



Leicester
City Council

MINUTE EXTRACT

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

Held: MONDAY, 23 JANUARY 2006 at 6.00pm

Adjourned Monday 23 January 2006 at 7.55 pm
Reconvened Monday 23 January 2006 at 8.00pm
Adjourned Monday 23 January 2006 at 8.49pm

Reconvened Tuesday 31 January 2006 at 5.30pm
Adjourned Tuesday 31 January 2006 at 8.00pm
Reconvened Tuesday 31 January 2006 at 8.07 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Johnson - Chair
Councillor Karim - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Waddington – Labour Spokesperson

Councillor Beck	Councillor O'Brien
Councillor Clair	Councillor Sood
Councillor Fitch	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Vincent
Councillor Kitterick	Councillor Willmott

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr Edward Hayes - Roman Catholic Diocese

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Mr Chino Cabon - Leicester Racial Equality Council
Mr Resham Singh Sandhu Leicester Council of Faiths
Ms Jane Rolfe - Primary Sector
Mr Peter Flack - Secondary Sector
Mr Adam Suddaby - Incorporated Colleges

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44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr Fitch	Leicester Adult Education College	LEA
Cllr Kitterick	Hazel Primary	LEA
	Leicester Adult Education College	LEA
Cllr Sood	Spinney Hills Primary School	LEA
Mr. A. Suddaby	Leicester Adult Education College	Co-opted
	Ellesmere College	Co-opted
Cllr Thompson	Sandfield Close Primary	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 items:

Draft Revenue Strategy for the Education & Lifelong Learning Minute no. 48 refers

Councillor Sood declared a non prejudicial in the items on the agenda as her soon worked as a teacher in City Schools.

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

The interim Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which gave details of the draft revenue strategy for the Education and Lifelong Learning Department. The report gave a summary of the budget of the department under the main headings and the proposed reductions and growth bids. A pro-forma giving detail of the objective and predicted effect was given for each reduction and growth proposal.

It was stated that the Cabinet lead Member had requested the views of the Scrutiny Committee on the draft strategy which could then be taken into account when Cabinet finalised its revenue strategy proposals for Council. However it stated that the growth and reduction proposals had been framed around the need to meet the Council's corporate savings target and the need to bring the Lifelong Learning and Community Development Service budget back to its base provision. As a result, where savings were considered to be unacceptable unless other funding could be identified, they would have to be replaced by other savings.

It stated that many of the savings proposals put forward would have a significant impact on front line service. Attempts had been made to limit this but savings in previous years had reduced the scope for 'back office' cuts and support services were the subject of a separate, corporate Support Services Review which had its own savings targets. Furthermore, it was stated that part of the departments' budget was ring fenced to schools, and support for schools by the Government and could not be cut and that cuts to Standards Fund expenditure was not recommended as this would result in the loss of grant

income.

Members expressed concern at the lack of sufficient information in some of the pro-formae and suggested that additional information was required before a decision could be reached. Further information was distributed to Members during the adjournment between 23 and 31 January.

Members expressed concern that if accepted proposals proved inadequate to meet the reductions required reserve proposals would be inserted late in the process and asked to see the reserve proposals. In response it was stated that in each area where it was possible to make a statement it would be done. Concern was also expressed in relation to the reduction 'Further proposals to be identified - £150,000' on which no information had been given.

Members suggested that in future more information be given of on-going costs. In response it was stated that this need was accepted but that a shortage of staffing had meant that so far it had not been possible to allocate the resources to compile the information.

The Chair invited comments from the Committee on each proposal in turn.

G22 Early Years Service – Service Conditions

It was stated that Government regulations required that all staff working with early years children must be appropriately qualified. Members suggested that the pro-forma did not fully reflect this.

R1 Community Buildings – Rationalise Provision

It was noted that as yet there were currently no specific buildings identified for rationalisation, but that the Authority were currently looking at a range of buildings, including assessing their condition and suitability.

Members expressed dissatisfaction that after the adjournment there was insufficient specific information on the impact of the rationalisation on buildings and which buildings this involved.

Members queried that the assertion that staff cuts were not expected following this saving and suggested that some posts could be lost. Assurances were sought that no buildings would be closed and that the savings put forward were fully achievable and tested. In response it was stated that a range of options had been put forward with indicative costings which were currently being checked.

R6b – Youth Work - Re-focus Youth Work to Remove Anomalies /

It was suggested that youth work in schools worked effectively in some settings and queried why a decision had been made to cease all schools based provision. It was suggested that the facility continue to be made available to all schools. Concern was expressed that insufficient evidence had been given for the proposed changes to the provision of this service.

R7 & 8 - Early Years – Out of Schools Grants / Creche Facilities to

Support Adult Learning

Concern was expressed that adult learners on low incomes would not be able to engage in learning and that it might prove difficult for them to access Learning and Skills Council grants. It was suggested that these issues had been raised some time ago yet there was still no evidence from the Learning and Skills Council that learner support funding would definitely be available. Members expressed serious concern about the lack of assurance received from the Learning and Skills Council and suggested that it was necessary as funding may run out and the complexity of the process may mean that few learners apply for or receive it. It was suggested that an advisory leaflet would be needed and a presentation given to Councillors on how this money and Child Tax Credits could be accessed. It was suggested that if necessary the approach could be progressed via a 'pilot' scheme. Concern was also expressed that the reduction affected some of the most deprived areas of the City and that head teachers had not been properly consulted on changes to Out of School grants. It was noted that consultation would follow this initial proposal.

In response it was stated that any grant from the Learning and Skills Council must be accessed against their terms and conditions. A letter confirming the availability of grant funding would be sought from the Learning and Skills Council. In relation to crèches it was stated that use varied considerably and rationalisation of the use of this resource was needed.

R18 – R23 Lifelong Learning

Members enquired about the self –service model. In response it was stated that it was an attempt to assist in the co-use of buildings and would follow a model of use developed elsewhere.

Concern was expressed about possible staff cuts. It was suggested that it may be possible where hours were to be reduced to set them at a mid point between that proposed and currently operated.

Members suggested that even with the increased detail provided after the adjournment there was not enough information of the impact of the reduction in hours on usage.

In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 7b Gary Garner (UNISON) was invited to address the Committee.

Mr Garner stated that trade unions members had suggested to him that the self –service model would not work and expressed concern that the process set down in legislation for consulting affected staff was not being followed.

R18 – Humberston / Netherhall - Amalgamate

It was suggested that the self –service model would be inoperable and the machines very costly and that Netherhall Library was used by local schools and that the computers were used for story telling.

R20 – Thurnby Lodge – Self Service Model

More information was requested in relation to the opening hours and whether the library would be open at the same hours as the Community Centre. In response it was stated that usage patterns would be looked at.

R 21 Fosse Neighbourhood Centre

Concern was expressed at the reduction in hours.

In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 7b Gary Garner (UNISON) was invited to address the Committee.

Mr Garner stated that concerns had been expressed in relation to the effect this reduction would have on Regeneration and Culture staff which was the subject of separate cuts. He also stated that he felt the consultation process had been inappropriate and suggested that cuts in the number of premises would lead to a reduction in premises staff which he stated had not been highlighted. He stated that 57.5 posts had been highlighted in Regeneration & Culture as cuts but there were also 200-300 priority redeployments in Regeneration & Culture and suggested that the exercise was just about setting a low Council tax rise.

In response it was stated that it had been attempted to concentrate hours to maximise efficiency.

R 22 – Southfields Reduced Hours

Concern was expressed that the reduction may increase usage in what was one of the most deprived areas of the City with the poorest results at Key Stage 2 in the City. In the light of this it was suggested that the Council had a duty to sustain provision at Southfields even if it was at a higher cost.

In accordance with Scrutiny Procedure Rule 7b Gary Garner (UNISON) was invited to address the Committee.

Mr Price suggested that the cut to Southfields hours would have a serious impact on the community. He also suggested that Southfields had been designed as an integrated lifelong learning facility and that there was funding available through Sure Start to re-instate this.

R23 – Early Years – Service Rationalisation

Concern was expressed about the possible impact on the quality of provision and it was suggested that it was intended to reduce the number of settings. In response it was stated that there was no intention to reduce the number of settings.

R24 & 25 – Policy & Resources

It was suggested that these cuts were not appropriate if the result would be to expect managers to spend more time on administrative tasks.

R26 – Schools Crossing Patrols

Serious concern was expressed that children would be put at risk and that due to the small number of hours worked and the age of staff involved very few would opt for re-deployment.

Members unanimously requested that this cut be removed. However if imposed it was felt that the impact needed to be closely monitored.

R2 & R4 – Voluntary Sector and Junior Youth Officer funded from grant

Concern was expressed about the increase in costs to the voluntary sector that would have to 'buy in' services and whether the voluntary sector had been consulted. In response it was stated that there had been no consultation yet, since this was at the proposal stage, and that it was intended to work with the voluntary sector to apply for the necessary funding from other sources, to improve their sustainability.

R27 – End Library Subsidy for Education Library Service

Serious concern was expressed that the effect of this may be that the County Council decided to charge City primary schools for the service and they may not be able to afford it. It was suggested that this cut had been looked at in previous years and rejected due to concerns expressed. For this reason it was requested that Cabinet be made fully clear of its potential impact.

In response it was stated that discussions had taken place by Members with the County Council and the issue was under review.

R29 – Amalgamate Specialist Librarian Posts

Concern was expressed that more support need to be given to minority communities and not less.

R31 – Non Routine transport – Tighten Control

R40 – Remove all Post 16 Travel Entitlement

Concern was expressed at the effect on the most vulnerable students and whether the proposed changes met the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. It was suggested that these savings would be difficult to meet in the light of the failure to meet savings targets under the transport review. It was suggested that R40 be amended to ensure only those in receipt of Mobility Allowance were affected.

In response it was stated that in relation to R31 the journeys were for non-curricular purposes and R40 that the majority of passengers under this proposal received mobility allowance.

R33 – Cut Overseas Relationships Programme Contribution

Members noted that this reduction amounted to the entire budget for this work and requested that this cut be removed.

R35 – Exclusions Hearing Support

It was suggested that this would have a negative impact on exclusions as it was suggested that the officers involved gave frequent support to avoid exclusion and that the team was currently very stretched. In response it was stated that the posts did not work directly with pupils at risk of exclusion.

R36 – Policy / Performance Advice to Members

It was suggested that this cut would severely impact on the Department's ability to meet its requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act at a time when the requirements were increasing.

R45 – Secondary Review Transport

Concern was expressed that the changes would have the effect of reducing attendance when attendance was already low.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the comments made in the consideration of the proposals be passed to Cabinet;
- (2) that the Committee requested that its dissatisfaction at the level of information provided be noted and that further information where requested be provided as soon as possible; and
- (3) that the Committee expresses its dissatisfaction to Cabinet with the proposed revenue strategy on the basis of the information received.