

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Wednesday, 7th September, 2005 at 5.30pm in Committee Room 2
at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Ridney (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Dunn (Vice-Chairman),
Councillors Mrs Coulter, Johnston, Mrs Pearce, Rahman, Rogers, Ryder,
Simms and Wright; Mr Hatton and Mr Smith; Mr Guest; Mr Nottingham
and Mrs Simms.

OFFICERS

The Director of Finance (Lead Officer to the Committee), Director of
Children's Services, The Assistant Director of Education (Community
Education), Mr Silvera (Race Equality Officer, Directorate of Education
and Lifelong Learning) and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property).

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th
June, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED

That, pursuant to the Council Procedure Rule 13(c), consideration
of item number 1(b) (Composition and Membership of the
Working group on the Review of Primary School Places) be
deferred until later on the agenda.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the
Members' Code of Conduct in respect of any matter to be considered at
this meeting.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Boys and Hart, Mrs Capell, Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson and Mrs Roe.

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SUBSTITUTES MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor Simms was serving in place of Councillor Boys for this meeting of the Committee only.

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A presentation on the implications of the Children Act, 2004 for the Council, and the consequential changes to officer responsibilities was given by the Director of Children's Services.

The definition of "children" had been changed under the Act to those persons under the age of 18, except for those who were looked after by a Local Authority after the age of 16 or had a learning disability, for whom the Local Authority was responsible until the age of 20. The Act required the Council to appoint a Lead Member for Children's Services and a Director of Children's Services, the former of whom being responsible for political leadership and the latter for the administration of the Council's relevant functions. The Act required the Council and other agencies to cooperate with each other in relation to Children's Services and details of the agencies concerned and the functions on which cooperation was required were summarised in the presentation.

Statutory guidance in relation to the role of the Director of Children's Services had been issued by the Department for Education and Skills which involved 3 key areas; leadership within the Local Authority and beyond to secure and sustain the necessary changes to culture and practice so that services improved outcomes for all and were arranged around children and young people's needs; building and sustaining effective partnerships with and between local and out of area bodies, including the private, voluntary and community sectors who provided children's services, in order to focus resources on improving outcomes for children; and listening to and involving children.

In drawing attention to the challenges ahead, a brief discussion ensued on the way forward in response to which a recommendation by the Director that in the first instance two working groups, to consider the Council's responsibilities in the respective broad areas of service of provision and scrutiny, was acceded to. In view of the responsibility of all members of the Council for Children's Services under the Act a suggestion was made that the Director should instigate advisory training seminars for all members and it was agreed that one of the proposed working groups should consider proposals for a programme in this regard.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the presentation be received and noted.
- (2) That working groups to consider the role of the Local Authority in the respective broad areas of Children and Young Persons' Services and scrutiny of the preparatory work for the Children Act 2004, be appointed.
- (3) That arrangements for a programme for advising and training all members of the Council on their role and responsibility for Children's Services be considered by one of the above working groups.

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EXAMINATION RESULTS

The Committee congratulated schools on their achievements in the recent GCSE Advanced Level examination results.

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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS GREEN PAPER –
'YOUTH
MATTERS'

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the means by which the Council's response to this Green Paper would be made.

The Green Paper had emerged from the Department for Education and Skills' 5 year strategy for children and learners issued in July, 2004 in so far as that document related to youth matters. The Green Paper included proposals in relation to empowerment, management arrangements, opportunity cards and funds, arrangements for Local Authority youth work, the accountability frame work, engagement issues and the involvement of young persons with the Council and other agencies, including the voluntary and community sector and the connexions service. A summary of the proposals in the Green Paper on these issues was contained in the report now submitted.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the Green Paper 'Youth Matters', as summarised in the report now submitted, be noted.
 - (2) That a Working Group be appointed to consider and prepare the local authority response to the Green Paper and that the remit of the working group also include consideration of support for the development of the strategic direction for services to young people.
 - (3) That the Lead Officer to the Committee in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to approve the composition and membership of the Working Group in resolution 2 above and those Working Groups referred to in the resolution to Minute 14 and resolution (2) to Minute 18, in the light of preferences expressed by members as to which Working Group(s) on which they would prefer to serve and that the Director of Law and Property write to all members of the Committee to obtain their preferences in this regard.
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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT FINANCE DELIVERY: CONSULTATION

A report of the Director Children's Services was submitted setting out the terms of reference or a review of higher education student finance delivery being conducted by the Department for Education and Skills and seeking consideration of proposals in relation to the response to consultation thereon.

RESOLVED

That the response set out the case for the continued local provision of a student finance service.

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THE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted setting out the Equality and Diversity Annual Report for the Directorate of Education and Lifelong Learning for the period 2004/05.

The report set out the achievements and issues relating to equality and diversity over 2004/05.

In the discussion on this issue, a question was asked in relation to the data on the proportion of ethnic minority applicants who were successful in being short-listed for interview for posts, in response to which the Assistant Director of Education (Community Education) was asked to respond in writing to the questioner. In response to a further question, regarding the Council's engagement with ethnic minorities in the event of the closure of the Dudley Racial Equality Council, the Assistant Director referred to bodies with which the Council was in partnership or had involvement with in this context.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received and noted.
- (2) That a report be submitted to the next ordinary meeting of the Committee listing the community groups with which the Council will engage in the context of the discontinuation of the Dudley Racial Equality Council.

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ATTENDANCE FIGURES BY ETHNICITY

Further to a request made at a previous meeting of the Committee, for school attendance figures by ethnicity to be provided, the Assistant Director of Education (Community Education) reported that statistical information in this regard was not yet available.

In response to a question regarding duty of care, in the light of the abduction of a school pupil in Scotland, the Assistant Director confirmed that registration arrangements in Dudley were robust but cautioned that any system could be prone to human error.

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UPDATE OF CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted seeking consideration of the draft Capital Strategy for 2005-20 in so far as it related to issues within the terms of reference of this Committee.

RESOLVED

That the draft Strategy for 2005-20 be accepted in as far as the responsibilities of this Committee are concerned.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm