

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Tuesday, 25th January, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.
at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Ridney (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Dunn (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Mrs Coulter, Finch, Hart-Bowman, Mrs Pearce, Rahman
Rogers, Ryder and Wright; Mr Hatton, Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson, Mr
Nottingham, Mrs Roe, Mrs Simms and Mr Guest.

OFFICERS

The Director of Finance (as Lead Officer to the Committee), The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, The Assistant Directors of Education (Access and Inclusion), (Resources and Planning), and (School Effectiveness), the Head of Early Years and Childcare (Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property).

45

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th December, 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct regarding all matters on the Agenda for this meeting in view of their respective offices as Governors of the schools indicated:

Councillor Mrs Coulter – Netherton C E Primary School
Councillor Finch - Priory Primary School and Castle High School
Councillor Hart-Bowman – Bishop Milner R C School
Councillor Wright – Straits Primary School and The Ellowes Hall School.

Mrs Simms declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of all matters on the Agenda for this meeting in view of her work placement for University at Woodsetton School.

Councillor Mrs. Coulter declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in respect of all matters on the Agenda for this meeting in view of her Chairmanship of The Pupil Referral Unit Committee.

Councillor Rahman declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 8 on the Agenda (Outcome of Consultations on Proposed Changes to the LMS Formula for 2005/06, including Proposed New Delegations) in view of his Governorship of Netherton Park Children's Centre.

Councillor Rogers declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 8 on the Agenda in view of his position as Associate Manager of North Warwickshire (Mental Health) NHS Trust and in view of his wife's being employed as a Teaching Assistant in Special Needs.

Mr Guest declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item 9 on the Agenda for this meeting (Remodelling of the School Workforce) in view of the employment of his daughter as a Nursery Nurse at Colley Lane Primary School.

Councillor Mrs Dunn declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 12 on the Agenda for this meeting (Sure Start Plan 2004-06) in view of her Chairmanship of the Governing Body of Rufford Primary School and her Governorship of Huntingtree Primary School.

Mrs Roe declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 12 on the Agenda in view of her being a parent of a child educated at a primary school in Dudley.

Councillor Mrs Ridney declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 12 on the Agenda in view of her Governorship of Christchurch Primary School and Netherton C E Primary School.

Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 13 on the Agenda for this meeting (Standards in Dudley Schools 2004) in view of her being employed as Deputy Headteacher of Wollescote Primary School.

Mrs Roe declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in Item Number 13 in view of her office as a Governor and her employment as and a Teacher at Redhill School.

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ORDER OF BUSINESS

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13 (c) it was :
RESOLVED

That Item Number 12 on the Agenda for this meeting (Sure Start Plan 2004-06) be considered as the next Item of Business.

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SURE START PLAN 2004-06

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted on the Sure Start Plan for 2004-06.

The report explained that Sure Start was the Government's framework for bringing together early years education, childcare, health and family support. This encompassed targeted services in disadvantaged areas and universal services for children aged 0-16 years, in early education and out of school provision. There were two key elements to the programme: early education for all, and more and better childcare, which included free part-time early education for all 3 and 4 year olds and the creation of new childcare places and local programmes, which included children's centres where they were needed most and ongoing Sure Start local programmes.

The role of the Local Authority was to provide leadership and join up agencies by bringing together local partners in order to move Sure Start delivery forward. Specific responsibilities included strategic planning for delivery; consultation and partnership; support and delivery; financial accountability, monitoring performance and promoting children's development. The objectives and targets of the Plan were summarised in the report, together with the financial implications.

In attending the meeting for this item, the Head of Early Years and Childcare explained how funding streams would operate and answered a question in relation to provision in the Woodside Area.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

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SCRUTINY PROTOCOL FOR SELECT COMMITTEES

A report of The Director of Law and Property seeking consideration of a draft Scrutiny Protocol for Select Committees was submitted. The draft Protocol was appended to the report.

RESOLVED

- (1.) That the Director of Law and Property be recommended that the second sentence of Clause 15 of the draft Protocol be amended by the substitution of the word “five” for the word “two” and by the substitution of the words “and no” for the words “but in any event the”.
- (2.) That, subject to the above recommendation, the draft Protocol be supported.

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PROTOCOL FOR RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEMBERS AND OFFICERS OF DUDLEY MBC

A report of the Director of Law and Property, as Monitoring Officer, was submitted, seeking consideration of a draft Protocol for relationships between Members and Officers of the Council. The draft Protocol was appended to the report.

RESOLVED

That the draft Protocol be supported.

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PROPOSED REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2005/06

A joint report of The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and The Director of Finance was submitted on the proposed revenue budget of the Council for 2005/06. The report also indicated the Government’s proposals for the level of revenue support grant to be allocated to Dudley in 2005/06. The particular implications for services covered by the terms of reference for the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning were set out in paragraph 3.8 of the report.

A number of questions were asked by certain Members, these relating mainly to free school meals for Astley Burf, grants for voluntary organisations and home to school transport. In response to a question on the latter issue, The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning indicated that a decision on the details had yet to be made.

RESOLVED

- (1.) That the Government’s proposals for Revenue Support Grant for Dudley in 2005/06 be noted.
- (2.) That the proposals of the Cabinet regarding expenditure on services covered by the terms of reference of this Committee be received.

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OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LMS FORMULA FOR 2005/06 – INCLUDING PROPOSED NEW DELEGATIONS

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted indicating the outcome of the consultation on new delegations and proposed changes to the Local Management for Schools (LMS) Formula. A summary of the consultation responses was set out in the Appendix to the report and the recommendations of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, made in consequence of the points raised in the consultation, were set out in paragraphs 13-20 (inclusive).

RESOLVED

That the recommendations arising from the consultation as set out in paragraphs 13-20 of the report now submitted, be supported.

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REMODELLING THE SCHOOL WORKFORCE

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted indicating progress relating to the remodelling of the school workforce, with reference to classroom support staff.

A proposed local agreement had been drawn up and a copy was appended to the report now submitted. The report summarised the approach taken by Dudley in negotiating the agreement and indicated that, following ballots, the proposed agreement had been accepted by the General Municipal and Boiler Maker's Union but rejected by UNISON. The overall vote had been in favour of the proposals.

The principles that would apply in assimilating existing staff to the new structure were set out in the report, together with future plans for the development of the framework and the timescales involved. A breakdown of cost pressures for 2005/06 estimated by the Department for Education and Skills was set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted; that the action taken to date be endorsed and that the action now proposed be supported.

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SUPPLY TEACHING IN DUDLEY

Further to the request made at the previous meeting of the Committee, a report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted setting out the current position regarding supply teaching in Dudley.

The report indicated that, in order to support schools in accessing appropriately experienced and trained staff, the Local Education Authority worked in partnership with the Black Country School Improvement Partnership to provide the Black Country Supply Service (BCSS). Since September 2004, the BCSS had met all requests for supply staff made by Dudley Schools.

Concern was expressed by certain members at the general standard of supply teaching and at the adverse impact on learning of continued use of supply staff over a long period could have at a school. In response, reference was made to the measures taken to vet supply staff and ensure quality control, which the LEA was more able to achieve through the BCSS than through commercial providers.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and noted.

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EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004/05

A report of the Director of Lifelong Learning on the Education Development Plan for 2004/05 was submitted.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Education (Resources and Planning) indicated that, as a result of the revision of Education Plans by the Department for Educational Skills, the existing Education Development Plan would be discontinued after 2005 and that plans for school improvement would be made under an over arching planning framework, The "Children and Young People's Plan" as set up under The Children Act, 2004.

The Plan for 2004/05 was divided into seven priorities, each with associated activities, details of which were summarised in the Appendix to the report now submitted. The full Plan had been circulated to Members of the Committee in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Education Development Plan for 2004/05 be supported.

STANDARDS IN DUDLEY SCHOOLS 2004

A report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was submitted providing data on the performance of schools in the Borough in relation to the Foundation stage; Key Stages 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum Assessments; Key Stage 2 of the Ethnic Minority Assessment Data; learning at the Key Stages 1 and 2 of the Looked After Pupils Assessment Data. The report also provided data on School Attendance and Exclusion.

A supplementary paper was circulated at the meeting providing the latest data available on the performance of schools in the Borough in relation to Key Stage 4 National Curriculum Assessment; Key Stage 4 Ethnic Minority Assessment Data and Pupils in Public Care Assessment Data. The report and the supplementary papers compared Dudley's performance against national statistics and the Council's statistical and geographical neighbours. In response to a question on the statistics on permanent exclusions, the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the LEA worked with the aim of securing a place for an excluded child in an alternative school with minimum delay. In relation to the Key Stage 4 figures, which indicated a reduction in the percentage of 5 plus A* GCSE passes of 0.1% in 2004, the Assistant Director of Education (School Effectiveness) confirmed that the LEA was taking measures to address this but explained also that the reduction had been due partly to a change in the method of calculations by the Department for Education and Skills.

In response to a question regarding the diversity of pupil's attainment by ethnic heritage in relation to pupils of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African background, the Assistant Director (School Effectiveness) indicated that where children had English as a second language, they generally had to work harder at their comprehension skills to achieve required standards. She then summarised the work being done with children from Ethnic Minority backgrounds to help them develop in Science and Mathematics and referred to the work of EMAS in this regard. The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning confirmed that, regarding ethnicity, where a gap in skills was identified, the LEA endeavoured to identify the reasons and then take appropriate action.

In view of the late circulation of the data on Key Stage 4, the Chairman invited Members to submit any questions to the Assistant Director of Education (School Effectiveness) and requested that responses to questions and any points raised be referred to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the reports now submitted be received.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer of the Committee was submitted setting out extracts from the Quarterly Performance Report for the second quarter of 2004/05, in so far as they related to the activities under the terms of reference of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN