
MEETING	EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	26 FEBRUARY 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS KIRK (CHAIR), BROOKS (VICE-CHAIR), ALEXANDER, GUNNELL, HYMAN, MERRETT, MR J BAILEY AND DR D SELLICK
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR MORLEY

28. 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, in addition to the list of general personal interests circulated with the agenda.

Members declared the following additional general personal interests and asked that they be added to the list:

- Cllr Gunnell – as a member of the Management Committee of Danesgate Pupil Referral Unit
- Cllr Merrett – as Acting Treasurer of York Chinese Cultural Association.

Mr Bailey also asked that the list be corrected to record his interest as being “Chair of Governors of Huntington Primary School and Governor of Huntington Secondary School”.

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

30. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council’s Public Participation Scheme.

Ken Beavan spoke in relation to agenda item 4 (Interim Report for School Governors Review). He commented that the responses showed an unwillingness to answer certain questions, indicating that most governors found these questions intrusive and irrelevant to their role. He expressed the view that objective (ii) of the review should be abandoned, on the basis that the data was inadequate, and suggested that the survey could have a negative effect on the number of new applicants.

31. INTERIM REPORT FOR SCHOOL GOVERNORS REVIEW (PART A)

Members considered a third interim report on the scrutiny review of the role of School Governors (Part A), which presented information resulting from responses to the survey sent out to all Governors in January, as requested at the last meeting. The report also invited Members to comment on a draft version of a questionnaire to be sent to Governing Bodies.

Details of information taken from the survey responses had been fed into the database in order to provide a set of reports on the ethnicity, gender, age and economic profile of school governors, together with some comparative information on the ethnicity of York residents and school pupils. These reports were attached as Annexes A to I to the main report. The draft questionnaire had been provided separately as Annex J. Regarding the costs of the survey, it was confirmed that the Scrutiny Management Committee had agreed on 25 February to release an additional £650 to cover those administrative costs that needed to be funded from the Scrutiny budget.

Members noted that there had been an excellent response rate to the survey, with 1,090 forms sent out and 1,050 returned. However, they were concerned that many respondents had declined to answer the questions relating to ethnicity, age and gender, resulting in a lack of data in these crucial areas. Rather than speculate on the reasons behind this, it was suggested that the matter be explored further with those governors who had agreed to attend the informal consultation session after the formal meeting. It would also be possible to amend the draft questionnaire, in the light of the consultation, in order to gain the information required via the survey of Governing Bodies.

RESOLVED: (i) That the interim report, and Members' comments on the survey results, be noted and that the reasons behind some of the responses be explored further during the informal consultation session with school governors scheduled to follow this meeting.

(ii) That the Scrutiny Officer amend the draft questionnaire at Annex J to the report in the light of the outcome of the consultation session and circulate it to Members for their comments and agreement before sending it to Governing Bodies.

REASON: In order to progress the review as agreed, whilst complying with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

Action Required

1. Amend and circulate draft questionnaire.

GR

32. URGENT BUSINESS - SCOPING REPORT FOR PART B OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNORS REVIEW

Members considered a report which presented a proposed remit for Part B of the review of School Governors (to investigate the role of Governors and current clerking arrangements in extended schools). The Chair had agreed to take this item under Urgent Business due to the need to progress this part of the review at an early stage, once Part A had been completed. Heather Marsland, the Head of Early Years and Extended Schools Adviser, was in attendance to expand upon the information provided in the report and to answer Members' questions.

The report outlined the government's Extended Services in Schools agenda, requiring every school to provide a range of services and activities outside normal school hours, and its implications for the role of Governing Bodies. It was noted that the City of York was the 4th highest performing authority in the region regarding this agenda, due largely to its Shared Foundation Partnership policy. Support and training available for governors in this area of work had included training days, briefing sessions, a DVD and information pack and guidance on the Yor-Ok web site. There was also a multi-agency consultative forum - the Early Years and Extended Schools Partnership - and one to one help was available from a development worker from the Early Years and Extended Schools Service in every school.

Members were invited to consider how they wished to proceed with Part B of the review and to agree a time frame. It was suggested that they might take advantage of the informal consultation session following the formal meeting to obtain governors' views on the additional work and responsibilities arising from the introduction of Extended Schools Provision.

RESOLVED: That a decision on the timetable and methods for progressing Part B of the review be deferred until after the informal consultation session with governors following this meeting.

REASON: So that proper consideration can be given to how the review should be progressed, in the light of the views obtained from governors.

Action Required

1. Include item on next agenda seeking decision on methods GR / timetable for Part B of review.

M Kirk, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.05 pm].