

**SPECIAL MEETING OF SELECT COMMITTEE
ON LIFELONG LEARNING**

Wednesday, 29th September, 2004 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Ridley (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Dunn (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Boys, Burston, Finch, Mrs Pearce, Rogers, Ryder and C L Woodall; together with the following non-Council Members
Voting Member

Church Representative

Archdiocese of Birmingham - Mr Hatton

Non-Voting Members

Teacher Representative

Secondary Education - Mrs P Roe

Free Churches

Mr J Guest

Persons with Experience of and Interest in Education in the Borough

Mr Nottingham and Mrs Simms

Together with the Director of Finance (Lead Officer), Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, Assistant Director of Education (Access and Inclusion), Assistant Director of Education (Community Education and Development), Acting Assistant Director of Education (School Effectiveness) and Mr J Jablonski (Directorate of Law and Property)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors Adams and Vickers

The following members of the multi-agency Inclusion Strategy Consultation Group - Mr B Bainbridge, Mr D Bishop-Rowe, Ms S Cunningham, Ms H Kew and Ms P Sharratt
Ms S Preston - Dudley South Primary Care Trust and members of the public

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Member made a Declaration of Interest in accordance with the

Members' Code of Conduct

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Coulter, Hart-Bowman, Rahman and Wright and Ms N Chapman

16 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillors Burston and C L Woodall had been appointed to serve as substitutes for Councillors Wright and Mrs Coulter respectively for this meeting of the committee only.

17 DRAFT INCLUSION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Prior to the presentation on this matter the Chairman in her introductory remarks welcomed Members of the Committee, invited guests and members of the public to the deliberation on the draft Inclusion Strategy Action Plan. She also specifically welcomed colleagues who formed part of the multi-agency Inclusion Strategy Consultation Group to assist in the deliberations of the Committee. Members of the public were also invited to contribute to the discussion on this matter and slips on which questions could be written had been made available to assist with this.

Following the introductory remarks of the Chairman consideration was given to report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning on the third version of the draft Inclusion Strategy Action Plan that was currently out for consultation. This meeting was part of the consultation process, which had a formal end date of 31st October, 2004.

A copy of the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan Consultation Document had previously been circulated to all Members of the Council and Sharon Menghini - Assistant Director of Education (Access and Inclusion) gave a brief presentation on the content of the Action Plan.

Following the presentation given the Lead Officer referred to a note circulated at the meeting on which seven suggested areas for discussion and follow up were listed. Members and other persons present then proceeded to discuss, in depth, the content of the presentation and documentation in respect of the Draft Inclusion Strategy Action Plan.

During the discussion on this matter Councillor Boys presented five petitions to the Chairman.

Arising from the consideration given to this matter, it was

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning be requested to consider, as part of the consultation on the Draft Inclusion Strategy Action Plan, the following comments as this Committee's response to the consultation:-
 - (a) That as parents involved and the public generally appeared to be misunderstanding the content of the Action Plan, due it was considered to the official language in which it was written, consideration needed to be given to overcoming such misunderstanding and the misinformation arising by the production of a document in plain English clearly setting out the proposals.
 - (b) That while the principles and concepts contained in the Action Plan (Paragraph 3 and 4) were generally accepted, there was a need to ensure that steps were taken to mitigate the isolation that might occur for individual pupils arising from the application of the Inclusion Strategy.
 - (c) That the safeguards set out in paragraph 9 and 14 of the Action Plan need to be strengthened to include reference to current legislative provision and the recourse, if necessary, to an independent Tribunal.
 - (d) That reconsideration should be given to the question of whether provision should be provided in five areas of the Borough instead of the four areas as proposed with the necessary statistical analysis being carried out as part of this. It was recognised that there would also be a need to maintain a continuum of provision meeting needs across the board so that there was not a gap between special school and mainstream provision.
 - (e) That whilst parental representatives considered that the issue of current transport arrangements was not a significant factor for them, it was recognised that the proposals should improve the current provision of home to school transport.
 - (f) That consideration should be given to retaining the better special schools.

- (g) That there was a need to retain specific provision for those children with complex needs.
 - (h) That the provision to be provided should have sufficient flexibility to be able to respond to future requirements.
 - (i) That, as it was recognised that teachers in mainstream provision needed the support of a variety of professionals/support staff to ensure that the proposals were successfully implemented, there was a need to ensure that the appropriate level of support for teachers was available in terms of the availability of such expertise and support and associated training across all the agencies involved.
 - (j) That there was a need to ensure that the future of existing teaching staff was dealt with in a way that was consistent with the implementation of the Action Plan.
 - (k) That there was a need to make specific reference to parents in the future consultation plan.
- (2) That should any member wish to make any individual comments on the Draft Inclusion Strategy Action Plan they are asked to do so to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning by 31st October, 2004.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

CHAIRMAN