

Time commenced – 6.00pm
Time finished – 8.10pm

EDUCATION COMMISSION 17 JANUARY 2005

Present: Councillor MacDonald (in the Chair)
Councillors Dhamrait, Latham, Liversedge,
Marshall, Winter and Wynn

Co-opted Members: Mr T Johnston, Dr K Devendra (Parent
Governor), Mr J Honey (Roman Catholic
Diocese), Mr D Edwards (Church of England
Diocese)

Also in Attendance Mr K Cullen (NASUWT), Councillors L Allen and
E Berry

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Khan, Ms N Iqbal
(Parent Governor) and Mr D Wilkinson (NASUWT)

Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

Declarations of Interest

Name	Type of interest	Reason
Councillor MacDonald	Personal	Governor – Lees Brook Community Sports College
	Personal	Member of National Union of Teachers
	Personal Prejudicial	Item 5 – Revenue Budget 2005/06 – 2007/08 item relating to teachers' pensions as Councillor MacDonald was in receipt of a teachers' pension

Councillor Dhamrait	Personal	Governor – Sinfin Primary School Governor – Dale Primary School
Mr T Johnston	Personal	Vice Chair Governor – Murray Park School Chair Governor – St. Clare's School
Councillor Winter	Personal	Governor – Mickleover Primary School
Councillor Wynn	Personal	Chair Governor – Beckett School Chair Governor – Bemrose School Wife a teacher employed by the LEA Governor – Nightingale Junior School Son employed by Woodlands School.
Mr D Edwards	Personal	Chair of Governors – St James' Infants Vice Chair Governor – St James' Junior Schools

31/04 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Education Commission held on 29 November 2004, were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Items for Discussion

32/04 Revenue Budget 2005/06 – 2007/08

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services. The Council's draft Revenue Budget was issued to Overview and Scrutiny Commission members at a briefing on 11 January 2005. All the Commissions were given an opportunity for detailed consideration of the draft revenue budget at their business meetings, during January 2005. The Commissions had been told that decisions had not yet been taken about the ways in which a sum, totalling £700,000, would be allocated for spending on public priorities. It was suggested that where appropriate, that each of the Commissions made recommendations on proposals contained in the draft budget which fell within the remit of the Commission. Commissions were also asked to make recommendations on what they considered to be the best ways of using the unallocated public priority spending.

The Performance Eye performance monitoring facility gives the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions the means of monitoring the effects and outcomes of the funding for Council services, agreed through the budget process. It was suggested that each Commission could identify particular service areas within its remit and could, at subsequent meetings, use Performance Eye to track progress and to examine the effects on performance of the budget allocation within those areas. A summary of the information from the draft Revenue Budget, which related to the Education Commission was set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Councillor Wynn referred to the disparity between the increases in the central Schools Budget and the LEA budget and the increase for schools. Councillor Allen reported that the authority was a lean authority, with below average central budgets. He said it was trying to cope with a lack of economy of scale. Derby had high rates of exclusions and problems with the pupil referral unit – PRU - which caused tremendous pressures and did not have the capacity to meet all the challenges of the future. Councillor Wynn suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the size of the LEA budget and bring it up to the average for Local Authorities. Councillor Latham was not in favour of increasing the establishment.

A Commission Member asked what the catering factors were. It was reported that these were part of the formula funding consultation and it was explained that as the take up of free meals had decreased and paid meals had increased, this had led to less funding. Councillor Winter asked if there were strategies to reduce the high levels of exclusions and tackle behaviour support. Councillor Latham asked about staffing at the PRU and funding from the Learning and Skills Council – LSC. It was reported that work was continuing with pupils who were at risk of exclusion, to try and tackle pupils' difficulties before they were excluded and the budget proposals addressed this. Councillor Allen reported that strategies were in place and that exclusions had decreased over the last three months.

Councillor Wynn proposed that Local Education Authority – LEA - funding be increased to the same rate as the schools funding increase of 6.5%. Councillor Latham suggested that the Commission accept the Cabinet's draft budget and that schools continue to be consulted throughout the year. It was noted that consultation which had taken place related to the schools formula funding. Councillor Wynn referred to the efficiency savings of 2.5% and felt that this was not realistic. It was noted that in the proposals, there would be £918,000 efficiency savings in 2005-06 which was above the £550,000 required to achieve the 2.5%. Councillor Wynn proposed that the efficiency savings for 2005/06 should be limited to the £550,000 that the Council was required to achieve. This proposal was agreed after a vote.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the report.**
- 2. To recommend to Council Cabinet to limit the efficiency savings to £550,000 in 2005/06.**

33/04 Education Capital Funding 2005/06 – 2007/08

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Education, which stated that the DfES had announced capital allocations for the next three years at national and individual authority levels. Derby City Council's allocation for 2005/06 had fallen by £1.4 million to £9.4 million for 2005/06. Appendix 2 to the report set out a full break down of the capital funding allocations. It was also reported that the Council had not been included in the next two waves of Building Schools for the Future programme to rebuild secondary schools. Councillor Latham was disappointed that the Council had not been included in the first two waves of Building Schools for the Future. She referred to the school place planning topic review which had not yet been considered by Council Cabinet and felt that this report would delay that further. She was concerned that the report would be out of date by the time Council Cabinet considered it. The Director of Education reported that draft guidance would be produced by the DfES which would change the situation significantly. The Council had received a pre-consultation draft and had commented upon it. Councillor Latham suggested that in relation to the primary review, the optimum size of schools could be considered by Council Cabinet even if the rest of the recommendations had to wait.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the Education Capital funding 2005/06 – 2007/08 to be reported to Council Cabinet shortly.**
- 2. To request a report to the next meeting of the Commission on the elements of the School Place Planning topic review, which could be considered by Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.**

34/04 Scoping Report for the Education Commission's Proposed 2005 Work Plan Topic Review of the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

The Commission considered a report from the Chair of the Education Commission, which set out a scoping report for a possible topic review for 2004/05 on the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners. The Commission were concerned about the possible work load for Members in relation to the new liquor licensing procedures and felt that at this time they could not commit to such a large topic review.

Resolved to recommend the next Education Commission to consider the DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners as a possible topic for review.

35/04 14 – 19 Post Inspection Action Plan

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Education which set out a report which would be considered by Council Cabinet at its meeting on 18 January 2005. The Commission were concerned that the proposals for the Joseph Wright College may weaken the viability of existing schools. Councillor Wynn stated that he was in favour of widening vocational training but was concerned about the effect it may have on schools. The Director of Education reported that the aim was to improve provision for pupils. There may be difficulties where sixth forms were on the margin of viability. The 14-19 strategy aimed to protect, preserve and develop viable networks which improved pupil opportunities and achievement and new provision should not prejudice this. There needed to be an appropriate range and balance of vocational and academic provision. Tom Johnston asked about the recruitment strategy in place between Rolls Royce and St Benedict School and he felt that other schools had similar links. It was reported that the strategy at St Benedict was a pilot and if successful could then be rolled out to other schools who were interested.

Resolved to reconsider the 14 – 19 Post Inspection Action Plan in six months.

36/04 Home to School Transport

Councillor Allen reported that the Home to School Transport Cross-Party Working Group were working on a new policy. There were problems such as personal safety which needed to be considered. Currently only road safety was taken into account. The cross-party working group were looking at related issues, such as, where the route of foot paths may need improvements by, for example, lighting or shrubbery being cut back.

Information being given to parents may need to be revised to remind them that it was their responsibility to get children to school.

Other difficulties included the new licensing arrangements, which would reduce the number of Members available to sit on Transport Appeals Panels. It was suggested that for the first few months of operation, a legal expert may be required at meetings and Panel Members would need to be trained. Clear and firm guidance was required on the way appeals were to be heard. The mechanics of how all this would be delivered needed to be considered. The proposals would come to the Commission for consideration before being submitted to Council Cabinet.

Councillor Wynn referred to the quality of paper work supplied for the appeals and said it was not always complete or sufficient to remove doubt. Members then tended to err on the side of over provision. The proposed policy changes should reduce the number of appeals being submitted. A further suggestion put forward was that for special needs applicants, their ability to get to and from school could be considered as part of the SEN review each year by officers. It was suggested that attendance of pupils should be included and as a checklist of information which was required could be drawn up.

Resolved to note the report.

37/04 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

As the Commission had considered the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for December 2004 at its last meeting and as the Forward Plan for January 2005 was not yet available, this item was therefore not considered.

MINUTES END