

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 08 JULY 2002

Councillors *Robertson (Chair), *J Brown (Vice Chair), *Adamou, *Davies, *Dawson, *Diakides, *Dobbie, *Lister, *Prendergast, *Simpson and *Williams.

*Mrs Shukla, *Mr B Aulsberry (REJCC Representatives), *Mrs Berkery-Smith, Mr L Haward (Church representatives), *Ms E Pine and *Mr R Sharp (Parent Governors representatives).

*Members present

SC11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: We received apologies for absence from Councillor GMMH Rahman Khan, Mr L Haward, Mr Sharp and for lateness from Councillor Simpson.

SC12 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (27 June 2002) - Agenda item 4)

Matters arising from the minutes

(a) Task and Finish Scrutiny Review

With reference to SC04, the Committee enquired whether progress had been made with regards to the proposal that a 'task and finish' scrutiny review, be chaired by a member of the opposition party. It was noted that Councillor Robertson would be meeting shortly with the Leader of the Council and the issue of a 'task and finish' scrutiny review was on the agenda for discussion. Councillor Robertson agreed to report back to the Committee on the outcome of that discussion.

(b) Improving Social Services

With reference to SC010 - Improving Social Services, the Committee requested an update from the Executive Member for Social Services on the series of action taken in response to the Children's Services' targeted Reinspection that took place in February 2002, the SSI's annual review meeting letter of 10 May and the zero star rating allocated to Social Services.

RESOLVED

1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2002 be agreed and signed.
2. That the committee receives a progress report from the Executive Member for Social Services on the Action Plan in response to the Children's Services' targeted reinspection.
3. That the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee inform Members of the outcome of discussions with the Leader in respect of the task and finish scrutiny review.

SC13 SCRUTINY IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION (Presentation from the Assistant Chief Executive - Organisational Development Agenda Item 5):

We considered the key features for Overview and Scrutiny in the new constitution:

Scrutiny Functions include:

Holding the Executive to Account

- Before decisions are made - Forward Plan
- Before decisions are implemented - Call-In
- After decisions are implemented

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- Policy Review and Development
- Health Scrutiny

Relationship between Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Panels

Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

- In charge of Call in decisions.
- Overview of performance of Panels
- Takes responsibility for overall political management of Scrutiny
- Approves all reports.

Scrutiny Panels are responsible for:

- Developing skills in a specific area.
- Advising Overview and Scrutiny Committee and
- Preparing reports.

Call-in arrangements

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee can look at any decision made but not implemented.
- The decision cannot be implemented while the call-in procedure is being followed.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can ask the Executive to reconsider and/or refer the matter to Council for further discussion.
- Special rules apply when a decision is regarded as outside the Budget and Policy Framework.

How Call-In Works

Four Members must sign a call-in form.

Up to Five days after the decision is published.

Overview and Scrutiny has 10 working days to convene.

Overview and Scrutiny can decide to:

- Approve the Decision.
- Take no further action.
- Refer the decision to the decision-taker.
- Refer the decision to Council for discussion.

The Forward Plan

Contains all key decisions to be taken in the forthcoming 5-month period.

States who will take decision, when, which stakeholders consulted and what papers used.

Rolling five month plan updated monthly.

Published two weeks before period starts i.e. 1st week of each month.

Contains urgency provision.

Scrutiny and the Forward Plan:

- Main source of future information
- Members kept informed of future issues
- Scrutiny can ask for information and examine an issue **before** the time comes to take decision.

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What are Key Decisions?

Key decisions are decisions, which are likely: -

- To result in the Council incurring expenditure or savings which are significant, having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
- To be significant in terms of their effect on communities living or working in an area comprising 2 or more wards in Haringey.

We noted the following comments from the Committee:

- It was difficult to identify new items in the Forward Plan.
- The Minutes of the Executive were published two days after the meeting on the website - what provision was there for people without access to the Internet to get copy of minutes. - It was important to ensure that paper copies were available for those who wanted them.
- There was a need to ensure that safeguard mechanism existed against possible abuse of urgency powers.
- It was essential to ensure that minutes of the Executive were received as soon as possible in standard format.
- August recess should be built into the constitution to avoid meetings of the Executive being called late in July, therefore giving Scrutiny Members full opportunity to call in decisions if necessary.

The constitution would be reviewed in the autumn and Members would be invited to contribute to the review process.

SC14 WORK PROGRAMME [2002/03] FOR SCRUTINY PANELS - Agenda Item

RESOLVED

That the 2002/03 work programmes and Reviews of the Scrutiny Panels be endorsed.

SC15 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF POST 16 EDUCATION - INTERIM REPORT (Report of the Chair of the Review Panel - Councillor Bob Harris - Agenda Item 8):

We noted that the 1999 inspection of the Local Education Authority (LEA) by OFSTED commented that "Post 16 provision within a number of the LEA's schools is uneconomical and the range of options open to pupils is limited". Several reports have been commissioned by the Council on post 16 and these highlighted a number of issues including small numbers, a limited range of courses and below average exam results. There was a lack of confidence amongst students and parents in aspects of current provision and a significant number of young people voted with their feet and went outside the Borough.

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From April 2001 the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) took over responsibility for funding and planning education and training for 16 year olds in England. From April 2002 local Learning and Skills Councils would allocate resources to LEAs for provision delivered in school sixth forms and in any LEA maintained 16-19 institution that the LEA or other bodies may set up under the new powers in the Learning and Skills Act. The local LSC for the area was the North London LSC and it also covered Barnet, Enfield and Waltham Forest.

It was acknowledged that the work undertaken on this review was not as comprehensive as originally hoped due to circumstances beyond the control of the Review Panel. However, conclusions had been reached on the issues to be addressed and possible options for future action to be fed into the debate and decisions that needed to take place and to which the Panel would wish to contribute. Of prime importance was the need to put the interests of learners first, not institutions. If this did not happen, it was possible that the solutions would be taken out of the LEA's hands. The forthcoming Post 16 inspection report and the overarching role of the LSC could assist in driving matters forward.

The Review Panel was aware of work being undertaken by the Director of Education through the post 16 Steering Group with professional partners but were concerned about how the views of students (and their parents) were considered. The following issues have been highlighted as needing to be addressed and endorsed by the review panel:

- Were we providing the right spread and balance of provision in the Borough, including advice and guidance?
- Is what we provide of high quality with good outcomes for our 16-19s?
- What were the main factors that should shape provision over the next five years?

The majority of Level 3 students appeared to stay in Borough after 16. However, approximately two thirds of Level 2 students did not take advantage of in Borough provision. It was unclear what happened to many of this group and it would be of great assistance if better tracking could be introduced. It was likely that many of them were attending out of Borough Colleges such as Barnet or Southgate. It would be useful to find out exactly why Haringey students went out Borough as it could show areas where Haringey needed to improve its provision.

The sizes of sixth forms throughout the Borough were, with the exception of Fortismere, relatively or very small and this must limit the options available. Some of the smaller sixth forms were declining in size and there must be a point where some of them became no longer viable on their own. This was one reason why the two consortia were set up. Whilst such arrangements could provide benefits, they often appeared to necessitate students travelling around between different sites. Such arrangements might well benefit from more centralised provision. In the final report the panel aimed to examine the imaginative and successful ways in which other similar Boroughs were tackling the issue.

The staying on rate at 16+ and 17+ varied considerably between the Borough's schools. It would be helpful to find out the reasons for this.

The Nexus Consortium brought together a number of schools, each with very small numbers of post 16 students. Geographically those schools were some distance apart and this factor must add to logistical problems. The recent OFSTED report on the LEA commented that the arrangement was proving difficult to operate and had not made any significant contribution

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improving curriculum opportunities or resolving the resource problems that the last inspection identified. There was a strong case for considering whether provision should be based on one site. Such an arrangement should not necessarily preclude it being achieved through the current consortium provided that this did not adversely affect the interests of learners. The students consulted generally preferred the supportive environment provided by schools in preference to the approach adopted in many Colleges.

Information and guidance for students should be improved. There was a need to ensure that there was good guidance so that students entered the right courses for the right reasons and achieved appropriate outcomes. Several students had stated that schools did not clearly publicise the various alternative options available, instead focussing on what they themselves provided. It was important that schools did not see other providers as being competitors and that students were given comprehensive information on the provision available. A joint guide should be produced as a first stage and be readily available.

There was a need for a clear 16-19 strategy, including one that specified targets for improvement and how it proposed to achieve them. This strategy should be subject to consultation with all stakeholders, particularly students and parents; hence the recommendation for a public debate that reached the views of students and their parents.

It was crucial that the interests of learners were paramount. There had been a lack of action in 16-19 education despite many of the problems highlighted being already well known and documented. Inaction was no longer an option and it was hoped that the current pressures for change would finally lead to improvements. Our students deserved nothing less.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That it is essential there be student and parent input into future decisions on 16-19 education.
2. That an early conference of all stakeholders, including students and parents, to debate and discuss a strategy for post 16 education be convened by the Council.
3. That, in order to help formulate a clear 16-19 strategy, the LEA and its partners look at good practice in other LEAs.
4. That given the particular failure of provision in the east of the Borough, the LEA and its partners give consideration as to whether the addition of a Sixth Form Centre or College would facilitate improved provision and attainment.
5. That data collection be improved, specifically in terms of tracking and on retention and progression at 16+, 17+ and 18+, including information on why students drop out of courses and on Haringey students who go out Borough.
6. That further work be done on raising achievement, including consideration of target setting and measuring added value.
7. That guidance systems be improved and that a booklet giving comprehensive information on post 16 options available be produced and given to all Year 11 pupils so that all students are helped to choose appropriate pathways.

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8. That efforts be undertaken to increase the range and flexibility of vocationally based options on offer as well as the work-based route where appropriate.
9. That an examination be undertaken of how we can maximise the effective use of regeneration funding to improve attainment for 16-19 year olds.

Minority Report.

The Committee noted the Minority Report (appendix D), statement by Sue Eedle (former Councillor) and her objections to some of the recommendations of the Post 16 Education, Interim Report. Sue Eedle informed us that she raised a number of objections to the draft interim report both orally and in writing. Whilst some amendments and improvements were made, and some of the recommendations were unexceptionable, she remained dissatisfied with the overall thrust of the report and felt it lacked rigour. The Minority Report outlined Sue Eedle's principal objections.

We noted the following comments made by the Committee:

- The Post 16 market was very diverse with many options for students to move around; students could not be compelled to go where the LEA wanted them to.
- Some of the colleges referred to were selective; it was therefore unsatisfactory to make comparison.
- The report outlined what we already knew in terms of low achievement. Many students did not achieve high GCSEs grades to study Levels or A Level equivalent course to enable them to go to university.
- There was a need for a strategic view and to present a vision for Post 16 provision in the Borough.
- There was disappointment at the length of time taken to produce the report.
- The report raised a lot of recommendations which were important to the development of Post 16 education in the borough.
- Some of the recommendations did not appear to be fully drawn out from the actual research carried out.
- The recommendations could feed into the discussion regarding the response to the OFSTED Post 16 Inspection report.
- It was important that the Local Education Authority and its partners worked closely with the Learning and Skills Council.
- More data and guidance were needed.
- The curriculum was not covered in the report; it was important to focus on this over the next few months in order to ensure that appropriate choices were offered to students.

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We noted that a conference of all stakeholders, including students and parents, to debate and discuss a strategy for post 16 education had been incorporated into the workplan of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the Interim Report and its recommendations be noted as part of the ongoing work being undertaken by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Irene Robertson
Chair