

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny (Services)

Date of Meeting: 11 June 2015

Report Title: Final report of the Overview and Scrutiny review of the council's role in raising educational achievement in Hastings and educational outcomes for the town's children and young people in an academised context

Report By: Simon Hubbard
Director of Operational Services

Purpose of Report

To report the work of the review team and its recommendations arising from its review of local education provision.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the committee support recommendations and next steps set out .**
- 2. That the committee thank those involved in this review.**

Reasons for Recommendations

To consider the review team's recommendations.

Introduction

1. Education is a key challenge facing Hastings. Some would agree it is the most significant issue in terms of the long term health and sustainability of the Borough. Educational outcomes for young people have historically been much worse than national averages. The position has a number of results
 - a. The impact socially and economically on the individual who does not achieve their potential, which in turn impacts on their family and community.
 - b. The ability of local people to take up employment opportunity in Hastings or outside.
 - c. A barrier to investment and the creation of jobs
 - d. A lack of aspiration amongst some families for their children.

These processes can become a self-feeding cycle. These issues have been identified as concerns in some predominantly poorer white communities and in particular in many seaside towns. Breaking this kind of process is essential to move more local families out of poverty.

2. Understanding and supporting processes that can break this cycle are therefore of obvious interest to the council and to scrutiny members in particular. Without a steady and sustained improvement in educational attainment and employment readiness the benefits of economic growth will not be shared by many Hastings residents. There is a clear issue in this respect not just in Hastings but in similar coastal communities. The issue is key to wider regeneration in the full sense of that word.
3. It was therefore appropriate that the council undertook an overview and scrutiny review of this issue. The review team members were Councillors Andy Batsford, Tania Charman, Mike Edwards, Nigel Sinden, Mike Turner and Trevor Webb. The review was chaired by Councillor Andy Batsford.
4. The review has had a high level of external impact from those with expertise from schools, East Sussex County Council, Hastings Futures Trust, Outside experts and others to whom thanks are sincerely due. Additionally, I believe members should thank the following staff whose contribution has enabled such a challenging topic to be tackled:

Joy Collins Mark Horan Michael Courts Jane Dodson

5. The review of the council's role in raising educational achievement in Hastings and educational outcomes for the town's children and young people in an academised context was included in the 2014/15 Overview and Scrutiny annual work programme. The review began in October 2014 concluded in April 2015 and fell within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services.
6. This review sought to provide members with a better understanding of the local educational landscape in order to explore scope for establishing a framework for

dialogue between educational providers and other partners in the town to improve outcomes for children and young people.

7. Members have gained a fuller understanding of a challenging local educational landscape and partners involved in the review have conveyed an unwavering passion and commitment towards improving outcomes for children and young people in the town.
8. This report sets out the background informing the focus of this review, considers the methods used and the key findings produced.
9. The report concludes with review recommendations and next steps that encourage the introduction of a model to enhance how educational providers and stakeholders can work together better locally within a challenging landscape.

Background

10. A number of Hastings Borough Council's scrutiny committee members have had a longstanding interest in the emergence of academies since the conversion of the town's secondary schools to academy status from September 2011.
11. In particular, members were interested in what implications emerging academies had for East Sussex County Council (ESCC) in terms of their scope to hold to account what was a new type of school entity for the locality.
12. This member interest led to a request to ESCC's scrutiny committees to consider this area of interest.
13. In response, ESCC's Children's Services Scrutiny Committee formulated a scrutiny review idea in September 2013 on 'Improving educational attainment in East Sussex.'
14. The ESCC committee chose not to pursue this review, which might have been an effective way of pursuing these issues which apply across the County.
15. In advance of this review commencing, ten of eighteen of the town's primary schools have converted to academy status by three academy chains (Ark, Hastings Academies Trust and TKAT).
16. A further two primaries are due to have academy status from April 2015 under the Dioceses of Chichester Academy Trust.
17. The volume of conversions of local schools to academy status has coincided with a shift of member interest from an emphasis on the type of local schools to a more holistic focus on the quality of outcomes for all the town's children and young people.
18. In particular members have become increasingly focussed on the potential for not only improving results, but enhancing a shared cultural ethos that inspires collective efforts from across the town's educational establishments and partners to support one another to improve the life chances of all the town's children and young people.

19. It is this holistic focus that informed the basis for this review, the nature of inquiry and recommendations proposed.
20. This level of senior and expert input is a measure of the commitment of both local partners and others to improvement and progress. This input was universally constructive and sometimes challenging.

Methods

21. The review team began with in depth scoping sessions to refine the review focus and agree lines of inquiry to inform discussion with stakeholders.
22. The resulting project initiation document at appendix A sets the parameters for review and identifies review team membership, terms of reference, corporate fit, objectives, key stakeholders, data, timeframe and reporting arrangements.
23. A mixed methodology was employed whereby qualitative semi structured interviews were used to gather views from identified stakeholders:

Carole Dixon - Chief Executive, Education Futures Trust

Martin Kaliszewski - Consultant (Research and Evaluation) CfBT Education Trust

Lucy Monk - Principal, Helenswood Academy

Fiona Wright - Assistant Director (Schools, Youth and Inclusion Support), East Sussex County Council

Jenny Jones - Executive Principal, Hastings Academies Trust

Dan Shelley - Vice Principal, Sussex Coast College Hastings

Lucy Heller - Chief Executive, Ark

Mark Phillips - Regional Director, Ark

Claire Kershaw - Head of Commissioning Education and Lifelong Learning, Essex County Council

Graham Lancaster - Standards and Excellence Lead Commissioner for Primary - North East, Essex County Council

24. An iterative, exploratory and collaborative approach has underpinned the semi structured interview schedule as members were keen that their lines of inquiry were fluid enough to further hone their focus and next steps in response to the emerging narratives of stakeholders interviewed.
25. The review team also took the decision to where appropriate engage with the various stakeholders separately within a private interview setting where this would enable members to hear candidly expressed views and to challenge them without impinging on others.
26. Over the course of the review, members identified further stakeholders including local primary schools, teaching staff and union representatives.

27. Desktop research has also been used to gather background information, research data and give context to qualitative views conveyed by stakeholders.

Key Findings

28. The following findings are set out under themes that reflect the objectives outlined in the project initiation document (appendix A):

The local educational landscape

29. ESCC, as the local education authority have responsibility for planning school places, promoting excellence in all providers and championing fair access to good schools on behalf of parents and students. However, the role of LEAs is much diminished. Hastings is an almost entirely academised Borough and this will present an ongoing challenge to the LEA to provide leadership. Other areas of the County have a more mixed economy of schools.

30. In 2012, East Sussex County Council published a Proposition for Partnership, which set out the profile for future engagement with schools against the context of reduced resources.

31. The local education authority has a statutory duty to ensure all children in East Sussex receive a good education, is required to provide a challenge to schools including academies if their outcomes are poor and to alert Ofsted or the Department of Education (DfE) of any associated concerns.

32. Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) have also been appointed by the DfE to monitor the performance of academies and intervene if there is a risk of failure. Unless there is a change of policy at a national level these Commissioners are likely to have an important and growing role. However, there is some uncertainty about how this would dovetail with other arrangements.

33. Review stakeholders conveyed some uncertainty over the precise role of RSCs, in particular how their activities would dovetail with existing structures, partnerships and responsibilities.

Performance

34. New national measures will be introduced from 2016 to assess the percentage of students making expected progress in reading, writing and maths.

35. At Key Stage 4, students will be required to study at least eight subjects across English, mathematics, science, humanities and languages through the English Baccalaureate qualification.

36. An 'attainment 8' and 'progress 8' measure will be introduced to record the proportion of students gaining an English Baccalaureate qualification and at least a grade C in English and Maths.

37. Concern was expressed on the impact of these changes with regards to those students wishing to study for vocational qualifications.

Support

38. A number of academy groups have developed training packages, which enabled good practice to be shared across the schools in their network.
39. Schools and the local education authority are also able to commission projects from outside bodies so that a wider range of providers can be called upon to meet the needs of Hastings children and young people. Local secondary schools have recently commissioned summer schools, to ease the transition for students from primary to secondary education.
40. In East Sussex, seven Education Improvement Partnerships [EIP] have been set up as part of a County wide approach to support closer working between schools. The partnership reflects the autonomy of school leaders to drive improvements within the schools system and allows for education providers to share good practice, in order to improve outcomes for pupils.
41. The Hastings EIP included all of the town's primary and secondary schools as well as Sussex Coast College Hastings.
42. Currently, Hastings EIP is undertaking a project to develop teaching of reading; this expertise will then be shared throughout all the schools in the partnership. A research and development project is also being undertaken which seeks to involve parents and carers more in their children's education. However, the level of resources available is limited (£40k) in the face of the challenges locally.
43. The EFT also holds regular meetings with the head teachers of local schools.
44. Such partnership working is evidence of an appetite for collaborative working that those engaged in the review are keen to continue, develop further and view as essential in the context of the following barriers and challenges faced.

Local barriers and challenges

45. Recruitment and retention of high calibre teaching staff has been identified by stakeholders interviewed as a significant barrier to improving educational performance and outcomes.
46. It was recognised that collective efforts from service providers across the town need to continue to ensure that Hastings has a positive profile as a place to live and work, in order to attract key workers to the area, and that the Local Strategic Partnership could serve as a good place to renew coordinated efforts.
47. A number of local schools have also begun to utilise teacher training programmes such as teach first and schools direct, which offer career development opportunities for newly qualified teachers.
48. The review team were aware of a history of low educational attainment in other coastal towns around the country and considered the impact of seasonal unemployment and outward migration on the aspirations of young people and their teachers within our own coastal town.

49. Support capacity in schools and with partner providers such as social care and mental health support for provision of pupils with special educational needs were noted as particular local challenges.
50. Recently, the EFT had begun to focus its activities on family support work, with the aim of creating a stable home environment to better enable young people and their families to value and access education. This is partly in response to changes in the types of services that academies now wish to purchase.
51. There is a need to encourage parents to choose schools in the town rather than placing children outside of the borough and remove barriers to higher education by boosting the attainment of early year's provision as part of improving results in later years.
52. It was identified that locally there appears to be a high volume of in year movement of pupils ('school hoppers') between secondary schools.
53. This movement of pupils brings planning and logistical challenges for schools and families and can be unsettling for those moving and those with new classmates/students.
54. Some stakeholders interviewed felt there was uncertainty around how the new 'progress 8' measures were to be implemented and the implications for comparative analysis of performance over time given the pending change in measurement.
55. Concern was also raised on the general pace of change and how in some instances, schools had to implement changes 'on the hoof.' This raises a question about the consistency of how such changes are implemented locally.

Developing good practice

56. The partnership model between Essex County Council (ECC), Tendring District Council and education providers had been drawn to the attention of the review team as [good practice](#) for supporting communication between key stakeholders.
57. Tendring had a similar demographic (at least in Clacton and Jaywick) to Hastings and a history of poor educational attainment when the partnership was set up.
58. The partnership model (outlined in appendix C), which includes officers from Essex County Council (ECC), the district council and local education providers, was intended to support communication between key stakeholders and allow for increased understanding of interventions that could be taken to address areas of underperformance.
59. The officer group reports to the local area board, which includes both district and county council members. No similar structure exists in East Sussex. This model is sufficiently successful to be extended to Basildon and other areas of challenge in Essex.
60. Consideration was given to how learning from this model can be applied in Hastings.

61. The review team felt that the commitment to partnership working evidenced from interviews with stakeholders as part of the review demonstrated a need for the council to consider this in more detail.
62. This partnership emphasis is further grounded in ESCC's [Excellence for All](#) Strategy that identifies a clear aspiration to achieve at least a 'good' Ofsted rating and 'appropriate progress' for schools across the county.
63. While the 'Excellence for All' strategy sets an aspirational tone for enhancing local partnership working, members were also mindful that under the new inspection regime Ofsted have judged ESCC (as the LEA) as 'ineffective' in terms of supporting school improvement. It is clearly to the benefit of local schools and families that ESCC are supported in addressing the outcome of that inspection and achieving a good inspection in the future.
64. Members were conscious that any efforts to support partnership working locally complement ESCC efforts in line with Ofsted recommendations to 'increase the pace of improvement, particularly in the primary sector, so that outcomes are at least in line with national averages.'
65. Members suggested that when considering a local partnership structure, that attempts are made to ideally work within existing partnership infrastructure which can already appear complex.
66. The Hastings Local Strategic Partnership was well placed to oversee further investigation of options to support partnership working due to its existing links with education providers.
67. Working through existing infrastructure should help avoid duplicating efforts and put this work into the wider context of Hastings overall journey of improvement.
68. The Head teachers group have since been brought up to date with review progress and were receptive to its indicative findings.

Conclusion

69. The key findings from the review offer a snapshot of the local educational landscape from different perspectives and suggest that there is a clear appetite and impetus for dialogue and joint work between educational institutions including academies and other partners in the town to work to improve outcomes for local children and young people.
70. This is supported by a strategic commitment towards a partnership approach (see ESCC's Proposition for Partnership) and improving outcomes for local children and young people in the County's 'Excellence for All' strategy.
71. The Tendring model is a good example of how such partnership working is addressing similar challenges to those identified here, consolidating and improving educational outcomes for children and young people in that locality. However, partners need to determine the right model for Hastings in the context of existing structures.

72. The challenge remaining is how to build upon the appetite and impetus shown by local individual stakeholder partners for partnership within a structure that clearly adds value to current work.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The review team supports partnership working and recommends the formation of a Task and Finish Group comprising of the following:

Chief Executive of Education Futures Trust (EFT)

Leader of Hastings Borough Council

The Chief Executive or Regional Director of ARK

Executive Principal Hastings & St Leonards Academy

Dioceses of Chichester Academy Trust & TKAT representatives

Director of Children's Service ESCC.

Elected nominee from the Head-teachers Forum

The group would be asked to bring forward proposals for LSP partners on how a future partnership might be shaped and work. The diagram at appendix B maps those stakeholders and partnership practice identified in this review around a central outcome (red) and includes a potential future partnership group (yellow). This is complex and the Task & Finish Group may wish to recommend a simpler model going forward. The Task and Finish Group will also consider and make recommendations on the final membership of any partnership model.

Recommendation 2

Proposals brought forward to the LSP from the Task and Finish Group carefully consider how best to encourage a creative partnership between educational and non-educational partners to improve outcomes in local schools.

Recommendation 3

The Leader of the Council is asked to report back to Hastings Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny committees on the outcome of the proposed Task and Finish Group.

Recommendation 4

O & S to receive an annual report on the work of a future partnership group.

Recommendation 5

The council continue to work with partners to address the issues identified with regard to key worker accommodation in the town and build on the promotion of Hastings as a place to work and live.

Next Steps

73. That the Task & Finish Group is set up to investigate options to support closer partnership working. The Task and Finish Group will assess whether this is best achieved by forming a new partnership model, or utilising existing structures.
74. That HBC and ESCC provide the limited clerical and officer support that the Task & Finish Group will require to arrive at a conclusion on the way forward. Resource implications should form part of the Task & Finish Group's considerations.
75. That the LSP be invited to discuss both the outcome of this review and the conclusions of the Task & Finish Group.
76. That the "management response" that will accompany this report to the Cabinet in September 2015 will also include an update on the progress of the Task & Finish Group.

Wards Affected

None

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

ESCC Proposition for Partnership:

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/nr/rdonlyres/99016604-2adc-4c53-b8cf-de09f95ec602/31557/c24jul2012item7securingeducationalexcellence.pdf>

ESCC Excellence for All Strategy:

<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/9FF0CACF-8E8F-4F51-A76F-AF14B2827B4F/36180/AdditionalDocumentsGovernanceCommitteeReportAppend.pdf>

Officer to Contact

Officer Names: Mark Horan & Michael Courts

Officer Email Addresses: mhoran@hastings.gov.uk mcourts@hastings.gov.uk

Glossary

DfE - Department for Education
ECC - Essex County Council
EFT - Education Futures Trust
EIP - Education Improvement Partnership
ESCC - East Sussex County Council
HBC - Hastings Borough Council
LEA - Local Education Authority
LSP - Local Strategic Partnership
RSC - Regional Schools Commissioner