

Select Committee on Children's Services – 19th June, 2008

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 2008-2009

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 and involving children with the objective of improving the wellbeing of children in the Council's area by development 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.
 - (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 2008/09 include consideration of the following issues at the meeting of the Select Committee indicated:

15th September, 2008

Building Schools for the Future

Fostering Service

Raising Expectations

Review of Operation of School Improvement Partners and School Improvement Policy

13th November, 2008

Children’s Trust

Children and Young People’s Plan

21st January, 2009

Educational Support for Ethnic Minority Pupils

Annual Performance Assessment Improvement Plan

Reducing Teenage Pregnancy

Budget 2009/10

25th March, 2009

Outcomes for Looked After Children

School Performance and Support for Schools.

8. The Committee operated last year with three standing working groups as follows, and it is proposed that these be reappointed in 2008/09:
- (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.
 - (d) Building Schools for the future Working Group – to consider particular issues relating to Building Schools for the Future.
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 to be included.
16. That the Working Groups for 2008/09 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

Background Papers

17. The Council's Constitution.