

SELECT COMMITTEE ON LIFELONG LEARNING

Thursday, 10th November, 2005 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2
at the Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Mrs Ridney (Chairman)
Councillors Boys, Mrs Coulter, Donegan, Hart, Johnston, Mrs Pearce,
Rahman, Ryder, Taylor and Wright; Mr Smith; Mrs Hewitt-Clarkson and
Mrs Roe; Mr Guest; and Mr Nottingham

OFFICERS

The Director of Finance (Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant
Directors of Children's Services (Resources and Planning) (Libraries) and
(Community Education), The Exclusion Officer, Directorate of Children's
Services and Mr Sanders (Directorate of Law and Property)

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th
October, 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code
of Conduct, was made by Councillor Mrs Coulter in respect of Agenda
Item Number 8 (Management Arrangements for the Pupil Referral Units)
in view of her chairmanship of the Management Committee for Pupil
Referral Units.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of
Councillors Mrs Dunn and Rogers; Mrs Capell, Mr Hatton and Mrs
Simms.

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SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillors Donegan and Taylor were serving in
place of Councillors Mrs Dunn and Rogers, for this meeting only.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED

That, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c), Agenda Item number 7 (Update on Remodelling of the School Workforce) be considered as the next item of business.

UPDATE ON REMODELLING OF THE SCHOOL WORKFORCE

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted giving an update on progress on the remodelling of the school workforce.

The initiative had arisen from a national agreement signed by the government, employers and school workforce representatives aimed at raising standards in schools by tackling workload and freeing teachers to focus on teaching and learning. The Government had left Local Authorities to implement their own individual schemes.

The report now submitted set out progress on the Dudley scheme, phase 1 of which had been adopted by 103 out of 112 schools and had been implemented. In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Resources and Planning) confirmed that, although the local agreement had been implemented successfully with the majority of the school workforce, the joint agreement with nursery nurses remained outstanding and the issue had been referred to ACAS by UNISON and the Local Authority for arbitration. As a result of this, the review of phase 1, agreed initially to be conducted in October 2005, had been deferred until December 2005, subject to the position with UNISON and ACAS being resolved.

In relation to phase 2, planning had commenced in June 2005 when several template job descriptions had been drawn up for consideration by Union representative consultative groups and the wider school workforce. Planning and implementation of this phase had therefore been deferred and was now scheduled to be implemented from January 2006, subject to the results of the ACAS consideration on phase 1. Changes had been made following initial consultations and Head teacher consultations had already taken place during September 2005. Revised documentation was due to be forwarded to schools very shortly. In concluding that significant progress had been made but that difficulties remained, the Assistant Director indicated that similar difficulties with nursery nurses pertained in other local authorities as well as Dudley.

In the discussion on the report, the teacher representatives for the primary and secondary sectors reported, respectively, a different reception to the implementation of phase 1 from teachers in those sectors. The teacher representative from the primary sector indicated that, while the 10% non-contact time appeared to be working satisfactorily, the overall feeling was that nothing else had improved significantly. She accepted that this might be due to the uncertainty which had arisen from the primary school review. She reported a feeling amongst primary teachers that many classes were becoming a job share and that this was affecting stability. The teacher representative from the secondary sector reported positive feedback from teachers in that sector, stating that cover supervision had been happily accepted and was seen as an advantage.

Reference was also made in the discussion to the effects of remodelling on supply teaching and it was confirmed by the Assistant Director that the amount of this had reduced since implementation. Other comments made included a concern regarding budget arrangements in the light of the delay caused by the referral to arbitration and a request for members to receive more details about the non-teaching workforce. In response, the Assistant Director indicated that such details would be included in a report to be made to a future meeting on phase 2.

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

FULL SERVICE EXTENDED SCHOOLS UPDATE

An oral report on progress on the Extended Schools initiative, in so far as it related to Dudley, was given by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Community Education Division).

The Government's target was that all schools in the country would be extended schools by 2010, with the target being reached in three phases.

The Assistant Director reported on the arrangements being made to commence the introductory work, which involved the development of a team within the Directorate of Children's Services, which would work with the various agencies and partners concerned in order to achieve change by the target date. The range of agencies and partners was diverse and included police, health, social care, school health, community nurses and the voluntary sector, as well as others.

The Assistant Director reported on the methodology for preparing for the initiative, which included the establishment of a development team within the Directorate of Children's Services to undertake the planning work. Support groups with regard to resources, implementation, strategy and links with children's centres were also to be set up. Area township meetings with other agencies were proposed, together with different means of sharing good practice, including a good practice day, establishment of workshops and the production of a newsletter. Work was still at a very early stage.

In the discussion on the presentation, the Assistant Director clarified the definition of extended schools and the type of provision that would be made.

RESOLVED

That the presentation be received and that further updates on this issue be submitted to the Committee in due course.

JOINT AREA REVIEW PROCESS AND PREPARATION

An oral report on this issue was given by the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Libraries).

The joint area review is the new inspection regime created under the Children Act, 2004, and will cover all services for children, not just those provided by the Council, although the Council is expected to take the lead in preparation for the Joint Area Review. The review will take place in March 2006 and will be undertaken in conjunction with the Corporate Assessment. At the same time, the review would inspect the Youth Offending Team and the Youth Service.

The Assistant Director identified the various key aspects of the review. In this regard, he reported that, as first step, the Council's self-assessment was being carried out and that arrangements were in hand for surveys of focus groups to be carried out. These would include pupils of different ages and data obtained would be analysed.

Case tracking for vulnerable children, and two weeks field work on site, would commence in March. An in depth inspection would be carried out into one area of the Borough in which discussions would be held with children, parents, carers and other interested parties. A detailed report and presentation would be made to a later meeting of the Committee.

In the discussion that ensued, the manner in which the area or areas to receive close scrutiny would be selected was clarified. The value of investigating issues arising from elements of self-assessment and to feed them into service management was acknowledged.

The Lead Officer then emphasised the importance of the scrutiny role the Committee would have in the lead up and follow through of the inspection and of the need for the Committee to shape an agenda to assist the process.

RESOLVED

That the oral report now given be received and the advice of the Lead Officer noted.

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MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted updating the Committee on the existing and planned arrangements for the management of Pupil Referral Units.

The report summarised the legal background and governor arrangements for Pupil Referral Units, together with other issues, including practices regarding admissions, staffing, curriculum, assessment and reporting, premises, discipline and inspection. Dudley currently ran four Pupil Referral Units, these being three "behaviour" units and the Home and Hospital service, each of which had evolved in isolation. In order to improve co-ordination and with the overall aim of reducing permanent exclusions in schools, the Joint Management Committee had been established in 2004, arising from the Inclusion Strategy.

In referring to the current figures regarding the permanent exclusion of pupils, the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Access and Inclusion) confirmed that there had been a reduction in numbers of permanently excluded pupils in key stages 2 and 3 since the introduction of the new governance arrangements and reported that consideration was being given to how similar preventative measures could be introduced for key stage 4 pupils. Reference in this regard was also be made to the development of the Parents' Centre, which was assisting in the field of anger management.

In the discussion, reference was made to methodology for the appointment of staff, regarding which it was explained that staff were appointed by the Directorate of Children's Services with an involvement from the Joint Management Committee. A request for clarification on the composition of the Joint Management Committee was made, in response to which the Assistant Director of Children's Services (Community Education) agreed to circulate the terms of reference, constitution and composition of the Committee to members.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2004/05

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the number of permanent exclusions in Dudley in the academic year 2004/05 and the reasons therefor.

Over the last four years, permanent exclusions had increased from 35 in 2001 to 91 in 2003/04. During the academic year 2004/05, however, the rate of increase had slowed down significantly to a figure of 92 and it was currently projected that the figure for 2005/06 would reduce to around 70.

The Lead Officer emphasised that permanent exclusions would be seen as a priority for attention under the Council's performance management arrangements and was to receive close attention under the Joint Area Review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In this regard, he emphasised the importance of the Committee's scrutiny role with a view to achieving targeted reductions in the number of permanently excluded pupils. The Assistant Director of Children's Services (Access and Inclusion) referred to the monitoring role carried out by the Department for Education and Skills regarding permanent exclusions, the data on which the Directorate of Children's Services contributed to regularly.

In the discussion, the Exclusion Protocol agreed with schools was referred to and it was acknowledged that this would be an area that would be looked at under the joint area review. Regarding the issue of prevention of exclusions, particularly in the field of looked after children and children with statements of special education need, the impact of early intervention by the Exclusions Officer was recognised. In addition, a Behaviour and Attendance Consultant for pupils at Key Stage 3 had been appointed and it was considered that this would impact on reducing permanent exclusions. Another initiative comprised parenting contracts.

Regarding fixed term exclusions, reference was made to the adverse implications for "Every Child Matters" in respect of safety by suspending pupils and leaving them to their own devices. In response to a question on financial resourcing, the Assistant Director expressed the belief that Dudley received less funding than its statistical and geographical neighbours but that an effective job was being performed.

The Assistant Director confirmed the policy of the Local Authority to mitigate permanent exclusions as far as possible and to intervene to block permanent exclusions if it possibly could. Permanent exclusions were effected only in cases of totally unacceptable behaviour. Councillor Hart wished it to be placed on record that she did not support this policy.

On consideration of the table in paragraph 7 of the report now submitted, attention was drawn to the disproportionate number of pupils of mixed race who were permanently excluded and a request was made that this issue be researched.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received and noted.
 - (2) That comparator figures on permanent exclusions with statistical and geographical neighbouring authorities be provided to a future meeting.
 - (3) That the terms of reference of the Behaviour and Attendance Consultant be issued to the Committee.
 - (4) That it be noted that the Director of Children's Services will submit an in depth report on permanent exclusions giving details in respect of the elements regarding permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions to the meeting of the Committee in March 2006.
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APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Lead Officer was submitted on the appointment of Working Groups for the remainder of the current municipal year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That a Planning and Developing Childrens Services Working Group and a Reviewing Select Committee Terms of Reference Working Group be appointed for the remainder of the current municipal year; that the respective terms of reference and outline work plans for the working groups be approved as set out in paragraph 5 of the report now submitted; and that the membership of the respective working groups be approved as set out in paragraph 6 of the report now submitted.
 - (2) That a special meeting of the Committee be arranged to be held on a date following the Special Meeting of the Cabinet on 17th November, 2005.
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QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted seeking consideration of the performance of the Council in relation to the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee for the first quarter of 2005/06.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the report be received.

- (2) That it be recognised that the Committee may have to scrutinise in more detail performance indicators DV043A and DELL A&I 027.
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44 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act, in particular that paragraph of Part 1 of that Schedule indicated below:-

<u>Description of Item</u>	<u>Relevant Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A</u>
Adult Learning Inspection – Quality Voluntary Inspection	11

45 ADULT LEARNING INSPECTION - QUALITY VOLUNTARY INSPECTION

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted indicating the outcome of the Adult Learning Inspection, which had taken place on 29th July, 2005.

RESOLVED

That the policy update of the inspection report be noted and that the staff involved be thanked and congratulated for all their hard work to date.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

CHAIRMAN