

Select Committee on Children's Services – 21st June 2007

Report of the Lead Officer to the Committee

Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Committee and Associated Matters including the Work Programme and Working Groups of the Committee for 2007-2008

Purpose of Report

1. To receive the Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules applicable to this Committee and details of associated matters, and to consider the work programme and the appointment of Working Groups.

Background

2. Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides for the appointment of five Select Committees, including the Select Committee on Children's Services.
3. The terms of reference of the six Select Committees are referred to in that Article and more fully in Table 1 of the Select Committee Procedure Rules. In respect of this Committee they provide for the Committee to fulfil all the functions of a Select Committee as they relate to Children's Services and in particular the functions of the Council under the Children Act 2004, and associated regulations and guidance including (a) the roles and responsibilities of relevant partnerships and (b) listening to and involving children with the objective of improving the wellbeing of children in the Council's area by developing the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. Article 6 also prescribes the general role of Select Committees and their specific functions, including those relating to scrutiny, and these are set out in full in Appendix 1 to this report.
4. The Select Committee Procedure Rules are contained in Part 4 of the Constitution and are set out in Appendix 2 to this report. Procedure Rule 3 sets out details of Education representatives, both voting and non-voting. The composition was determined in April 2000, on the basis of the previous representation on the former Education Committee, when Select Committees were initially appointed. Legislation and regulations, entitle the Church and parent governor representatives to vote at meetings of the Committee on matters relating to education. As indicated, these arrangements have been incorporated into the Council's Constitution.
5. Also attached, as Appendix 3, is the Scrutiny Protocol for Select Committees, which must be read in conjunction with the Select Committee Procedure Rules.

6. Members are also asked to note that other bodies involved with educational issues are:

- (a) Schools Forum – acts as a consultative body on the local Management of Schools, schools budgets and other issues relating to schools.

Heads, governors and related outside bodies and officers sit on this body. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Chairman of the Select Committee on Children's Services attend as invitees and have a speaking, but not a voting, entitlement.

- (b) Children's Corporate Parenting Committee – this body comprises members and officers and representatives from Black Country's Children's Rights and a young person with a remit to raise awareness of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities for children, champion the needs of children in care in Dudley, monitor and review the Corporate Parenting Policy and review targets and achievements in relation to the outcomes from looked after children. The terms of reference of the Committee include a number of specific issues in relation to looked after children.

- (c) Admissions Forum – this is a statutory body comprising representatives of the various admissions authority within the Borough with a remit to monitor and co-ordinate admissions policies across the Borough.

7 It is proposed that the work programme for 2007-2008 include consideration of the following issues at the meeting of the Select Committee indicated:

17th September 2007 – Annual Performance of the Parenting and Children's Trust

15th November 2007 – Looked After children
Building Schools for the future

23rd January 2008 – School Performance
Teenage Pregnancy
Budget for 2008-2009

26th March 2008 - Review of Annual Policy Statements and strategy Documents

8. The Committee operated last year with five working groups, four of them standing bodies to look in detail at specific issues under the terms of reference and the fifth a time limited working groups charged with the task of reviewing the practices and procedures involved in consultation and school closures. The latter working group completed its task and reported to the meeting of the Select Committee in March 2007, at which its recommendations were accepted.

Regarding the standing working groups, it is proposed that the School Support and Listening to Children and Young People Working Group be re-appointed in 2007-2008, the latter to meet only on an ad hoc basis when particular issues need consideration. Since much of their remit is covered by the Children's Corporate Parenting Committee and the Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care machinery, it is considered that the Corporate Parenting and the

Health Issues Working Groups be discontinued. In the light of the Youth Service Inspection report and Action Plan, however, it is proposed that a new Working Group to look at matters relating to the area of Youth provision, be established.

It is therefore proposed:

That the following Working Groups be established/appointed for the 2007/2008 municipal year:

- (a) Listening to Children and Young People Working Group – an informal group including a children’s representative and the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, to meet across the Borough and engage with and consult young people, on an ad hoc basis.
 - (b) School Support Working Group – to ensure schools receive appropriate support and advice from the Local Authority.
 - (c) Youth Provision Working Group – to look at matters relating to the area of youth provision.
9. Inevitably, the appointment of further time limited Working Groups to consider particular issues as and when they occur, may be necessary over the year and it is proposed that these will be set up on an ad hoc basis and appointed on a time limited basis.

Finance

10. This report has no direct financial implications.

Law

11. The relevant provisions regarding the Constitution are contained in Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, together with Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Equality Impact

12. This report complies with the policies of the Council on equality and diversity.
13. Children and young people have not been consulted in the preparation of this report, but it will be necessary to consult with them and perhaps appoint representatives of them to serve on certain Working Groups.

Recommendation

14. That the Terms of Reference Rules of Procedure and Protocol relating to the Select Committee be received and noted, together with the associated information referred to in paragraph 6 above.

15. That the work programme set out in paragraph 7 of this report be approved and that members be invited to discuss any further issues they consider should be included.
16. That the Working Groups for 2007/2008 be considered and appointed in accordance with paragraph 8 above and that the Lead Officer to the Committee, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to appoint the membership of the Working Group from preferences to be expressed by Committee Members.



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Lead Officer to the Committee

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Background Papers

17. The Council's Constitution.