

## AGENDA ITEM 13 REFERS

### The Southend Education Trust (SET)

On September 25<sup>th</sup> officers received a request that the administration and funding of the Southend Education Trust be added to the agenda of the November People Scrutiny Committee. Specifically, the request was for the following information:

1. A full account of the contributions from schools to the trust
2. How schools benefit from the work of the trust
3. Other sources of income
4. A list of individuals receiving monies from the trust
5. Its other expenditure
6. Why it is that an organisation dealing in these huge sums should continue without members being informed or any accountability

### Background

SET is an independent charitable organisation. It describes its main purpose as:

*'...to support schools and other agencies to work collaboratively to achieve our vision for Southend to be an exciting learning town.'*

Established in 2007, it was originally formed as a partnership of all 54 Southend schools and the Local Authority. At that time, its funding was drawn from contributions made to SET by a small number of schools that had previously been part of the Excellence Cluster and which agreed to pool their funding in order for it to be of benefit to the wider community of schools. The organisation also merged with the SCOLLAR TRUST, another educational consultancy. This merger ensured that the organisation had a secure business base as the TRUST had reserves and ongoing contracts that generated an annual income.

In 2010-2011, SET made the transition from a grant giving organisation to one focused on sustainability and the generation of income. At that time, 54% of its total income came from schools with the remainder coming from external grants. During that period its total expenditure was reported as £4,245,606 (against a total income of £5,006,535 of which £2,703,529 came from schools). The breakdown of expenditure was as follows:

Core costs: £509,460

Devolved to schools: £1,443,510

Learning Community: £84,915

Southend Curriculum: £382,110

Support for Learning: £1,613,330

Develop the Workforce: £212,280

SET reported the impact of these measures as a mixture of outcomes (e.g. contribution to NEET reduction and narrowing attainment gaps through 30 small scale school based initiatives) and qualitative measures such as 'strengthened Pupil Voice'.

At the beginning of 2013, all members were canvassed to ascertain whether or not they would be willing to pay an annual subscription to enable the organisation to rebuild financial resources. As a result of this change, the majority of schools elected to withdraw leaving 16 schools as members.

### **The current situation**

Sixteen schools now subscribe to the Trust and these contributions contribute to the organisation's income. Carillon, the training branch of the organisation also generates income from schools as it is one of the training providers schools select.

Schools that have remained as members consider there are benefits to be gained from being part of a small school network and they work together on different projects including peer reviews. Most schools chose to leave because they wanted the flexibility of choosing their provider(s) of professional development from a broader range available in the market locally and regionally.

When it was first established and on account of the fact that it involved all schools, the Head of School Support and Preventative Services represented the Local Authority on the SET Trust Board. At the same time when all Local Authorities were required to deliver on One to One Tuition and there being a reduction in the size of the central team, SET was commissioned to manage this programme.

Since the introduction of charging and the re-location to an office in Wakering, the Local Authority no longer has a place on the Board and therefore any information regarding the operation of the organisation, its income and specifically whether or not any grant applications have been successful will need to be requested directly from SET.