

minutes



Meeting EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Tuesday, 6th December 2005 (commencing at 10.30 am)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Kevan Wakefield (Chair)
Martin Suthers (Vice Chair)

A	Steve Carroll	Peter D Prebble
	Sybil Fielding	Darrell Pulk
A	Glynn Gilfoyle	Mark Spencer
	Ellie Lodziak	A Yvonne Woodhead
	Philip Owen	Brian Wombwell

Statutory Added Members

Mr K Daly
Mr D Richards JP
Ms P Burbidge (Parent Governor)
Ms L Wooding (Parent Governor)

Non-Voting Co-optees

A	Mr L Jefferies	(Teacher Trades Unions)
	Mrs G Lane	(School Governors)
A	Mr N Lewis	(F E sector)
A	Mr A McAllister	(Ethnic Minority Communities)
	Mrs C McCreadie	(Teacher Trades Unions)
	Dr B Ramsey	(School Governors)
	Ms F Ridgwell	(Teacher Trades Unions)
A	Karen Brookes	(Head Teachers)
	David Cokeham	(Head Teachers)

Others invited to attend

Ms T Carnachan (Support Staff Unions)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor M Brandon-Bravo
Mr B Pardon

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

It was noted that Mrs C McCreadie had replaced Ms L Regan as the NUT representative on the Committee.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 18th October 2005 having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair, subject to a correction to page 4, line 33, to read "... Nottinghamshire's ranking in key stage 2 science had improved only because ...".

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor S Carroll
" G Gilfoyle
" Y Woodhead (on other County Council business)
Ms K Brookes

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

GRADE BOUNDARIES FOR GCSE EXAMINATIONS

Di Morton, Assistant Director (Strategic Support Services), introduced the report which gave information on grade boundaries at GCSE, and how the performance of Nottinghamshire pupils related to these. Councillor Prebble asked whether information was available on the impact on pupils of having extra tuition. Mrs Morton was doubtful that such information existed, but offered to check. Councillor Brandon-Bravo believed that public confidence needed to be restored, and he did not understand the examination boards claiming confidentiality. Councillor Owen questioned the statement in the report that the weighting of individual units was not available. He gave examples he had found on the websites of several examination boards. Mrs Morton explained that the report had intended to make it clear that information on individual pupils was not available. She outlined the work which had been undertaken on this, and emphasised the Department's aim to provide the information the Committee wanted.

It was agreed to note the report.

APPOINTMENT AND RETENTION OF GOVERNORS

Pat McLardy, Head of Governor Services, introduced the report on the appointment and retention of local authority governors. She drew particular attention to the current performance, and to the review being undertaken by the Governance Consultative Group. She planned to report again to the Committee after completion of the review. Mrs Burbidge asked if governors had exit interviews when they had resigned. Ms McLardy said that resigning governors were asked to fill in a questionnaire. The results of this were not yet recorded on a database, but this was an option. The review would be looking at whether the right questions were being asked.

Councillor Pulk asked how Nottinghamshire compared with other authorities. Ms McLardy replied that the average vacancy rate was 12%. She pointed out that other authorities were reducing their vacancy rate, and Nottinghamshire was seeking to learn from their good practice. Unitary and city authorities were achieving the lowest vacancy rates.

Councillor Suthers wondered what percentage of enquirers resulted in appointment to a governing body. Ms McLardy indicated that this information was not held, but would be useful to monitor. Councillor Suthers commented that the application pack itself might be off-putting. Councillor Brandon-Bravo agreed that the amount of documentation sent to governors, together with their responsibilities, would be off-putting. Councillor Owen also was worried by governors' workload and the long agendas for meetings.

In reply to Mrs Burbidge, Ms McLardy explained that her responsibility was for local authority governors, but figures showed a vacancy rate of 10% for parent governors and 16% for community governors. Mrs Wooding asked about governors being sued. Ms McLardy replied that if governors had followed procedures, they should not be prosecuted. She offered to speak to Mrs Wooding outside the meeting about this.

Mrs Lane observed that the Nottinghamshire Association of Governors had argued for years that governors' responsibilities were inappropriate, and that for many tasks they were not trained. She wondered if it was worth making representations to government about this. Councillor Pulk commented that councillors were also lay people. In his view, if there were no governors, a bureaucrat would be performing the equivalent function. He recognised the big time commitment of being a governor, but believed that local people needed to be in charge of their local school.

It was agreed that Committee members be given the opportunity to participate in the review being carried out by the School Governance Consultative Group. Councillors Fielding, Pulk and Suthers and Mrs Burbidge and Mrs Lane expressed an interest in being involved. An interim report would be presented to the Select Committee at its 7th March 2006 meeting.

CHILDREN ACT STUDY GROUP

Councillor Wakefield reported orally that the study group had now met twice. He asked for the Committee's endorsement of the study group's terms of reference, which was granted. The next meeting would be on 22nd December. Councillor Wakefield invited any interested member to join the group. The study group's terms of reference were agreed as follows:-

1. To consider the impact that the Children Act and its associated policies will have on schools within the County;
2. To examine preparations already underway in schools within the County for the introduction of the new model of children's services;
3. To ensure that partnerships between schools and various organisations are established to provide a seamless transition into the new system for children, particularly focusing on inequalities.

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN STUDY GROUP

Councillor Wakefield reported that this study group would next meet on 20th December, and again any member was welcome to attend.

FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Prebble felt that the agenda for the April meeting of the Committee looked heavy. Councillor Wakefield agreed to look again at the work programme, and expressed the possibility of an additional meeting if necessary. Mrs McCreadie asked whether consultation on the management structure had now taken place. Mrs Morton understood that consultation was in its early stages, and further discussions were expected. Mrs McCreadie asked for the Arrangements Committee to look at relations between the teaching unions and Corporate Human Resources. Mr Cokeham commented that consultation with the unions over the restructuring seemed to be poor. Mrs Morton undertook to report back the concerns which had been expressed.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am.

CHAIR

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