



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

In Attendance

Gary Garner and Dave Mitchell – UNISON

73. SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE

The Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning submitted a report which updated the Committee on the pupil attendance levels for the 2003/04 academic year, outlined the strategies being adopted to address the position, and gave consideration to the new powers available to address unauthorised absence. Members were reminded that this matter had been discussed as urgent business at a previous meeting (minute 52, 16 December 2004 refers), but that no details had been available at the time.

It was noted that the Anti-Social Behaviour Act had introduced the new powers to fine parents whose children were persistently absent from school without authority. The Committee were informed that if the Authority did not respond by drawing up a Code of Conduct, the Secretary of State could direct them to

do so.

The Committee was advised that the fines would be used as a last resort as there was a range of intervention strategies which could be used in the first instance. It was noted that the Education Welfare Service provided help and support in cases of non-attendance, and that officers were working closely with Police to remove truants.

It was suggested that statistics from authorities that were already using penalty notices in this way be produced to see if they had been successful in reducing truancy. However it was reiterated that this was a new power therefore there was as yet no clear data to analyse.

Attention was drawn to the statement within the report that said 'No parent will receive more than one Penalty Notice...' and it was asked why this had been written into the draft Code. In response, Members were informed that if the child continued to truant after a Penalty Notice had been issued, the matter would be brought before the Magistrates Court.

It was suggested that the Chair and Spokespersons should look at the Code of Conduct in greater detail to see how it could be made more robust and bring the matter back to the Scrutiny Committee. It was felt that it was important for this to happen before consideration of the matter by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the introduction of Penalty Notices be supported in principle;
- 2) That the Chair and Spokespersons be requested look in detail at the Code of Conduct to make it more robust;
- 3) That Cabinet be requested to defer consideration of the report until recommendations from the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee have been received.