
MEETING	SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CALLING IN)
DATE	27 JULY 2009
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS HEALEY (CHAIR), FUNNELL (VICE-CHAIR), SIMPSON-LAING, TAYLOR, R WATSON, WAUDBY, HYMAN (SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNCILLOR ORRELL) AND HORTON (SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNCILLOR SCOTT)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS ORRELL AND SCOTT

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. The following personal non-prejudicial interests were declared:

- Councillor Simpson-Laing as the mother of a child who used the school meals service and as a Governor of Carr Infants School
- Councillor Horton as a Governor of Copmanthorpe Primary School
- Councillor Waudby as a Governor of Lakeside Primary School and the grandmother of a child who used the school meals service
- Councillor Funnell as a Governor of Burnholme Community College

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION / OTHER SPEAKERS

It was reported that, under the Council's Public Participation Scheme, two members of the Youth Parliament had requested that their written statements be read out to the Committee. There had also been one request to speak from a Member of Council.

Councillor Alexander, Children and Young People's Champion, read out the statements from Joe Finney and Joe Armer, Members of the Youth Parliament, in relation to agenda item 4 (Called In Item: School Meals). The pupils expressed concern that an increase in the price of school meals would result in many children not receiving a nutritious hot meal and would instead purchase food from fast food outlets. The price increase was of particular concern because of the financial climate and would be catastrophic to some families. They urged that prices be decreased or frozen.

With the permission of the Chair, Cllr Alexander also spoke in relation to agenda item 4. He stated that he concurred with the views that had been put forward in the statements from the members of the Youth Parliament. Prices had increased every year since 2003 and there had been a decrease in the number of pupils using the service. The Executive Member had consulted with headteachers via the Schools Forum but should listen to the views of children and parents.

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In) meeting held on 13 July 2009 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

14. CALLED IN ITEM: SCHOOL MEALS

Members received a report which asked them to consider the decisions made by the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services, at a Decision Session on 20 July 2009, regarding the price to be charged for school meals in York schools from September 2009 and the allocation of the School Lunch Grant.

Details of the Executive Member's decisions were attached as Annex A to the report. The original report to the Decision Session was attached as Annex B. The decisions had been called in by Cllrs Douglas, Scott and B Watson for the following reasons:

"The Executive Member:

- *Failed to heed the advice of the Shadow spokesperson*
- *Failed to appreciate the financial implications to families in York*
- *Failed to appreciate the effect the rise will have on school meal take up in the future."*

Members were invited to decide whether to confirm the decisions of the Executive Member (Option A) or refer them back for reconsideration and / or amendment at the next meeting of the Executive (Calling In) (Option B).

Cllr Brian Watson spoke on behalf of the Calling In Members. He stated that insufficient details had been given regarding the savings that would be made through the introduction of dishwashers into those schools that did not already have this equipment. At a time of economic recession and increasing levels of obesity, school meal prices should not be increased. Families would not be able to afford the increased prices and pupils would purchase food from outside school, which would not be a substitute for a quality school meal. Members should take note of public opinion and ensure that children were able to have good quality and healthy meals.

In response to questions from Members, officers explained the reasons why the unit cost of the meals had increased and how school meals were funded in other authorities. The current contract was due to be reviewed in 2010. Details were provided regarding the School Lunch Grant, including the options as to how this could be used and the implications when the grant came to an end. The Schools Forum had been consulted on the proposed pricing of school meals. At the request of the Executive Member, work was being undertaken on the implications of providing assistance to families in receipt of working tax credits when future school meal prices were set.

Clarification was sought as to the costs of installing dishwashers in the nineteen schools that did not already have this equipment. Officers stated

that the cost would be around £160,000. It was noted that although there would be savings in terms of energy and water, the primary driver was the improvements that would be made to the health and safety of staff and to their working conditions.

After a full debate, Councillor Simpson-Laing moved and Councillor Horton seconded, that the Executive Member reconsiders her decision, and if required re-consults the Schools Forum, to reassess the rise in the cost of school meals in light of the financial implication to parents, the effect on children's diet and the long-term effect on the school meals service and that both options 1 and 2 be reviewed. Three Members voted for this proposal and four against. There was one abstention. The proposal was therefore declared LOST.

Councillor R Watson then moved, and Councillor Waudby seconded that the Executive Member's decision of 20 July 2009 be endorsed. Four Members voted for this proposal and three voted against. There was one abstention. The proposal was therefore declared CARRIED, and it was

RESOLVED: That the decision taken on this item by the Executive Member on 20 July 2009 be confirmed.

REASON: In accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution in respect of called in decisions and because the Committee considers that the Executive Member's decision was correct.

Councillor P Healey, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.10 pm].