skeels (Stanley Park Juniors)

2. Presentation

Andrew introduced Colin Stewart [Executive Head of Education and Early Intervention] to give an up-date on the Sutton Primary School Improvement Partnership.

Colin outlined what had been the original intention of the Partnership. It would be broadly run as it had been at the end of the last academic year with the agreed services transferred by the end of the financial year 2015. The Partnership Board had met a couple of weeks ago and Colin had asked for a 3 month delay. There had been an early assumption that there would be a significant reduction of funding for the services supervised by Colin of about £6 million. However, in July a paper had gone to the Council’s Strategy and Resources Committee revising the cut to £9 million. Consequently the LA was having to re-look at all its services. There were issues to be looked at:

- Can the services still go to the Partnership?
- Will there still be the services within the LA?
- Given the workload of Headteachers, does the Partnership have the capacity to administer and run services?
- Should the LA consider a ‘spin out’ of a larger portion of services?
Q – Won’t all of this actually mean a longer delay?
A – The LA is doing a high-level feasibility study. We are looking at what services we can ‘spin out’ and then have a view on what that could look like.

Q – All this was already supposed to be in place. Now there is further delay. Are we looking at something that won’t actually take place?
A – Money for the services comes from 2 sources, the DSG (Dedicated Schools’ Grant) and the LA. The schools control the DSG monies and the Council controls the LA portion. The DSG funding is aligned to the services. It could be that the Partnership will function as originally planned or there could be something as part of a much larger structure. For example the Music service may become either an employee led mutual or possibly a charitable company.

Q – If it becomes an employee led organisation then it is moving away from its original structure. Is there going to be a proposal back to governors that is properly costed and itemised with pension contributions etc?
A – We do need to look at all the issues. We hadn’t anticipated the severity of the settlement that means that the Council needs to cut a further £40million by 2020. At least now we have more accurate figures. Our Primary and Secondary schools are one of the best in the country however, I’m not sure that the Sutton schools’ budgets can support the services alone. A larger ‘spin out’ could be financially attractive to other schools and LAs.

Q – What information will go to governing bodies this Autumn?
A – The Board has agreed a statement to go to all governing bodies. We are trying to think about our staff as we don’t want to create either any false panic or conversely false expectations. There is also commercial sensitivity. We are also mindful that the statutory Social Services Safeguarding takes a portion of our budget.

Q- If you are considering a business model that includes the selling of the services to other Boroughs, what are we doing to ensure that we have the right people in the right place?
A- There is the option of matching public sector services with commercial firms as with Music and ICT. We have already made contact with an external provider to give business advice to senior officers. We are looking to align services to an existing business entity and a business case will be put to elected members.

Q – Out of the £9 million possible cuts, what percentage are you looking at from Education?
A - Difficult to say. We must look at the statutory services within children’s services but also ask, can we do them cheaper?

Q – What would be the cost to the schools if marketing costs were passed on but with possibly no take-up?
A – I don’t anticipate costs to be more than before. Sutton schools have excellent reputations, and if we were to set up a social enterprise company, there would be no share holders and no need to pay dividends and we would look to.

Andrew thanked Colin for his presentation. Colin then left the meeting.
3. School places

Andrew gave an update of the Secondary School Expansion Programme from the last Children, Family and Education Committee meeting on 18 September 2014.

Phase 1 – September 2015
Carshalton Boys Sports College (1FE)
Carshalton HS for Girls (1FE)
Glenthorne HS (1FE)
Nonsuch HS (0.5FE)
Sutton Grammar School (0.5FE)

Phase 2 – September 2016
Greenshaw HS (2FE)
Overton Grange (1FE)
St Philomena’s HS (1FE)
The John Fisher School (1FE)
Wallington County Grammar School (0.5FE)

As far as the proposed new secondary school is concerned, the Greenshaw Trust has now put in a bid to the Education Funding Agency to provide this through build a 10FE Free School programme. This gives access to a different Capital funding stream, although the LA retains a statutory strategic role to ensure sufficient school places within the Borough. Also currently a much higher proportion of pupils are transferring from their Sutton primary schools to the Sutton secondaries.

Q – Will one 10FE school be enough?
A – Don’t know what, if any, other places planned.
Brenda Morley stated that 16FE will be needed by 2020 and that the LA will know about the funding by the end of this calendar year.

PART B

1. Minutes of the last AGM – 1 October 2013

The minutes were agreed subject to the corrections below:

Chair’s Report - Final Para – insert ‘the LA at’ to read “….agreement from the LA at the Schools’ Forum…”
AOB - Insert ‘Primary’ to read “… nominate Primary governors…”
NB Secretary’s note – a version of the minutes has this in.

2. Matters arising
None not on the agenda elsewhere or covered at previous meetings.

3. Chair’s Report

Andrew gave a verbal review of the past year. He mentioned the presentations given to the FSG; Stephen Kingdom (Deputy Director of SEN and Disability Division at the DfE) on the SEN changes, Isabel Ramsey on the work of NLEs (National Leaders of Education), Chris Williamson and Bernard Tomkins on the work of NLGs (National Leaders of Governance) and Rosemary Brennan (LA Project Officer) on the ‘Local Offer’.
The FSG website is up and running – Thanks to Philip Lines. The FSG agendas, minutes and presentations are on the web-site as well as items of interest from the NGA (National Governors Association). The web-site address is on the FSG item on this term’s FGB agendas. He hoped that governors have looked at the site, or if not, please to do so and urge their colleagues to do so too. Governors can also contact him via the web-site with queries or suggestions for further topics for meetings. Andrew said that personally he would like all governors to have an LA email address so that all could be communicated with directly rather than burden FSG reps or Chairs to disseminate FSG information.

There are a number of challenges for governors, Colin’s presentation being one example. There is a concern that schools budgets may well be under threat especially if the LA no longer maintains services. Elected members have agreed to cut play service provision and Children Centres will all have a 14% cut from April 2015. Governors, especially the SEN Governors, need to be aware that Educational Psychologists allocation of time in schools have been affected by the changes to SEN. In light of these challenges Andrew said that it was even more important that there is a forum for governors to meet and discuss issues so he urged the meeting to encourage all governing bodies to affiliate to the FSG.

As there is a requirement for all maintained governing bodies to re-constitute by 01 September 2015, there is a suggestion to invite a speaker from the NGA to the next meeting of the FSG. Andrew asked for governors’ feedback on this. There is also a suggestion that the FSG should organise a Governors’ Conference with the participation of other governor groups eg Merton and/or Croydon with the participation of high profile speakers.

Finally Andrew thanked the committee for their support this year.

3. Treasurer’s Report
Philip had circulated a Statement of Account and Treasurer’s Report. There had been a planned loss last year due to the setting up of the web-site. He presented a list of anticipated expenditure for next year which would also incur a small deficit. In the light of this, the committee proposed that the subscription per school be raised from £10 to £15. This would be the first increase since the setting up of the ASG in 1994.

The meeting was asked to agree the increase

Proposed – Dave Christmas
Seconded – Alan Mcintosh
Agreed unanimously

4. Elections to FSG Committee
Andrew reported that Philip would be moving away from Sutton at some point in the near future. Consequently we will be needing a new Treasurer with some finance and, hopefully, IT skills who would be willing to work with Philip and then take over when he does leave. There were no volunteers from those at the meeting, but those present were asked to contact Andrew with names of possible candidates.

There had been no other nominations for committee membership other than the existing members who were willing to stand again.

Proposal by Dave Christmas to re-elect all current members to their existing roles
Seconded – Simon Dursley
Agreed unanimously

Chair – Andrew Theobald
Vice Chair – Carole Cook
Treasurer – Philip Lines
Secretary – Sue Smith
Committee members – Angela Baughan, John Hickey, Graham Jarvis

6. Report back from the Schools’ Forum

Philip mentioned that all minutes and papers from the Schools’ Forum are on the Borough’s web-site. He highlighted 2 issues from the last meeting:

- A request from Sutton Children’s Social Care services for £50k to create an Education post in the Referral and Assessment (RAS) Team for one year. The aim is to increase the knowledge and expertise of the education sector in the team, improve education liaison and partnership working around safeguarding issues. It was hoped that they could recruit a teacher from a Sutton school on a seconded basis.

There was a question as to the amount requested to fund this post but it was said that these days this is what salary plus on-costs is.

- A request from Internal Audit to consider increasing capacity to boost the number of audits carried out each year and especially to support schools in the ‘Limited Assurance’ category.

7. Hustings meeting – Would governors like the FSG to organise a pre-election Hustings meeting?

This would be a stand-alone meeting, possibly in the spring 2015, with 1 representative from each of the main parties and which would only focus on Education matters. There were for and against views expressed. Andrew asked for a straw poll with a show of hands. There was a majority in favour but a significant minority against.

This will be taken back to be discussed further by the committee

8. AOB

None

9. Date of next meeting - Tuesday February 3rd 2015