

DfES GUIDANCE ON SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE AND THE EDUCATION WHITE PAPER

REPORT BY HEAD OF POLICY & RESOURCES

SCHOOL ORGANISATION COMMITTEE

22ND NOVEMBER 2005

PURPOSE

To inform the Committee of various proposals from the DfES, and to seek their views if any action should be taken.

BACKGROUND

Earlier this year the DfES issued guidance on the constitution and statutory procedures of the School Organisation Committee. This is summarised below.

- All members of the Committee should be advised of the statutory procedures.
- There should be a nominated officer within Children's Services Directorate for all statutory procedures.
- Consideration should be given to extending SOC membership to a 'sixth group'
- Consideration be given to adopting a code of 'conduct and conflict of interest'.
- The standing orders of the committee should be reviewed to ensure that the points remain valid and are up to date.

At that time the DfES also advised that the annual production and approval of a School Organisation Plan was no longer required. The Schools Organisation Committee does however have to be consulted on the Children's Services and Young Peoples Plan, the first of which has to be completed by 1st April 2006. Although some work has begun on this it is yet to be decided what elements of the School Organisation Plan would be included in the Children's Services and Young Peoples Plan.

The Education White Paper however confuses the 2 issues described above as it suggests the abolition of the School Organisation Committee, with presumably school reorganisations being handled by the Local Authority. An Executive Summary of the White Paper has been sent to Members of the Committee separately and is available to members of the public on request.

It is assumed that some of the confusion will be resolved by the enactment of an Education Bill. Therefore the recommendations to the Committee are as below.

RECOMMENDATION

That: (a) no change to the constitution be made until the Education Bill is enacted, and if the SOC is to continue, consideration be given to amendments at that time;

- (b) the School Organisation Committee discuss the Children's Services & Young Peoples Plan at a meeting in March 2006;
- and;
- (c) the School Organisation Committee is involved if any statutory proposals are made prior to its abolition.