



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ADULT & COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 21 MARCH 2007 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Corrall - Chair
Councillor Almey – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Porter – Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor A. Vincent – Focus Team Spokesperson

Councillor Kitterick (for Cllr.Waddington)
Councillor Nurse

Councillor Renold
Councillor Thompson

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60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Waddington.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were requested to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda and/or indicate if Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No declarations were made.

68. PROPOSED FUNDING CHANGES TO ESOL PROVISION

The Corporate Director, Adults and Housing, submitted a report that informed the Committee of forthcoming proposed English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) funding developments put forward by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in its annual statement of priorities.

The Committee were informed that should the funding changes be agreed and implemented from September 2007, there would likely be a significant impact on the City Council's Adult and Skills Learning Service, and on people living and working in Leicester. The LSC have stated that from 2007/2008 ESOL learning would no longer attract automatic fee remission. Free tuition would only be available to priority groups, primarily people who were unemployed and receiving income-based benefits.

The Committee were informed of the impact of the changes and of the

categories of people most likely to be affected, including people from within the new communities that have arrived in Leicester since 2001, asylum seekers and dependant spouses entering the UK on visas.

Officers reported that a series of actions that included lobbying of the Government, the collection and presentation of evidence to relevant bodies, the seeking of alternative sources of funding and working closely with the LSC were currently being undertaken. A recent Parliamentary Statement had been issued that led officers to believe that the situation might not be as serious as initially anticipated but that there were still serious concerns that warranted the continuation of the actions outlined.

The Committee considered the implications of the LSC proposals outlined in the report and expressed serious concerns at the effects these changes would have the City Council's Adult and Learning Skills Service and also for a large number of disadvantaged people residing in Leicester who were currently eligible for free ESOL tuition.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that, in view of the proposed funding changes put forward by the LSC, and of the large number of disadvantaged Leicester residents likely to be affected by these proposals, Cabinet be asked to give consideration to look at alternative ways of funding the ESOL provision in Leicester.
- 2) that the importance of the contribution of ESOL in promoting equal opportunities and access to services by removing barriers to poverty and deprivation, promoting integration, increasing employment opportunities among ethnic communities and raising the skills and attainment level among some of our more disadvantaged citizens, be noted.
- 3) that the need to continue to make representation at a national, regional and local level to ensure that the needs of our community are understood and that the implications of any changes in funding and learner entitlements are understood and acknowledged by funders and stakeholders, be noted.
- 4) that it be noted that the Adult Skills and Learning Service is looking at accessing alternative sources of funding in order to be able to continue to offer a relevant and appropriate learning programme to ESOL learners.
- 5) that it be noted that the LSC must be asked to respond to demand by making "other" ESOL courses eligible for funding e.g. ESOL and work or vocational ESOL courses.
- 6) that it be noted that the Council has requested that the LSC recognizes the obligation we have to continue to provide a service for existing learners and acknowledges the need for

continuing learners to receive free learning as agreed at the point of their initial involvement.

- 7) That it be noted that the actions taken by the Cabinet Lead member in writing to the agencies urging Government and LSC to restore access to free ESOL learning.

73. CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 6.28pm.

