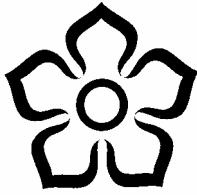


**MINUTE
EXTRACT**



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2005 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

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

Councillor Almey	Councillor O'Brien
Councillor Clair	Councillor Panchbaya
Councillor Corrall (for Cllr Willmott)	Councillor Sood
Councillor Fitch	Councillor Thompson
Councillor Henry (for Cllr Beck)	Councillor A. Vincent
Councillor Garrity (for Cllr Hunt)	Councillor Wann (for Cllr

Kitterick)

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Ms Madeline Dodd - Parent Governor (Secondary School)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Mr Chino Cabon	- Leicester Racial Equality Council
Mr Peter Flack	- Secondary Sector
Professor Benyon	- De Montfort University/University of Leicester
Mr Adam Suddaby	- Incorporated Colleges
Mrs Paula Peers	- City of Leicester Governors Association

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6. 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.

Ms Madeline Dodd	English Martyrs Catholic School	Co-opted
Cllr Fitch	Leicester Adult Education College	LEA
Cllr Panchbaya	Spinney Hills Primary School	LEA
Mrs Paula Peers	Babington Community Technology College	LEA
Cllr Sood	Spinney Hills Primary School	LEA
	Leicester College	LEA
Mr. A. Suddaby	Leicester Adult Education College	Co-opted
	Ellesmere College	Co-opted
Cllr Thompson	Sandfield Close Primary	LEA
	Northfield House Primary	LEA

Councillor Waddington declared a personal interest in Appendix A and prejudicial interest in item Appendix B as her son worked for an hour a week at an institution paid for by the Council. Councillor Waddington undertook to leave the meeting for the discussion on Appendix B.

Councillor Corrall declared a personal interest in both reports as members of his family were a sports coach and a teacher.

Councillor Sood declared a non-prejudicial interest in the items on the agenda as her son taught in City schools and as a Director of a community group.

9. LIFELONG LEARNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - BALANCING THE BUDGET

The Deputy Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer submitted a joint report making recommendations for balancing the budget of the Education and Lifelong Learning Department in 2005/06 and recommending a strategy for balancing the budget in later years.

The Chief Finance Officer in his introduction to the report noted that the proposals sought to strike a balance between minimising the effect on service provision and avoiding future budget problems. He also went in to considerable detail about the consultation and noted that many of the issues raised as part of the consultation had been addressed with the latest set of proposals.

Members of the Committee raised a number of concerns about the use of the money originally aimed for use in raising Key Stage 2 standards. There was a particular feeling that primary education shouldn't suffer due to mismanagement that had occurred elsewhere in the department. It was also noted that the primary headroom funding in future years had been allocated to support the Islamic and City Academies and this would further affect primary education. It was strongly felt that primary education was important and that the proposed earmarked money would strongly benefit this area. The Chief Finance Officer in reply made a number of points. He stated that the usual budgetary procedures required departmental budgets not to overspend and any change to this was a matter for Cabinet. He noted that £800,000 had been identified in the schools' block budget that could assist in replacing this money. He also noted that the capital funding previously frozen could now be approved for expenditure at primary schools. The Deputy Chief Executive further commented that since the £1.1 million revenue funding had been frozen since April, it was now unlikely that the whole of it would be spent in the remainder of the financial year. The replacement funding, if available, would mean that work could still commence this year and continue into 2006/07.

Members of the Committee raised concerns about consistency of funding for crèches. It was felt this should be considered further with a report detailing the levels of charging across the city. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that a further feasibility report would be undertaken on where the effect of cost increases fell.

The issue of loss of funding for fitness instructors was raised. It was felt wrong at this time to remove such funding in view of obesity problems and the desire in communities for more sports funding and services. The Chief Finance Officer stated that it was likely that funding for these posts would have ended anyway in due course as fitness was low on the Learning and Skills Council's funding priorities.

Concerns were expressed about the consultation that had taken place on these balancing the budget proposals. It was felt that the number of responses was low in view of the number of letters sent out. It was also felt that no proper arrangements had been set up to consult school staff and lifelong learning staff. It was also stated that the meeting, as detailed in the report, held with Voluntary Action Leicester, Leicester Centre for Integrated Living and Leicester Racial Equality Council should not be regarded as consultation. This meeting was to have concerns addressed. Concerns were also expressed that Council did not receive a petition that was gathered due to concerns about data protection. The Chief Finance Officer commented that a full copy of the consultation responses were included in the Members' library and would be summarised for the final Cabinet report.

Members of the Committee made further comments about the fact that the

people who would suffer from the proposals were not those who created the problems in the first place and this was felt to be wrong. It was therefore moved by Councillor Garrity that 'to cover the £2.3million as identified in the report, the money should be taken out of general reserves and that Cabinet listens to the points made by the Committee and agrees to make no cuts to primary schools, crèches or adult services'. Councillor Fitch seconded this motion. Councillor Garrity by way of further explanation explained that it was fairer to ensure the burden is shared by as wide a number of people as possible and the fairest way to do this was to use reserves. She felt that this was an emergency and therefore justified.

A member of the Committee raised a point of clarification. The Committee had recommended on the previous report that no cuts be made to frontline services, therefore reserves could be used simply to support frontline services affected by the proposals.

The Chief Finance Officer commented with regard to using the reserves. He stated that he would have to advise the Cabinet on the high risk of using them. He stated that the Council had a comparatively low level of reserves. There were further financial risks to be faced in the future that would mean he would be likely to recommend that reserves be increased in future budgets.

The Chair then moved a further motion as follows, 'that the Committee opposes cuts to frontline services and requests that Cabinet takes a further look at cuts to these areas and if necessary uses the general reserves to ensure the services are maintained'. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:

that the Committee opposes cuts to frontline services and requests that Cabinet takes a further look at cuts to these areas and if necessary uses the general reserves to ensure the services are maintained.