

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**21st March, 2007**

- Members Present:-
 Councillor Bains
 Councillor Crookes (Substitute for Councillor Asif)
 Councillor Duggins
 Councillor Lee
 Councillor Mutton
 Councillor Ridge (Deputy Chair)
 Councillor Sawdon (Chair)
 Councillor Williams
- Co-opted
 Member Present:- Councillor Clifford
- Cabinet Member
 Present:- Councillor Blundell (Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People))
- Other Scrutiny
 Members Present:- Councillor Kelly
 Councillor Mrs. Lucas
- Employees Present:-
 P. Barnett (Chief Executive's Directorate)
 J. Blount (Chief Executive's Directorate)
 M. Bonathan (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
 C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services)
 R. Hughes (Head of Corporate Policy)
 R. Snow (Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate)
 A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)

208. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

209. Call-Ins Stage 1

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received yet this week. The deadline for call-ins of Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 12th March, 2007, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 23rd March, 2007. Any call-ins received after this meeting and before that deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

210. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Venture Capital Limited

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money) that detailed the work of the Coventry Venture Capital Limited over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's representatives at meetings of the Board.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to Coventry Venture Capital Limited.

211. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Governing Body of Hereward College

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Lee that detailed the work of the Governing Body of Hereward College over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's representative at meetings of the Governing Body.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to the Governing Body of Hereward College.

212. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Special Interest Groups of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Gazey that detailed the work of SIGOMA over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's representative at meetings of the Group.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to the Special Interest Groups of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).

213. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Williams that detailed the work of the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority over the previous 12 months and included attendance records and details of remuneration for the City Council's representatives at meetings of the Authority and its Sub-Committees.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority.

214. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested in order that Members could monitor progress.

215. Work Programme 2006/2007

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the 2006/07 Municipal Year.

216. Statutory Notices for Deedmore and Hawkesbury Fields Special Schools

Further to minute 203/06, the Committee considered a report of the Director of Children, Learning and Young People that had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 211/06 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Kelly, Mrs. Lucas and Clifford. The report sought approval for the publication of Statutory Notices for the closure of Deedmore Special School (moderate learning difficulties) Hawkesbury Fields Special School (severe learning difficulties) and the opening of a new broad spectrum special school, initially on the site of the existing Deedmore and Hawkesbury Fields Schools, with the plan to co-locate in a new building on the site of Moathouse Primary School in the future.

The Members calling in the report and the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, in particular how it was proposed to move and manage more children with special educational needs in mainstream schools, the size of the new school, the consultation process and communications with parents of prospective pupils who were currently of a pre-school age, the procedure for assessing whether it was appropriate for a child to attend a mainstream or SEN School and how, when the school was relocated to the site of the Moathouse School, maximum benefits would be obtained from the co-location.

The Cabinet Member explained that the proposals had been subject to a wide consultation process which had been reported on in July, 2005, the proposals were supported by parents and staff of the schools. The new facility at the site of the Moathouse School would be appropriately sized and would have the capacity to be extended in the future if required. It was felt that the co-location on with a mainstream school would allow pupils to integrate more fully and to gain important life skills. The Cabinet Member indicated that no pupil would be forced into an inappropriate school.

The school population of pupils with moderate learning difficulties in SEN schools was changing; this was both a national and local trend and reflected the fact that many of these pupils were now accommodated in mainstream schools. Schools catering for moderate and severe learning difficulties had grown closer and the changes proposed in the report were seen as a natural way forward that would allow more flexible provision. It was expected that the new build school would be sized at 112 pupils with two forms of entry although this figure was under review. More young people were coming forward with more complex needs, the officers saw no reason why the school's capacity could not be adjusted upwardly if required. The officers emphasised that they wished to keep lines of communication open with the parents and would wish to rectify any perceived problems at an early stage.

The Committee noted that the new school was not being funded by PFI but from the City Council's resources, the Officers indicated that they seeking resources for an additional broad spectrum SEN school in the city and confirmed the LEA's commitment was that any child that required it would receive appropriate SEN educational provision. With regard to the trends within special educational needs, the Officers indicated that the increase in the number of pupils with complex had been ongoing for some time although

the numbers with less severe educational needs were reducing; it was a matter of shifting needs rather than increasing numbers.

The officers went on to explain the process by which assessments were made as to the best place for a child to be educated. The Committee noted that officers worked closely with the parents throughout the process and although there was the option of tribunal if parents did not feel that the LEA's decision was correct; Coventry had one of the lowest rates of SEN tribunals in the country, this suggested that the process worked.

Provision for children in the ultimate new build school would be greatly improved from that currently available, discussions were already under way with the Head and Chair of Governors at Moathouse School regarding the co-location of the two schools. Officers felt that Moathouse School was the right location for the new facility, co-location would give flexibility and remove the need for transportation between sites. The officers acknowledged that there were some concerns and it was hoped that the response at the meeting went some way to reassure parents and elected members.

RESOLVED that the Committee concur with the decision of the Cabinet.

217. **Best Value User Satisfaction Survey**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy that set out the initial findings of the Best Value Satisfaction General Survey conducted in late 2006. The Committee noted that more detailed information would be available on this matter later in the year when more analysis had taken place.

All English Local Authorities were statutorily required to undertake best value performance indicators surveys on a three year basis. This report summarised the initial results from the third round of surveys conducted in 2006/07.

The Committee went on to consider the summary data in detail and were concerned that those elements of the survey that related to the Culture, Leisure and Libraries Portfolio had either stayed the same or gone down. The Committee noted that the service would shortly be examined by the Audit Commission and it was agreed that this side of the survey and the results of the audit should be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Board in the new Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that the relevant Scrutiny Board be requested to consider the results of the cultural aspects of the survey together with the results of the Audit Commission audit when the information is available in the new Municipal Year.

(NOTE: The items of business at minutes 216 and 217/06 above were considered as items of other public business, the reasons for urgency is both cases being the need to allow the matters to be considered without delay.)