



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: TUESDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2004 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Willmott - Chair
Councillor Maw - Conservative Spokesperson
Councillor Vincent – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson

Councillor Farmer (for Cllr Panchbaya)	Councillor Seare
Councillor Fitch	Councillor Smith (for Cllr Keeling)
Councillor Kitterick	Councillor Sood
Councillor Mrs Middleton	Councillor Tessier
Councillor Renold	Councillor Thompson

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr Edward Hayes	-	Roman Catholic Diocese
Canon Peter Taylor	-	Church of England Diocese
Ms Veronica Bolsover	-	Parent Governor (Secondary School)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Mr Chino Cabon	-	Leicester Racial Equality Council
Ms Jane Rolfe	-	Primary Sector
Professor Baskerville	-	De Montfort University/University of Leicester
Mr Adam Suddaby	-	Incorporated Colleges
Mr Geoff Rawnsley	-	City of Leicester Governors Association

In Attendance

Councillor Johnson – Cabinet Link Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

Gary Garner - UNISON

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60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

The meeting was asked to note the general interests of Members as governors

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as follows:

	School / College	Category of Governorship
Professor Baskerville	Leicester College	LEA
Cllr Kitterick	Hazel Primary School	LEA
Cllr Mrs Maw	Willowbrook Primary School	LEA
Cllr Mrs Middleton	Caldecote Primary School	LEA
	Fullhurst Community College	LEA
Mr G Rawnsley	Crown Hills Community College	LEA
	Mayflower Primary School	LEA
Cllr Renold	Spinney Hill Primary School	LEA
Cllr Smith	Mowmacre Hill Primary School	LEA
Cllr Sood	Spinney Hill Primary School	LEA
	Leicester College	LEA
Mr. A. Suddaby	Leicester Adult Education College	Co-opted
	Ellesmere College	Co-opted
Cllr Thompson	Sandfield Close Primary School	LEA
	Northfield House Primary	LEA

The Town Clerk advised Members who were school governors that they had non-prejudicial interests in, and their general declarations applied to the following item:

Draft Revenue Strategy for the Education
& Lifelong Learning Department

Agenda Item 7,
(minute 66 refers)

63. PETITIONS

The Town Clerk reported receipt of the following petitions:-

- a) A petition from the parents of users, ex-users and supporters of the New Parks Adventure Playground, containing 1040 signatures:

"We call on the City Council to continue to fund the facility. To ensure that our children and future generations have a safe, friendly place they can use in their leisure time, as an alternative to roaming the streets."

- b) A petition from the young people who use the New Parks Adventure

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Playground, containing 861 signatures:

"Don't close down our playground.

We, the young people who use the New Parks Adventure Playground, want it kept open. We ask the City Council to continue to find the money so we can continue to use it.

If it closes, we will have nowhere to go."

- c) A petition from members of the New Parks Social Club, containing 266 signatures:

"We the users of the New Parks Social Club, value the Adventure Playground, which keeps our children off the streets. Don't close it down. We call on the City Council to continue to provide the money to keep it open. Give our kids somewhere safe to go where they can enjoy themselves, without getting into trouble or disturbing other residents; an alternative to roaming the streets."

- d) A petition from Playfair, containing 10,041 signatures:

"Please sign this petition if you don't agree to the closure of your local playground. It will mean:-

More children on the streets, as there are no plans to replace the Adventure Playgrounds - more children at risk - more vandalism and crime in your area - a waste of years of community effort - loss of valuable educational and social resource - closing the playgrounds will effect everybody in the community! Councillors should vote to take playgrounds off the list of cuts at the earliest opportunity!!"

66. DRAFT REVENUE STRATEGY FOR THE EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING DEPARTMENT

The Committee considered proposals submitted by Councillor Willmott as Leader of the Labour Group which detailed alternative budget proposals for the Education and Lifelong Learning Department. Councillor Willmott stated that the proposals put forward had been prepared under the Labour group's instruction by officers from the Resources Access and Diversity Department and had been checked for their viability by the Chief Finance Officer and the Service Director (Policy and Resources) in the Education and Lifelong Learning Department. He emphasised that he considered the proposals to be realistic and that when the rest of the proposals were released the sources of additional funding would be seen. He suggested that the Council was not in as serious a financial position as claimed and had extensive reserves under a number of headings.

He stated that the Labour group proposals would ensure the reversal of proposals relating to:

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- the closure of St Matthews Sports Centre, Workplace nursery and Shoppers Play Centre,
- the reduction of the Book Fund, and in Play sessional staffing,
- the deletion of the Sport Grant, and the general activities fund, and
- the withdrawal of funding to Grant Aided Projects.

In addition he stated that £2m of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding would be allocated to the department which would ensure no teachers would need to be made redundant and expertise could be bought in to help schools in special measures. The remainder could be used for growth bids. He stated that these proposals had been prepared to illustrate that there was an alternative to the budget proposed and hoped that Cabinet would scrutinise them.

Councillor Willmott seconded by Councillor Sood moved:

‘That the Cabinet be asked to consider and scrutinise the Labour group proposals for the Education and Lifelong Learning budget.’

In support it was suggested that the ruling group’s intention had been to increase the level of reserves at the expense of services. It was felt that although it had been stated that the reserves were relatively low it was important to balance the desire to increase reserves against the effect of the cuts proposed. It was suggested that voluntary sector grants may need review but that this should be a considered process looking at each organisation in turn.

In response it was stated that the 2002/03 Audit had stated that the Council’s current level of reserves were low compared with other Unitary and Metropolitan Councils. Currently the reserves equated to around 1% of the Council’s income which was felt to be too low as they had been used to support the current year’s budget and were being used to support the Swan Bridge settlement. It was suggested that the Council did not have control of Neighbourhood Renewal funding and that a redirection of funding would leave other areas short. In addition it was suggested that to reinstate funding to voluntary groups without project officers would not be practical. However it was emphasised that the draft revenue strategy currently under scrutiny was still in the consultation period and would be amended. It was felt important to see the rest of the Labour group proposals identifying the source of the additional money before a conclusion on the proposals presented could be reached.

Councillor Vincent seconded by Councillor Farmer moved the following amendment:

‘That the Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) wishes to express its concern over the level of cuts initially proposed to the voluntary sector;
- (2) asks Cabinet to take full consideration of the direct and indirect effects that these proposed cuts to the voluntary sector will have on the Council’s stated priorities; and
- (3) asks Cabinet to consider all proposals to minimise the effect which the budget constraints have forced upon the Council.’

the proposer and seconders of the motion agreed to accept the amendment and so the motion as amended read:

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‘That the Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) asks Cabinet to consider and scrutinise the Labour group proposals for the Education and Lifelong Learning budget.
- (2) wishes to express its concern over the level of cuts initially proposed to the voluntary sector;
- (3) asks Cabinet to take full consideration of the direct and indirect effects that these proposed cuts to the voluntary sector will have on the Council’s stated priorities; and
- (4) asks Cabinet to consider all proposals to minimise the effect which the budget constraints have forced upon the Council.’

The amended motion was AGREED.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) asks Cabinet to consider and scrutinise the Labour group proposals for the Education and Lifelong Learning budget,
- (2) wishes to express its concern over the level of cuts initially proposed to the voluntary sector;
- (3) asks Cabinet to take full consideration of the direct and indirect effects that these proposed cuts to the voluntary sector will have on the Council’s stated priorities; and
- (4) asks Cabinet to consider all proposals to minimise the effect which the budget constraints have forced upon the Council.