

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - STUDENT JOURNEY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Student Journey held in the Bewl Room, Sessions House, County Hall Maidstone on Wednesday, 27 April 2011.

PRESENT: Mr I S Chittenden, Mr M C Dance, Mr R J Lees, Mr S C Manion, Mr M J Northey, Mr K Smith and Mrs C J Waters

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Policy Overview Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Membership - to agree to co-opt Mr R J Lees on to the Committee
(Item 1)

RESOLVED that Mr R J Lees be co-opted onto the Select Committee.

2. Election of Chairman
(Item 2)

Mr M C Dance proposed and Mr M J Northey seconded that Mr K Smith be elected Chairman of the Select Committee.

Agreed without a vote

Mr K Smith was duly elected and took the Chair.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

Mr K Smith proposed and Mrs C J Waters seconded that Mr M C Dance be elected Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee.

Agreed without a vote

Mr Dance was duly elected.

4. Terms of Reference and Scope
(Item 3)

1. Members discussed the draft Terms of Reference and Scope and made the following comments:-

a) the Committee should look at the bigger picture of unemployed young people and the reasons why they are not in employment. Part of this is the number of young people dropping out of university after one year. These young people are in danger of being 'lost' as they don't show up in any statistics, having been counted once as part of the university cohort. It would be helpful to be able to find out:-

- the drop-out rate,

- the reasons behind young people dropping out,
 - what can be done to help them re-engage with other options.
- b) it would be useful to understand how a young person's community influences their choices and aspirations in terms of higher education and employment;
 - c) it is important for the Committee to remain focussed and disciplined and not try to cover everything. The Committee could identify and recommend further work to be done in a separate future project;
 - d) what is vital is for the Committee to view the issues from young people's point of view;
 - e) barriers to education and employment can include practical issues such as transport, particularly in rural communities;
 - f) it is helpful to bear in mind what changes might arise in Government policy during the life of the Committee. For example, changes in university tuition fees will start to take effect, and the Committee might meet young people who are re-thinking or have changed their plans in response to the higher charges;
 - g) the issue of youth employment should be looked at from both sides; to see if education is preparing young people adequately for the world of work, and to see if local business has any involvement in helping to prepare young people so they are able to meet its needs;
 - h) data used would need to be independent. The Mosaic data model would be useful;
 - i) students are a microcosm of society, and it is important to cover all social groups and abilities;
 - j) the Committee will need to be innovative in the way it engages young people. It will need to go to them rather than expect them to come to County Hall, and social networking media could also be used. The Kent County Show in July would provide another possible option to advertise the work of the Committee and reach young people;
 - k) the Committee will need to make as much use as possible of existing evidence and avoid duplication, so that its contribution to highlighting the issues will cover fresh ground and hence have more value;
 - l) the Committee should seek practical outcomes which could be adopted as a model for other authorities in the UK; and
 - m) it is important that the Committee produces recommendations which can be supported by officers, and a session to share views partway through the process will be helpful.
2. RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference and Scope be agreed and adopted.

5. Administrative issues

(Item 4)

1. The Democratic Services Officer tabled a paper which set out a number of suggested administrative arrangements for the preparation of the hearing programme, the timing of interview sessions and the handling of information. These had been tried and tested by previous Select Committees and had offered a useful model. Members noted the following:-

- a) more dates will be identified and reserved than are expected to be needed. Officers will allocate reserved dates to hearings or visits, depending on the availability of desired interviewees and hosts, and advise Members of the programme and any dates which are no longer needed;
- b) evidence-gathering sessions will be half-days only, each half-day including a maximum of three interviews (but a minimum of two), each of 45 minutes' duration, with a 15-minute 'buffer' between to minimise and absorb over-run. The importance of making the most of the interview session and keeping to time were emphasised. Any questions arising later can be emailed to the interviewee and answered, with the answers being shared with the Committee;
- c) a 'summing up' session of 20 minutes' duration will be added to the end of each half-day, after the public part of the proceedings, to allow Members to summarise and note the main issues arising from the session. This will be shown on the agenda;
- d) all agendas, papers and briefing material will be circulated to Members by email, followed by paper copies; and
- e) summaries of evidence-gathering interviews will be shared with Select Committee Members as soon as possible after each interview, at the same time as they are sent to the interviewee to check, but these summaries will remain in draft form until they have been cleared and agreed by the respective interviewees. Interviewees will be advised that Members are being given the summary as a draft.

2. RESOLVED that the points set out above be adopted as the Select Committee's method of conducting its evidence-gathering.