

**Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 1st September, 2008.**

**Present:-** Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Basharat, Dale-Gough, A S Dhaliwal, Mann and Qureshi.

**Education Voting Co-opted Members:-**

Roy Davey, Oxford Diocese  
Pat Parker, Diocese of Northampton

**Education Non-Voting Co-opted Members:-**

Mr R Daniels, Secondary School Representative

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Bal and Finn.

**PART I**

**14. Declaration of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**15. Election of Vice-Chair**

**Resolved -** That Councillor Dale-Gough be appointed Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2008-09.

**16. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th July 2008**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Mann provided all Members with a Cabinet (Education) report from October 2000 which detailed proposals for the provision of teaching community and mother-tongue languages. It was agreed that this be included as an agenda item for the next meeting.

**17. Development of Play in Slough**

A report which detailed the progress of the Play Strategy and current and future funding available to improve play opportunities was presented to the panel by the Head of Creative Delivery. The report provided information on the funding that was available from different sources including grants from the Big Lottery Fund and from Play Builder Capital Funding. A further bid could be submitted in the autumn of 2008 to the DCSF for Play Pathfinder funding; this must be used for the instillation and management of a major development. This would be in Upton Court Park and a further facility would be provided in Salt Hill Park. The Slough Children and Young People's Plan was outlined to

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Members. Opportunities for play development and the Play Pathfinder Project was outlined.

In the subsequent discussion Members raised a number of points including:-

- A co-opted Member requested further clarification on the engagement of third sector voluntary organisation within the play strategy. Six play areas had already been identified and a further 14 play areas would be identified with the help of the voluntary sector; who may also be able to bid for some of the funding. In response to a further enquiry, Members were informed that a condition of the funding was that it could not be spent in schools.
- A Member asked why none of the playgrounds in Slough had been insured against vandalism. In the past it was decided that it was not cost effective. However, the officer undertook to provide information on the costs of insuring play areas against vandalism.
- Funding was available for the post of a Play Ranger, who would assist in providing play activities for children and young people in Slough. The other 2 year post was for a Play Co-ordinator who would oversee the entire project answering to the Play Strategy Partnership Group. Until the job specifications were confirmed by HR, the salary of each post was not yet finalised.
- A Member asked how the funding would be broken down. A consultancy would oversee the entire project costing in the region of 10-12% of the capital sum. Property services would carry out some work on behalf of the play strategy with a possible cost of 1% of the capital sum. When a full breakdown was finalised this would be reported to the panel. A Member was concerned that there was not expertise in the Council to carry out the project. It was explained that this was not the case but that there was not enough officer resources to meet the tight deadlines.
- A Member noted from the report that no funding would be available to the 26 play areas that were the responsibility of housing and asked whether this was likely to create a two tier system. Officers agreed that this was an ongoing issue and attempts had been made to address it over the past 2-3 years. The Director for Green and Built Environment (who had recently taken over responsibility for the housing function) had looked into how revenue support could be created for the provision of play areas within the housing budget.
- Officers would be working with Groundwork Thames Valley for commissioning the playground design. Groundwork had previous work in innovative playground design and had recently won an award for best play area at the Hampton Court Flower Show. They would conduct consultation with the community including schools and youth clubs once they had finalised designs for the play areas.
- An innovative water play area would be created in Salt Hill Park. This was in response to consultation with families as there was already teen provision in the park. Developments in Upton Court Park would be on a large scale including play facilities for 0-18 year olds as this was Slough's flagship park.

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Officers informed Members that an action plan and timescales were available with budgets for the provision of the play facilities for any member who required it.

**Resolved** – That the report be noted.

### **18. Pathways to Employment Including Apprenticeships**

The Assistant Director for Raising Achievement presented a report to the Panel which included information on the provision of other work based programmes in Slough. Background information on young people who were not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) was also provided. Earlier in the year there had been significant publicity in the national press about apprenticeships provision. The Learning and Skills Council would no longer have responsibility for provision of apprenticeships and this would fall to a separate Government Department. The officer acknowledged that local provision of apprenticeships and other work based programmes was currently underprovided; however it was difficult to engage private companies to create work-based learning programmes for young people. Although a major provider of apprenticeships was Slough Borough Council.

In the ensuing discussion Members raised a number of points including:-

- A member requested further information about the two major providers listed (Pitstop and Protocols Skills Ltd) and the apprenticeships that they provided. Pitstop was based on motor vehicle engineering with the support of East Berkshire College and it was believed that Protocols Skills Ltd provided basic administration and business skills courses.
- It was explained that Connexions monitored an area programme which was co-ordinated through Bracknell. Slough selected the elements of the programme they required. Funding for the programme was based on different factors including deprivation. Slough was consequently in a good position.
- A Member asked about the costs of provision for each different course. The Officer explained that this information would need to come from each of the apprenticeship providers and the Learning and Skills Council and undertook to provide the information if possible.
- An enquiry was made about the number of boys and girls who were currently engaged in work-based provision programmes and the programme currently undertaken by East Berkshire College encouraging more girls to take up apprenticeships. The officer explained that this information could be provided in future to the Panel.

**Resolved** - That the report be noted.

### **19. Forward Agenda Plan**

The Chair requested that the unprogrammed report on underperforming schools be brought to the November meeting. Members were informed that it was important to clarify the distinction between “underperforming” schools and

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schools with low GCSE and 'A' level results as all secondary schools in Slough were ranked as either good or outstanding by OFSTED. The Member mentioned other underperforming schools locally that were not controlled by Slough but it was explained that they would be unable to report on these. A report on the GCSE and 'A' level performance figures for Slough schools was requested and it was agreed that these two reports would be combined at the November meeting.

**Resolved** – That the Forward Plan be updated as noted above.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 7.10 p.m.)