

ITEM 4

Time commenced – 6.00pm

Time finished – 7.55pm

EDUCATION COMMISSION

4 APRIL 2005

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

Co-opted Members: Dr K Devendra (Parent Governor),
Ms N Iqbal (Parent Governor)
Mr D Edwards (Church of England Diocese)

Also in Attendance Mr D Wilkinson (NASUWT), Councillors L Allen
Councillor Jackson

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hird, Thomas Johnston (Co-opted) and Tony Walsh (Derby REC).

Late Items Introduced by the Chair

In accordance with Section 100 (B) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to admit the following as a late item as the consultation period ended on 13 May 2005:

- Consultation on New School Funding System

Declarations of Interest

Name	Type of interest	Reason
Councillor MacDonald	Personal	Governor – Lees Brook Community Sports College
	Personal	Member of National Union of Teachers
Councillor Dhamrait	Personal	Governor – Sinfin Primary School
		Governor – Dale Primary 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 Peters, Littleover Vice Chair Governor – St James' Junior Schools
Nasreen Iqbal	Personal	Governor Hardwick Primary school
Dr Devendra	Personal	Governor Chellaston Junior School

46/04 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings on 21 February and 8 March 2005, were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendment:

21 February 2005

To include Tony Walsh's apologies.

Items for Discussion

47/04 Changes to Education Transport Policy and Procedure

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Education detailing the revised transport policy and appeals process.

Simon Longley, Assistant Director – Education, advised the Commission that the current policy and procedures were a stressful and bureaucratic system for parents. A cross party working group had reviewed the current appeal procedures and had formulated a new proposed policy.

The proposed policy addressed the key issues by replacing a meeting with the Taxi Licensing and Appeals Committee with an officer review. This type of review would provide a quick response, with consistent decisions. Procedures had been incorporated into the proposed process to allow an Assistant Director to give further consideration to an application, refused by the officer review in order to assess whether due process had been followed. Parents would have the right to use the Council's Complaints Procedure if they were dissatisfied with the officer review decision. The change in the appeals process would not remove a parent's ultimate right of complaint to the Secretary of State if they were unhappy about a school transport decision.

The cases that an Assistant Director deemed to exhibit circumstances not adequately covered by the policy could be submitted to the Taxi Licensing and Appeals Committee so that a judgement could be made where policy might be effected.

Councillor Jackson had been invited to speak to the Commission and said that the change to the Licensing Committees, which had resulted in only 3 Councillors now forming a panel, had caused difficulties. She said that each Panel could be made up of totally different Councillors who wouldn't necessarily now be the background to any of the cases.

David Edwards commented that parents found the whole system daunting. He suggested that the revised policy include Voluntary Controlled Schools. Councillor Allen responded that Voluntary Controlled Schools would be included.

Councillor MacDonald suggested that the working of the new policy should be reviewed by the Commission at some point in the future. Dave Wilkinson asked that the Commission be advised of how many cases had been brought to a member appeals panel as part of the update. Councillor Allen suggested that the Commission be given an update report in 12 months time after the policy had been in use for three school terms.

Councillor Wynn commented that it would be useful if the Assistant Director discussed cases, that were not adequately covered by the policy, with the Cabinet member, and that section 3.3 of the report should be amended to include this.

Resolved:

- 1. To recommend to Council Cabinet that they approve the revised transport policy and appeals process.**
- 2. To receive an update and review the revised policy after three school terms.**
- 3. To amend 3.3 of the report to include reference to the Assistant Director discussing cases, that were not adequately covered by the policy, with the Cabinet member.**

48/04 Every Child Matters

The Commission received a presentation on Every Child Matters from Rachel Dickinson, Assistant Director - Integrating Children's Services.

Rachel gave background information on Victoria Climbié and an explanation of the events surrounding her death. She said that the report of Lord Laming's Enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié influenced the Government's Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' which was published in September 2003. Following consultation this led to the Children Act 2004.

Rachel told the Commission that the Children Act 2004 required a shift from intervention to prevention services, and demanded a step change and a whole system reform so that services were organised around children and families. The Act encouraged local leaders to work in partnership with local communities and deliver the change for children agenda. The Act had five key outcomes, these were:

- to be healthy,
- staying safe,
- enjoying and achieving,
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic well being.

The Children Act required the five outcomes for children and young people to be delivered through children's trust working arrangements. There were four key elements of children's trust arrangements:

- Integrated front line delivery
- Integrated processes
- Integrated strategy
- Inter-agency governance.

The Integrated Strategy would have local leadership with the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member. Integrated strategy requires needs analysis and planning to be undertaken in partnership with the development of joint commissioning and budget pooling in order to improve outcomes for children. The aim of inter-agency governance was to ensure effective leadership by the local authority and the engagement of all the key partners involved. All agencies needed clear accountabilities for the delivery of services to children currently and as partnership arrangements develop.

In Derby, the Children's Strategic Partnership Executive had produced a framework and direction, which had been approved by the Council Cabinet. The delivery team had been recently established and now included the common assessment project team. Derby had made good progress in developing and rolling out the common assessment. The work to develop the children's centres in Derby was also a key element of the integration agenda.

Rachel said that what was so positive about this change was that families would not have to go to different agencies to get different aspects of help.

Dave Wilkinson said he was worried that budget pooling Social Services and Education budgets would mean Education would suffer. Councillor Khan asked if something would be put in place to ensure the Education budget would not lose out. Rachel Dickson responded that it was the role of Council Cabinet to make funding allocation decisions. Simon Longley added that the Schools budgets would be protected in any case and the Council would want to continue the attainment of children at schools.

Councillor Latham asked how long the issues with Data protection were going to carry on? Rachel responded that indications from the Government was that they would be able to release more on information sharing in December 2005. The Council would ensure that data was constantly updated, eventually databases from Social Services, Education and the Health Authorities would have to be brought together.

Resolved to note the presentation.

49/04 Education Commission Tour on 3 March 2005 and Proposals for Future Visits and External Meetings by the Education Commission

The Commission considered a report on the Education Commission tour on 3 March 2005 and on proposals for future visits and external meetings by the Commission.

Members agreed that the visits to schools had been extremely useful. Simon Longley commented that four of the schools visited had also found the visits very positive.

Councillor MacDonald asked members of the Commission to advise of any other schools in the City that would be suitable for a visit.

Nasreen Iqbal commented that it was difficult to understand how child could work and attain in the environments provided by some of the schools visited.

Councillor Dhamrait suggested that schools should be encouraged to contact their local councillors if they had any issues with their school.

Councillor MacDonald suggested that the Commission write to each school thanking them for showing members round and that they found the visits informative and useful.

The Commission asked Simon Longley to suggest a few schools for them to visit enabling them to get a picture of the worst and the best schools in the city.

Councillor MacDonald stated that the Commission would also like to visit the PFI schools sometime in May.

Resolved:

- 1. To note the report.**
- 2. To ask the Assistant Director of Education to suggest schools for the Commission to visit enabling them to get a picture of the worst and the best schools in the city.**
- 3. To arrange visits to the PFI Schools during May 2005.**

50/04 Consultation on New School Funding System

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Education and Director of Finance about the proposals for the new funding systems for Schools.

Keith Howkins, Head of Service – Finance and Contracts, advised the Commission that the DfES had issued a consultation paper on proposed changes to the funding system for schools from April 2006. The consultation would close on 13 May 2005 and the Director of Education, in consultation with the Cabinet member, would be submitting a response. The Schools Forum would also be considering the proposals.

The proposals would formalise the governments ring fencing of schools funding, through the transfer of funding for the Schools budget from the Revenue Support Grant to a ring-fenced specific grant – the Dedicated Schools Grant. The transfer would include funding for all activities currently in the Schools Budget, including centrally funded special educational needs services.

The proposals would go some way towards addressing the unpredictability of school budgets from year to year by implementing three year budgets. The proposal would also simplify funding streams. Whilst three year budgets would be welcomed in principle the LEA had significant concerns over the DfES proposal that they should make school budget allocations on an academic rather than financial year basis.

Councillor Wynn commented that if the school knows their budget allocation in March they can plan how they are going to spend the budget for the next school year. Keith commented that in summary schools would be able to work with firmer budgets.

Councillor Latham stated that she disagreed and that an academic year budget would remove the need for two sets of pupil numbers in the formula. Councillor Latham also commented that she was not sure how the LEA could have its own funding formula if budgets were ring fenced, Keith commented that the proposals will still allow the LEA to agree their own formula.

Councillor Wynn agreed with the attraction of a three year budget but was concerned that it could be a straitjacket for schools, and that the ability of the schools and the LEA to respond to changing circumstances would be limited.

Dave Wilkinson commented that a three year budget sounded good if there was low inflation. He said the budget would also have to be linked in with the annual pay award for staff. He was worried that the proposals might not work and was very cautious about them. He also commented that this was a massive issue and should not be left to the Schools Forum to decide.

Resolved:

- 1. To recommend that Council Cabinet do not support the proposals for a three year budget.**
- 2. To recommend that Council Cabinet do not support the proposals for a budget for the academic year.**

51/04 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

The Commission identified the following items on the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for consideration at a future meeting:

Ref	Decision Matter
150/03	Vision for Children's Centres
120/04	Academies
123/04	Consultation on the Redesignation of Special Schools

52/04 Responses of Council Cabinet to the Commission's Revenue Budget Recommendation

The Commission considered a report from the Director of Corporate Services giving the Council Cabinet's response to the Commission's Revenue Budget recommendation.

Resolved to note the report.

MINUTES END