



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: WEDNESDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2005 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Johnson - Chair  
Councillor Fitch - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson  
Councillor Sood – Labour Spokesperson

Councillor R Blackmore	Councillor Panchbaya
Councillor Green (for Cllr Hunt)	Councillor Porter
Councillor Hall	Councillor Renold
Councillor Henry	Councillor Suleman
Councillor Lloyd-Harris	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Nurse	Councillor Westley

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Mr Chino Cabon	-	Leicester Racial Equality Council
Ms Jane Rolfe	-	Primary Sector
Mr Peter Flack	-	Secondary Sector
Mr Adam Suddaby	-	Incorporated Colleges
Mr Geoff Rawnsley	-	City of Leicester Governors Association

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**71. DEPARTMENTAL REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY**

The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Project Director gave a presentation on the consultation process for the BSF project. As part of the presentation he stated that the consultation period had lasted 7 weeks, and that there had been a 10% return rate, which was normally considered to be a reasonable response rate. It was noted that a full report on the BSF project would be considered by Cabinet on 7 March.

Concern about the consultation process was expressed and it was asked if there was any indication about why many schools did not respond. It was noted that not all school Governing bodies had met to discuss a response yet. It was noted that as not all schools had stated that they were in agreement with the BSF project, this may be a problem for proving the strategic business case

due to its nature as a citywide strategy if this continued to be the case. Concerns were also expressed regarding the lack of feedback from community groups.

Concern was expressed about the funding model and funding the additional future costs, for example facilities maintenance. It was suggested that the project was a massive financial risk for the Council and that if it did not work out, core services would have to be cut to pay for it. Members were informed that it had been hoped to fund the estimated £4million 'affordability' gap for maintenance equally from the City Council and from schools, but it had been proposed by schools that they should fund 30%, with the City Council paying 70%.

It was suggested that some people from communities with English as a second language may have experienced difficulties understanding and responding to the information received. It was suggested that officers raise the issue in the Asian media, for example on the radio with a translator, to explain the project more clearly. Officers agreed to take this on board. It was also suggested that a breakdown be included on the charts which showed the number of responses received from ethnic minority groups.

It was noted that Riverside Community College was to be a PFI funded school. Concern was expressed that Riverside was in special measures and also suffered falling rolls, which may be exacerbated by the opening of the City Academy and may in turn lead to its closure. If this were to be the case, under the terms of a PFI the City Council would have to continue repaying the loan for the lifetime of the contract. In response, it was stated that even if the premises were not used as a school they could be used for community or other use.

The opinion was expressed that, although not part of the BSF programme, the standard of Primary education was a contributing factor to the success of pupils in secondary schools and so a consistent strategy covering primary and secondary was needed. In response, it was stated that while not part of BSF, the importance of primary education was acknowledged and the last meeting had considered the development of a new primary strategy.

Members asked that they be given the opportunity to consider the full BSF report before it was discussed by the Cabinet, and it was agreed that possible dates for a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be investigated. It was noted that there would be a detailed presentation to the BSF Project Board on 22 February to which the Chair and Spokespersons would be invited. It was queried why special schools had not been included. In response it was stated that the inclusion of special schools was still being considered with money held in reserve if it was agreed to include them.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Chair and Spokespersons be requested to consider calling a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee if appropriate to consider the full BSF report before its consideration by Cabinet on 7 March;

- 2) That Cabinet be recommended to proceed with caution, and that the Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of progress.