

Note: Minutes indicated as **DRAFT** will remain so until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

# **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON**

### **22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005**

**Councillors:** Peter Argyle (P), Brian Bedwell (AP), Paul Bryant (P), John Chapman (AP), Sheila Ellison (*Vice-Chairman*) (P), Sally Hannon (*Chairman*) (P), Sandra Harding (AP), Andy Kilgour (AP), Tony Linden (P), Mollie Lock (AP), Gordon Lundie (AP), Tim Metcalfe (AP), Irene Neill (P), Caroline Suggett (P)

**Co-opted Members:** Miss Sue Brown (A), Francis Connolly (AP), Angela Creed (P), Patrick Davies (A).

**Also Present:** Elizabeth O'Keefe. Councillors: Keith Chopping and Emma Webster. Officers: Jo Naylor (Scrutiny Officer), Anna Ditchburn (Service Development Manager – Education Services) and Jason Teal – (Partnerships Officer – Consultation).

## **PART I**

### **16. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Brian Bedwell, Sandra Harding, Mollie Lock, Andy Kilgour, Tony Linden, Gordon Lundie and Tim Metcalfe.

Substitutions: Keith Lock was a substitute for Mollie Lock. Billy Drummond was a substitute for Sandra Harding. Elizabeth O'Keefe spoke on behalf of Francis Connolly (Co-opted Member).

### **17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

### **18. CHANGE TO HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY ON DENOMINATIONAL TRANSPORT**

The Chairman reported on how the original decision had been called-in on several grounds including concerns over the lack of response from schools, the timescale for permitting responses and general issue of contact with the Diocesan groups.

Anna Ditchburn (Service Development Manager – Education Services) introduced her Service Area's response to several of the issues that had been raised. She explained how the original decision had been rescinded. Any revisions to the Home to Transport Policy would now not be implemented until 2007/08 due to the timescales required for the school admissions process. She further added that if the policy to remove denominational transport is implemented, it was proposed that current recipients would continue to receive assistance while they are in compulsory attendance at their existing school, provided they remain normally eligible.

#### **The discussion included:**

- The need to await the Government's White Paper on Home to School Transport prior to revisiting the Council's Policy on this matter.
- It was acknowledged that the consultation would have benefited from wider representation from faith groups and more thorough consultation.
- Methods of consultation including the potential use of the internet, notices in the media, public meetings and the Council's West Berkshire News publication, etc.
- Using the Children & Young People's Select Committee as a forum for consultation, as this meeting includes both faith and educational representatives who sit as Co-opted Members.
- The possible reasons for low response rates from school consultation exercises.
- The role of the Education Management Advisory Board and its representation of Head Teachers.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE – 26.05.05 – MINUTES

- Due to the small numbers involved, the opportunity to contact the parents of the children who would be effected by any change to the policy on denominational transport.

The Chairman then invited Jason Teal (Partnerships Officer – Consultation) to outline the Council's general protocols for consultation. He described how email is often favoured on the grounds of speed and low cost. However, the limitation of this method is that there is no guarantee the individual has received, opened or read the email.

### **The discussion included:**

- The benefits of addressing email to a named individual.
- Asking for confirmation of receipt on the email.
- The resource intensive nature of follow-up calls to those that have not responded.
- Forewarning – via website or media – that a consultation with a short time-scale is due to take place.
- The difficulty reaching faith groups in general and the work of the Reading Council for Racial Equality to systematically identify faith groups and ethnic minorities.
- The need to keep Ward Members informed.
- Development of guidance detailing when it is appropriate to use email with elected Members and key organisations; i.e. size limits on documents and gaining prior agreement they wish to receive documentation in this way, etc.

### **RESOLVED to**

- (1) Consider the use of a pre-warning mechanism if undertaking a consultation process over a short time frame.
- (2) Develop a protocol and follow-up mechanism to ensure documents have been received during a consultation.
- (3) Ensure the Council's relevant Service Grouping is responsible for contacting elected Members to verify that consultation documents have been received.
- (4) Ensure when circulating a large document via email, that as an alternative, individuals have the option to receive a paper copy.
- (5) Request that no specific policy decision be made on denominational transport policy until the Government White Paper on Home to School Transport is issued.
- (6) Request that the Home to School Transport policy is received by the Select Committee (or its successor Committee) and Co-opted Members to consider in draft form, prior to a decision being taken by the Executive.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.05pm)*

**CHAIRMAN:** .....

**Date of Signature:** .....